

Workers Power

25p/10p strikers

Paper of the Workers Power group

RALLY TO THE MINERS

IN THE LAST week of January the Tories got the first scent of victory in their nostrils. Thatcher and Walker instructed MacGregor and Eaton to demand prior and unconditional surrender from the miners.

It must be made clear to every trade unionist that if the miners are driven back on these terms then the whole labour movement will suffer the most vicious punishment at the hands of the Tories.

The miners are indeed, as the bosses' press sometimes claim, "the guards regiment of the British working class." Their ranks have stood firm and held the battle field - virtually alone - for eleven months. Such heroism is unparalleled in British working class history, as is the scale of repression used against them.

Five miners have lost their lives in the dispute. Dozens have suffered serious injuries at the hands of the clubs and shield brigades and the police cavalry. Thousands have received staggering fines on rigged charges. Dozen of miners, class war prisoners, have been thrown into jail. Added to this heroism is the mass heroism of sustaining the strike mounted by the women support groups.

■ GENERAL STAFF ■

The miners have received serious support from militant sections of railway workers, seamen and dockers. Labour movement activists have staffed the hundreds of support groups. But the other regiments of the British working class have been kept off the battlefield. Their leaders and the so-called general staff of the labour movement, the general council, have refused point blank to support the miners in this, the most critical battle since 1926.

They have given no clear or unequivocal verbal support to the miners demands. They have not even called a 'day of action', or a national demonstration. Instead they have condemned the miners' resistance to police violence and tied the NUM up in five months of fruitless negotiations.

The union leaders - and this includes Knapp, Buckton, Todd and McNestry have pulled their troops out of the firing line every time the Tories attack on them presented the possibility of linking the struggles. Their left reputations have been entrusted to heroic minorities of their members operating blacking.

Yet on the rail, in the car industry, in the docks and even the pit deputies have all shown a willingness to struggle. This willingness was repeatedly frittered away by negotiations with the government and the employers which resulted in agreements which the government has either already torn up or will do so should the miners be beaten.

It is not true that the working class is beaten and demoralised. This defeatist

lie unfortunately does not come from Willis and Kinnock alone - or from the so-called 'left' leaders who use it as their excuse for doing no more. It is repeated by the misnamed Communist Party of Great Britain. It is parroted by self-deluded pessimists like the Socialist Workers Party who give the bureaucrats a free alibi with their talk of a 'downturn' that makes solidarity action impossible.

Such defeatist talk is rubbish. Britain lost 26.6 million working days through strikes last year - the highest figure since 1979 and the third highest this century! Even if the pit strike is completely excluded from the figures that leaves 4.3 million days lost, 31% up on the 1983 figures. As the *Financial Times* says, this "provides little comfort for the government."

A survey of employers also reveals that 60% expect an increase in labour troubles in the coming year. Moreover postponing the call to arms now will not get workers off the hook. The Tories will attack the Dock Labour Scheme the moment they can get the miners out of the way. The Ridley Plan to privatise public transport puts a pistol to the head of the bus workers. The railways are also number one target for attack. The Unemployment Secretary Tom King is preparing to 'solve' unemployment by forcing people on the dole to do "community work" - ie the jobs of the sacked council workers, dismissed as a result of rate-capping and axing the budgets of Labour councils. He is preparing to use the lie that it will create more jobs to scrap employment protection legislation, to lessen job guarantees and unfair dismissal schemes. He intends to end the option for young people under 18 to sign on the dole by making the YTS slave labour scheme compulsory. Behind these attacks the mounting toll of unemployment will be used to cut real wages.

■ CAMPAIGN ■

What can we do to stop them? We have left it late, very late, but not too late. We must use every forum, every demonstration to fight for mass solidarity action. At a local level the miners support committees should call emergency conferences of workplace delegates from all unions supporting the miners. They should place the proposal for a short, sharp campaign in every workplace to win the members to action alongside the miners.

This will need leaflets, bulletins and sales of *The Miner*. It will need work time meetings addressed by the stewards and by miners and miners' wives. It will need resolutions calling on the union's leaderships at all level to take action in their own interests and alongside the miners. It means mounting a massive campaign of picketing all those

workers failing to observe existing TUC agreements.

It would also mean a deafening call on the TUC to rally to the miners with an indefinite general strike aimed at winning the miners' full demands, unconditionally repealing the Prior, Tebbit and King anti-union laws and scrapping the laws which destroy local democracy and force cuts in services and jobs.

To get this industrial action alongside the miners - to win a general strike the miners support committees must begin the work of transforming themselves from ginger groups of activists working hard to materially sustain the miners into councils of action, comprised of workplace delegates. This must be fought for in the stewards committees, in the branches and in the powerful district committees. The fight must be taken into the all too often moribund trades councils.

Where workers are taking action alongside each other - railworkers and miners for example, they should form joint action committees which can also become the basis for councils of action.

■ MAXIMUM ACTION ■

The February 11th Day of Action will not win the strike for the miners. One day general strikes will not force the Tories to back down either. They are self limited to being a demonstration and Thatcher will not yield to demonstrations. But when they are called we should fight for the maximum action - strike action. We should get the largest mass turn out on the demonstrations and at the rallies. But we should use it, not just enjoy one day of speechifying. We need to call, in our speeches from the platform, in our chants and slogans on the marches, where necessary by heckling bureaucrats who offer no real support, for action now, for a general strike.

We can have no confidence that the TUC will either call or lead that strike action however. That is why councils of action are vital. The moment they exist in any serious numbers we will fight for a national congress representing them so that they can act as an alternative leadership to the treacherous general council.

- Turn miners support committees and trades councils into a Council of Action for every town and city.
- For a General Strike to win the miners' full demands, to smash the anti-union laws and the laws against local democracy.
- For workers defence squads to resist Thatcher's para-military picket busting police.
- Down with the Tories - for a Workers' Government based on councils of action and a workers' militia.



VICTORY THE ONLY HONOURABLE SETTLEMENT

MAKE NO MISTAKE about it, the NUM executive is desperately looking for a way out of this dispute. Their problem is that Thatcher and the NCB will not let them have one.

In most areas officials signalled in the early new year that they thought the dispute should be wound up. This was as true in 'left' led Wales and Scotland as in 'Right' led Northumberland. In Yorkshire lodge officials began to tell the men that there were only a few weeks left to go.

Of course this was all explained to the members in terms of an imminent victory. 'The Miner' of January 17th announced that the strike was creating economic mayhem and a Britain 'bleeding'. Its message was that the miners were winning the strike through making it too expensive for the Tories to hold on much longer. Peter Heathfield gave the same message to a recent rally in Barnsley. As the 'Yorkshire Miner' reported, "he predicted that within a few weeks, the government would be forced to resume negotiations, because the country could not tolerate the costs of the dispute."

This was, at best, self-deluding nonsense. From day one the Tories have made it plain to all who have eyes to see that there are no limits to the price they are prepared to pay to isolate, humiliate and break up the National Union of Mineworkers. Theirs is an open political fight to smash the strongest Trade Union. An isolated miners' strike that simply holds on in the hope of costing the Tories too much will never defeat such an enemy.

Behind all the confident talk the majority of the executive have been making it increasingly plain that they didn't even believe their own rhetoric. It was designed to keep the members' spirits up. Scargill, McGahey and Heathfield took their hands off the wheel and handed negotiations over to the entire NEC, in its turn the NEC made it clear that it would accept a moratorium on pit closures and an independent enquiry pushed for by Welsh clergymen. They offered talks with "no pre-conditions". This meant they were no longer insisting on resisting the closure of uneconomic pits and the full reinstatement of all victimised members.

The latest hints from 'left' leaders to industrial correspondents suggest they are now even considering ordering a return to work without there being a signed settlement. This may save them the personal humiliation of signing the

board's terms. But it would leave the Board's Plans intact. The union would be left bled dry and exhausted to fight another day. And over 600 men would have been sacrificed by the union if they are not fully reinstated. The NCB would force their terms on the membership in one way or another.

Predictably the Tories and NCB have taken every hesitation and every 'white flag' as a signal that they can tighten the screws on the miners. They have demanded unconditional surrender from the NUM as their precondition for holding what Michael Eaton calls short "oneday" talks to end the dispute.

They expect that now the NUM leaders have told their members that the union must make concessions on every front they call up the tempo of the back to work movement and place greater pressure on the executive to fragment and surrender.

The NCB and the Tories have locked the NUM leaders out of a negotiated settlement. They are insisting that a return to work is on their terms. Every scab who crawls back, every colliery that produces coal will have accepted "management's right to manage". After humbly pleading for 'peace with honour' the NUM executive are now being asked to recognise the "NCB's right to manage" in the interests of the profits of the bosses and the bankers.

The NUM leaders have no way out of the dispute on its present terms. South Wales is now thrashing around calling for the TUC to solve the dispute for the miners. Emyln Williams has talked of the dispute being now "more the property of the TUC general council." But Willis and Basnett have made it plain that they consider the NUM's strike demands to be unreasonable. If the dispute was handed to them they would simply take this as a license to deliver the head of the NUM to the Tories. Such a proposal is nothing more than an attempt to pass the parcel of responsibility for selling out the miners.

Arthur Scargill has called for the resumption of mass pickets. But for even this to become a reality the course of the dispute has to be drastically changed. The executive will not do so and neither has Arthur turned his rhetoric into action by calling on the rank and file to organise to fight the backsliders and take the strike forward once again.

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INSIDE:



The Labour Party at War
Welsh Popular Front

OPERATION
MOSES

USE CONFERENCE TO CALL

THE MINEWORKERS DEFENCE Committee Recall Conference on February 9th could provide a second opportunity to transform the work of the Miners' Support Committees Movement and aid a miners' victory. At the last conference the London-based committee, made up of a coalition of centrists- Socialist Worker, Socialist Action, Socialist Organiser and left reformists like Ken Livingstone, bureaucratically stifled attempts to debate resolutions that called for a real campaign for strike action alongside the miners. The support committees were left after that conference with no perspective other than to carry on collecting money.

This conference, at least on paper, seems to be open to a debate on resolutions and different strategies for the strike. As such it should be attended by all rank and file workers in the mines and from other industries.

A number of amendments and resolutions have been put to conference reflecting various alternative ways forward. (See *Black Dragon* No.5 Feb 4th). Birmingham Trades Council support committee's proposal represents a common one, also argued for by the SWP. The resolution argues that mass pickets of power stations are "the key" to victory.

Mass pickets are crucial as a means of winning over workers inside and turning away suppliers. However if building them is separated from winning industrial action by other workers they will suffer the same fate as did Orgrave last year or Grunwick way back in 1977. A better model to follow is Saltley during the 1972 miners' strike.



Orgrave, 1984

What made the government capitulate at Saltley was not simply the size of the pickets but the fact that massive industrial action of local general strike proportions took place and threatened to escalate.

It was the failure to push for and win such action that was decisive in preventing a repeat of Saltley at Orgrave.

Moreover to argue for mass pickets of power stations in a period when the police are massively

prepared and armed without arguing for the creation of properly organised picket self-defence squads, which can alone repulse police attacks, is pure stupidity. All mass pickets should be built for through industrial action by other workers and by involving the maximum number of miners and the unemployed. Organised self-defence to make them effective blockades is an urgent task of the movement.

A second perspective for the strike's develop-

ment is embodied in resolutions from Oxford Support Committee and from the paper *Socialist Action* (*Socialist Action* being presumably too weak these days to win these positions in Trade Union bodies or support committees.) These call for trade unionists to concentrate their efforts on winning a "recall of the TUC". In the case of the Oxford resolution sponsored by Alan Thornett this will be "to call a general strike." Predictably in the case of *Socialist Action* it will be convened

John Sturrock (Network)

WHY KINNOCK HOPES THE MINERS LOSE

SOMETIMES OUR BITTEREST enemies tell the truth. When they do we can learn from them. The bosses press is unremitting in its hatred of Arthur Scargill. But this hatred includes fear, and at times even a grudging respect for an open enemy. The bosses press, on the other hand, praises Neil Kinnock's respect for law and order. But it cannot conceal its contempt for the man. No one likes a Judas. Even his paymasters throw him his thirty pieces of silver with disgust.

Thus the hard-line class war paper *The Sunday Telegraph* summed up Kinnock's role sharply enough- even though from the other side of the battle lines:

"The last thing Mr. Kinnock wants is any last-ditch attempt to rally support for the strike, the defeat of which along with its leader, he cannot wait to see... Not only do the political and industrial leaders of the Labour Movement refuse to do anything to avert what may turn out to mean the destruction of their equivalent of the Brigade of Guards, but they do not even want to talk about the tragedy." *Sunday Telegraph* 20.1.1985.

It is indeed Kinnock's heartfelt desire to see the miners sold out. He wants to see their leaders- especially Scargill- humiliated and all the dangerous nonsense about fighting the Tories here and now, out of the way. He realises that only a beaten and cowed working class will patiently wait until Labour can be elected in 1987 or 1988. Only a passive working class will allow him to court the "professional middle class" and the progressive industrialists Kinnock has set his sights on.

The Kinnockites' view of the strike, "leaked" to the *Sunday Times* (27.1.85) reveals this approach. An unnamed "leading Labour strategist" is quoted as saying: "But we have lost a year out of the calendar and the most damaging aspect has been the strike's domination of attention away from other issues."

In other words, the strike is viewed as having been a waste of time. Yet what else should a party that claims to support the working class have been doing for a year?

What are these "other issues" that the strike detracts attention from? The strike is against unemployment. It has raised issues such as women's rights, trade union rights, combatting police violence. It has placed Thatcher's inhuman economic policies under a spotlight. The strike is not a diversion from other issues of vital importance to the working class. Neil Kinnock and his friends obviously feels it diverts public attention from their pathetic parliamentary skirmishes. To clear the road for his - not even effective- speech mongering he is prepared to see the miners go down to defeat. The reason is plain enough. A defeat for the miners will strengthen the Kinnockite-right-wing coalition's grip on the Labour Party. They will use such a defeat to purge the party of left policies and left personnel.

On the policy front the campaign document *Jobs and Industry* due to be launched in March, signals the direction to be taken. Written largely by John Smith, a member of Kinnock's inner cabinet of advisors, it is packed full of economic policies worthy of the SDP. The *Guardian* described it as accepting that "a number of socialist

tenets will have to be abandoned." Nationalisation is gone and replaced with plans for tripartite consensus planning on the Japanese model. Ailing industries will no longer be given public funds-

"We will be more selective" warns Smith. Crowning the document is a direct echo of Thatcher's credo, wealth before health (and schools, jobs etc): 'Socialists must interest themselves more in the creation of wealth and not just in the redistribution of wealth.' In effect the document is a thumb in the eye to workers struggling to defend their jobs and livelihoods today. It is an attempt to prove to the so called 'socially upwardly mobile' section of the population that Labour is a good election prospect. It openly refuses to promise anything now arguing that *until* there is a Labour government (1988) all that can be done is some clever thinking: 'This is the period in which we can develop new ideas'

challenge Kinnock's scabbing, and therefore his leadership, during the strike is a clear sign that fundamentally they are tied to his electoral strategy. To challenge him would be to challenge a strategy that even Benn and Skinner firmly believe in, a strategy of change through parliament. This meekness will make the job of purging the 'Trotskyists' a lot easier. Already Militant supporters in the Rhondda and Gillingham are being expelled for selling their paper. A defeat for the miners would dramatically increase the tempo of this purge.

VICTORY

On the other hand a decisive victory for the miners could scupper the best laid plans of Kinnock's cabal. To this end militants inside the Labour Party must adopt a combined strategy. They must fight to resist the pressure that the Labour leadership is exerting on the NUM to surrender. They must throw themselves wholeheartedly into a struggle to win solidarity strike action that is the key to victory. And they must bring Kinnock and the other traitors to heel. An all-out struggle needs to be mounted against Kinnock and the right. Benn and the left need to be forced to stop back pedalling and join this fight. We firmly believe that in the course of such a battle, which we are already engaged in, the Labour Party will come to see that Kinnock and themselves cannot inhabit the same party. We believe that they will come to see that they need a party that places the class struggle and its final victory over capitalism above all other things. That they need and must build a revolutionary party.

SAME SONG

Kinnock is singing the same song in the fight against rate-capping. His miserable advice is do not break the law and hang onto office: 'Better a dented shield than no shield at all.' This message from Kinnock to the Labour Party local government conference accepts that the Labour councils will have to make the cuts caused by rate-capping. The 'dented shield' won't stop the axe chopping services and jobs in rate-capped councils.

To get these policies through and keep the party intact Kinnock will need to tame the Bennite left and purge the 'Trotskyist' elements. The taming of the Bennites has been all but completed. The so called 'hard lefts' refusal to



Jack Collins calls for

A personal appeal to delegates to Feb.9th 1985 Mineworkers Defence Committee Conference from Jack Collins Secretary of Kent Area National Union of Mineworkers.

"Comrades and Friends, First let me wish you every success with your conference and in any future solidarity actions you may organise in support of the miners.

The miners' strike is obviously the key battle facing the working class movement. On the outcome of the struggle depends not only the future of the National Union of Mineworkers but possibly the very future of legal and official trade unionism and other forms of democratic and progressive organisation in Britain.

The Tories understand this only too well. Consequently they have mobilised the full resources of the bosses state against the miners most of whom, despite nearly a year of provocation, intimidation and bribery, have stood firm.

The most recent underhand ploy has been the attempt to string out the process of negotiations in the vain hope that the core of the striking miners would crack. They have clearly underestimated

the resolve and fighting spirit of the striking miners. In contrast the leadership of the TUC have clearly failed to respond in kind to the attacks of the Tories on the miners and the wider working class movement.

The miners strike has exposed the Willis's, the Basnetts and the Chapples of the movement as spineless fat cats with no guts to fight. The miners have never had any reluctance to call over the heads of such official "leaders" of the movement if these people fail to live up to their responsibilities as class fighters. As Arthur Scargill has said: "Our people have suffered hardship the like of which you cannot begin to comprehend, a section of the working class, the miners and their families, have been bludgeoned by this government and their supporters. How much longer are you going to stand on one side and see us continually battered. I ask trade unionists at rank and file level, stop waiting for the leadership to tell you what to do, take industrial action and put into effect TUC policy."

I am issuing an appeal to conference delegates today to make winning industrial solidarity from

COLLISION COURSE

The Tories were on a collision course with the miners. Should the miners have accepted the March 6th closure programme? Should they have handed over the right to fight back to an interfering bosses' press by calling a ballot? Should they have given cups of tea to the policemen who invaded the mining villages? For the Kinnockites and the right wing around Hattersley the answer to these questions is a resounding yes. The Labour Party should not be concerned with the direct struggles which the working class is repeatedly forced to take up. Rather it must distance itself from these struggles and concentrate on wooing "public opinion" in preparation for the next general election.

Bryan Gould MP writing in the now thoroughly Kinnockite *Tribune* summed up this scabbing attitude perfectly: "Each time we reduce our credibility with the electorate by resorting to demopolitics, or by speaking the language of violence or by pretending to be some sort of revolutionary movement, we betray the issues we claim to care about, and we abandon the people we claim to defend... It is time for the Left to take electoral politics seriously." (1.2.85)

FOR ACTION

merely to implement the (even then) inadequate blacking promises made last September. In both cases the movers are proposing what in present circumstances would be a diversion from the burning needs of the moment.

Thornett's position flows from a degree of black pessimism about the state of the class struggle almost as deep as the SWP's. Like the SWP, Thornett thinks there is no chance of winning industrial action alongside the miners by significant groups of workers. Whereas in the past he would have posed the need for a new "revolutionary leadership", now he and his "Socialist Group" can only call on the TUC to take the lead. In posing the next steps for the miners purely in terms of placing demands on the official trade union leadership, the Oxford resolution ignores the task of winning the rank and file of other unions to solidarity action. To adopt such a position would be disastrous. For one thing a recall TUC will never be held unless there is sufficient pressure from below in terms of solidarity strike action, the formation of real rank and file organisations and councils of action. Indeed only in such a situation could a congress be won to a General Strike call and such a call be made effective.

Thornett in contrast believes in the magical properties of a call from "our leaders". Certainly an official call makes it easier to win action, which is why we demand that our union leaders immediately call for solidarity action in support of the miners, why we demand the TUC call a general strike, but it does not guarantee it. The best possibility of winning a general strike is the building of an organised rank and file - a militant minority - which can deliver such action in the factories and workplaces - in most cases against the sabotage of "our leaders."

Far from warning the rank and file that this is the case the Oxford resolution in fact sows illusions in the potential of the official leadership. It suggests that the one day action last year over GCHQ was an example of what the TUC ought to do again! And it implies that the rail union leadership - Knapp and Buckton - were responsible for the action on the rail on January 17th when in fact they tried to limit and sabotage it. Only determined pressure from the militants prevented the leaders calling the action off at the

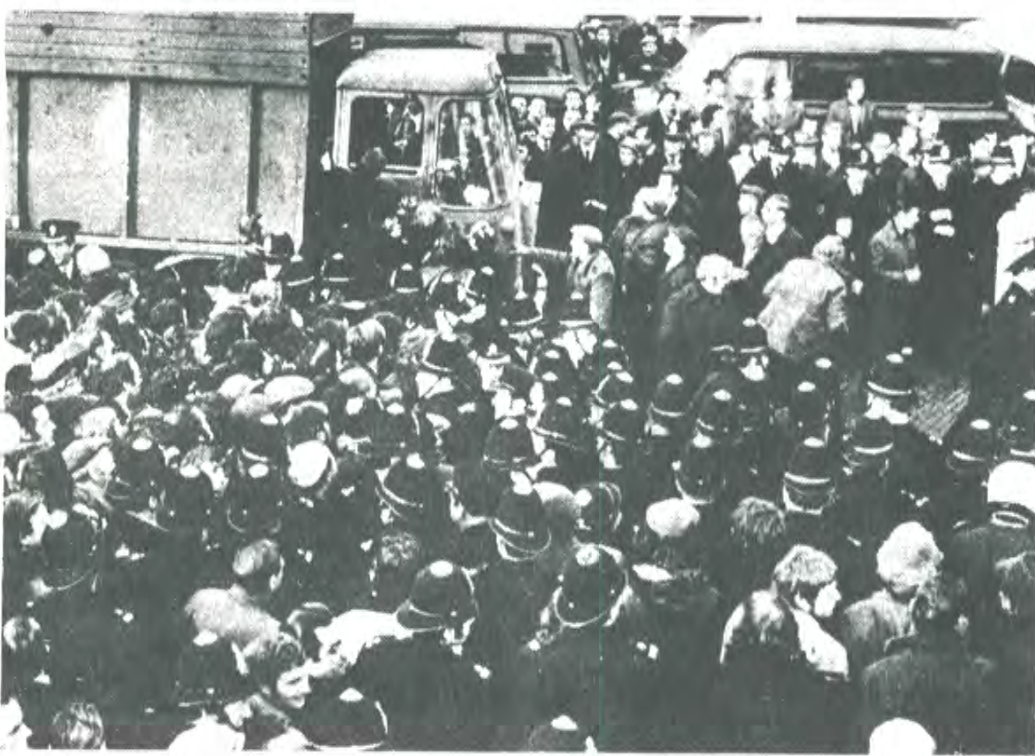
last minute. To follow the line of the Oxford resolution or *Socialist Action* at this conference will be to divert the movement into tailing and waiting on the trade union leaders.

Three resolutions on the conference agenda do offer a perspective that can take the strike and the support committees forward - the amendment from Newham and Leicester Trades Council Miners Support Committees and the resolution and amendment supported by Coventry Colliery Strike Committee (Keresley) and Reading. These reaffirm the only acceptable basis for a settlement of the strike against the waverings of the executive - no pit closures except on the grounds of proven exhaustion, the reinstatement of sacked miners, the release of NUM prisoners and a guarantee of no victimisation of workers who have taken solidarity action.

Further the original Keresley resolution, which was prevented from being debated last time, argues for the need to transform the support committees. It calls for a massive campaign alongside the miners to get to speak in every workplace, not just to committees or branch secretaries but face to face with the rank and file. It calls for solidarity action and a general strike to throw back the government offensive against the trade unions. (This whole original resolution is supported by Keresley strike committee, which is not made clear in the current issue of *Black Dragon*). In this way, by drawing in delegates from other groups of workers in struggle - railway workers, council workers, teachers - the support committees can be transformed into real councils of action which can mobilise to win the strike.

To do this means first rallying the conference to such a perspective against the crippling defeatism and tailism of the existing MDC leadership. It means linking up with the emerging minority in the NUM - the rank and file miners in the Midlands, Yorkshire and South Wales - who must be won to fighting for such a perspective as an alternative to the compromise being peddled by sections of the NUM leadership and the Communist Party. Support the resolutions and amendments from Coventry NUM, Reading, Newham and Leicester.

by Stuart King



Saitley Gate, 1972

a General Strike

other sections of the working class movement up to and including a general strike, an urgent priority, and to support any resolution, amendment or initiative put to conference which sets this task. Food and money remain an important, indeed vital, component part of solidarity with the miners, and on behalf of miners everywhere I express my heartfelt thanks for this sterling work, without which we would not have physically survived this past 11 months.

However the whole question of industrial solidarity is becoming more and more important. There is a crying need for a cross-industry movement of those committed to total physical support for the miners. This total physical support movement should be committed to a class struggle programme and, if necessary, be organised independently of the official structures, in much the same way as the National Minority Movement of the 1920s. Given this perspective the miners support committees can begin a process of transforming themselves along the lines of Councils of Action.

Although I have on frequent occasions called for preparations for a general strike to back the

miners, we have to understand that the situation today is potentially very different to the 1926 debacle.

Today we see the possibility for social change. The miners point the way forward not only to the rest of the working class movement in the short term, but also to the struggle for a society where human need, not profit is the motive of our economy. But that relies above all on our seizing the opportunities that the struggle is presenting us with.

*Prepare for a General Strike against Pit closures and against the Tories Anti-Trade union laws.
*Forge a fighting minority movement of all those committed to total physical support for the miners.
*Transform the miners support committees along the lines of councils of action.

Once again I send you my very best wishes for a successful and productive conference,
Yours fraternally,
Jack Collins.

NO PROMISED LAND



THE NEWS OF Operation Moses, the dramatic air-lift of over 13,000 Ethiopian Jews (Falashas) to Israel, evoked memories of previous exploits, past glories of the Zionist myth: the raid on Entebbe, the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, the Operation Magic Carpet which spirited 100,000 Yemeni Jews to Israel. As on previous occasions, a wave of popular sympathy greeted the disclosure in the Western world, conveniently bolstering Israel's image at a time when their activities in Lebanon merit much critical scrutiny. The air-lift, moreover, is not the fairy tale it appears and it raises many questions.

The Falasha community is one of the oldest in Ethiopia dating back more than 2,800 years. It has no connection with Palestine, historical or otherwise, and it shares no racial, linguistic or cultural features with the Jewish community in Israel. The Falashas were not even recognised officially as Jews by the Israeli Rabbinate until 1975. It is ironic that the Israeli state spends over 300 million dollars to bring such a people to Israel whilst almost a million Palestinians have been driven from their homes, their land confiscated, barred from their native land.

Operation Moses began in secret in 1977, with the Ethiopian government turning a blind eye in return for arms shipments to be used against the Eritrean population. But for many years only a trickle of Falashas chose to emigrate to Israel. Under the new Ethiopian regime the Falashas had more freedom than for generations and were far from the poorest section of the population. Like millions of Jews the world over, despite a religious yearning for the "promised land" of Israel, emigration to the real-life Zionist state held few attractions. Throughout this century the migration of Jews (from pre-war Eastern Europe, Nazi Germany etc) have tended towards America, in particular, rather than Israel, whose population is less than the Jewish population of New York alone. Zionists have frequently attempted to use their influence to block Jewish access to the West in order to force them to Israel.

FAMINE

It was the famine exacerbated by war, which drove the Falashas to seek relief in Israeli arms. Critics have suggested that the 300 million dollars might have been better spent on famine relief and aid which could have been of far greater succour to far more people. But that is not the Zionist way. From the early days of their movement, Zionists have always opposed the attempts of Jewish communities outside Israel to struggle against their oppressors. They have held up the state of Israel as the only solution to Jewish problems. In Czarist Russia, as elsewhere, this attitude led the Zionists to co-operate with the pogromists against Jewish workers fighting for revolution. Similarly, Zionists tried to prevent any organised resistance of Jews in Nazi Germany in return for selected immigration of some Jews to Israel.

Why should Israel go to such lengths at a time when most Western states are tightening their immigration controls and stepping up deportations? From its early days, the Zionist state has issued a clarion call to Jews under its famous "Law of

Return" and has often gone to extreme lengths to secure a response - as was the case in Iraq in the 1950s when Israeli agents secretly planted bombs in synagogues and cafes to panic the Jewish population into immigration for fear of pogroms. Israel was founded to be a Jewish state "as Jewish as England is English" in "a land without a people waiting for a people without a land" notwithstanding the prior presence and nationalist aspirations of the native Palestinian people.

However, despite the commitment to an all-Jewish state, and despite the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the Israeli economy now finds itself dependent on the Palestinian peoples both within the pre-1967 borders and in the occupied territories (Gaza, West Bank) as a source of cheap labour and as a market for Israeli goods. This undermines the ideological foundations of the Zionist state and adds credence to the claims and aspirations of the Palestinian people as a whole. Added to this is the desperate need of Israel for Jewish immigrants to bolster the ranks of the 4th largest army in the world and to populate the West Bank, which Israel is attempting to gradually annex in a de facto process without gaining a further large and hostile internal Palestinian population. But with stagnant (net) immigration and with a growing Palestinian population, Israel's needs for Jewish immigration remain large.

IMMIGRATION

Renewed immigration carries its own problems as many of the Falashas have already begun to see. The widespread image of them in Israel as "a people without culture" echoes previous waves of immigration from Morocco, Yemen or Soviet Georgia who also had to weather allegations that they were dirty, disease-ridden and ignorant. On their arrival in Israel the Falashas were subjected to humiliating "conversion" ceremonies with the many Christians discovered among them given only temporary visas. "The rabbis", according to a Civil Rights Party leader, "treat them like animals". Many Israelis, furthermore, are somewhat less than welcoming in their attitudes to these "Black Jews", with the Mayor of the resort of Eilat exclaiming "I asked that they only send us those who knew how to sing and dance so that we can set up a folklore group for tourists." Already it appears, some Falashas are beginning to wonder if they might not be better off somewhere else, with Canada being touted as an attractive proposition.

Whether they are truly regarded as members of "the Jewish people" or simply as a source of manpower with which to colonise the occupied territories (and certainly, many Falashas have already been posted to fortified settlements in the West Bank) it is dubious whether their hasty transfer to Israel is really in the interests of the Falashas themselves - stuck in an environment utterly alien to them and at the bottom of a ladder on which European and Oriental Jews already occupy very different perches, and face to face with the justified hostility of the Palestinian people.

by John Rubinstein

1914-1918 LABOUR RECRU

SINCE 1904 THE Labour Party had been affiliated to the Second International. Though unlike most of the other mass parties belonging to it, it did not claim to be socialist. It rejected Marxism and the class struggle as a foreign dogma. As GDH Cole, Labour's historian and a witness of those years, put it: "the party had in fact not taken its affiliation very seriously."

In addition to the Labour Party, the socialist groups—the British Socialist Party (the renamed Social Democratic Federation) and the Independent Labour Party—were members, as was the small elitist Fabian Society. Their leaders, HM Hyndman, Keir Hardie and to a lesser degree the Webbs played a role in the great International Congresses of the pre-war years. Hardie gained fame as the co-sponsor of a resolution, with one of leading French socialists Eduard Vaillant, which called for a general strike in the event of war.

The last years of the Second International were occupied with the mounting Imperialist rivalry between the two great alliances, the 'Entente' of Britain, France and Russia and the 'Central Powers', principally Germany and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Crises in Morocco and in the Balkans, where these powers or their lesser allies and dependents clashed, threatened a European, and even a world-wide conflagration.

Fear of this deeply alarmed the labour movements of all the major European countries and those of North America. At the Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart in 1907 a Comprehensive resolution was passed identifying the causes of the war threat, the attitude of the international workers' movement to it and its duties should it be faced with the actuality of war. The resolution pointed out that: "Wars are... inherent in the nature of capitalism; they will only cease when capitalist economy is abolished, or when the magnitude of the sacrifice of human beings and money, necessitated by the technical development of warfare, and popular disgust with armaments, lead to the abolition of this system". It went on from this to commit the representatives of the workers in the various national parliaments "to fight with all their strength against naval and military armament and to refuse to supply the means for it....." The resolution was further strengthened by an amendment moved by the Bolshevik leader Lenin and by Rosa Luxemburg,

leader of the left-wing of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). This stated: "In the case of the threat of an outbreak of war, it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives to prevent the outbreak of war by whatever means seem to them most effective, which naturally differ with the intensification of the class war and of the general political situation. Should war break out in spite of this, it is their duty to intercede for its speedy end and to strive with all their power to make use of the violent economic and political crisis brought about by the war to rouse the people, and thereby to hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule."

The International thus committed itself to a war against the war threat. British socialists addressed mass rallies in Berlin during the Morocco crises of 1908. In this context, at the next world congress of the International held in Copenhagen in 1910 Keir Hardie and Vaillant came forward with the idea of the international general strike to prevent war. It was sharply opposed by the German SPD and was deferred to the next congress, due to be held in 1913. The SPD leaders' reasons for opposition were opportunist. They felt that to endorse it would lay their party open to attack from the Kaisers' authoritarian government.

■ WAR FEVER ■

The Marxist left also heavily criticised it for different reasons. They pointed out that a general strike was not some sort of special method of struggle against war. The general strike could not be started, as it were cold, but had to relate to the whole preceding state of the class struggle. The circumstances existing at the time of an outbreak of war—fear of attack, chauvinist press hysteria, army mobilisation and its attendant martial law—all created very unfavourable circumstances for launching a general strike unless the working class was already on the verge of a general strike for reasons related to the more general class struggle. Moreover a general strike alone could not stop war. An insurrection to remove the war monger class from power was necessary to ensure peace. In fact Hardie's resolution was that of a desperate reformist and pacifist, not that of a revolutionary

Lenin's views were borne out by the experience of the outbreak of war in 1914. Disorientation and war hysteria made a general strike impossible even in Russia where during the month immediately preceding the war huge mass strikes were taking place and where many of the Russian workers' leaders resolutely opposed the war. Elsewhere the workers' leaders were carried away with chauvinism and led support for the war. But whereas Hardie and pacifists like him were completely demoralised by the 'failure' of the working class and the International to prevent war, Lenin and the Bolsheviks set out, in the words of the Stuttgart resolution, "to make use of the violent economic and political crisis brought about by the war to rouse the people, and thereby hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule." The result of

that crisis and the Bolsheviks leadership was the revolution of 1917.

When general war finally came in the summer of 1914 the parties of the Second International (with exception of the Russians, the Serbians and the Bulgarians) shamefully reneged on their promises at the Stuttgart and Basle Congresses. The parties had sworn not to vote for war credits yet all the major ones did.

The French Socialist Party stated in the Chamber of Deputies: "These credits should be voted for unanimously." The Belgian socialists declared: "The time has come when socialists must fulfil their duty without any hesitation. We must vote for all the credits that the government requires for the defence of the nation." Most shocking of all was the action of the SPD—the one million strong jewel of the international. On the 4th August its spokesmen addressed the German Parliament, the Reichstag, with the words: "We need to secure the independence and culture of our country. We shall not abandon our Fatherland in its hour of peril...we agree to the proposed loan."

By November of 1914 Lenin had drawn a decisive lesson from the collapse of the major parties of the world labour movement. "The Second International is dead, overcome by opportunism. Down with opportunism, and long live the Third International...." Rosa Luxemburg came to the conclusion: "Since August 4th German Social Democracy has been a stinking corpse."

What had happened in the British Labour movement in these fatal days? The Labour Party had never made any serious attempt to fulfil the Stuttgart resolution, even on the question of opposing the arms race. It was as Lenin noted before the war "a very opportunist labour organisation imbued with the spirit of Liberal-Labour politics." In 1913 Lenin noted that when the British parliament debated a motion by left-wing 'socialist' members of the Labour Party to reduce the Naval estimates, of the Labour members only fifteen voted against the government whilst twenty one absented themselves and four voted for the government.

■ PACIFISM ■

The Labour Party had never managed to hold a principled line of refusing to vote a man or a penny for the capitalist 'father land.' Its actions were thus perhaps less surprising than those of self-proclaimed Marxists. They were no less serious for that. In August 1914 the British Labour Party and the unions were forced to come off the fence. They had never been working-class internationalists. Rather they identified themselves with the lower middle class pacifism of the radical wing of the Liberal Party. The outbreak of an Imperialist war—a war either to protect the existing division of the world between the great powers which favoured Britain or to redivide it in a way favourable to Germany—faced every real mass Labour movement with an either/or decision.

Either they had to oppose the war and thereby weaken the 'defence of the fatherland' or they would be obliged to collaborate in the prosecution of the war and thus support to the hilt its imperialist aims. The first course required accepting that defeat in war was a lesser evil than the working-classes' complicity with its own exploiters. The second course tied the workers to every act of Imperialist 'brigandage' the German workers to the 'rape of Belgium', the British to the rape of Ireland. Pacifism and a purely passive resistance to the war effort could be a personal solution for isolated individuals. It was not a policy that could be pursued by the organisations of the working class—either trade union or political.



Ramsay MacDonald — a pacifist as long as our boys

The bourgeoisie, when it is fighting a life or death struggle for its profits, its colonies, its markets cannot afford to allow its labour force to be neutral. It does not leave the working class the democratic option of dissent. In the hypocritical pretence of "defending democracy," actual democratic rights, freedom of the press and assembly, the right to strike are simply abolished 'for the duration'. Thus the only real alternative to complying with the war drive was (and for marxists remains) opposing it with the methods of the class struggle, to fight to prevent the bosses offloading onto the workers misery and super exploitation necessitated by their war. Through this struggle the need to abolish war by abolishing capitalism and seizing power from the ruling class becomes clearer and clearer—first to thousands, then to millions.

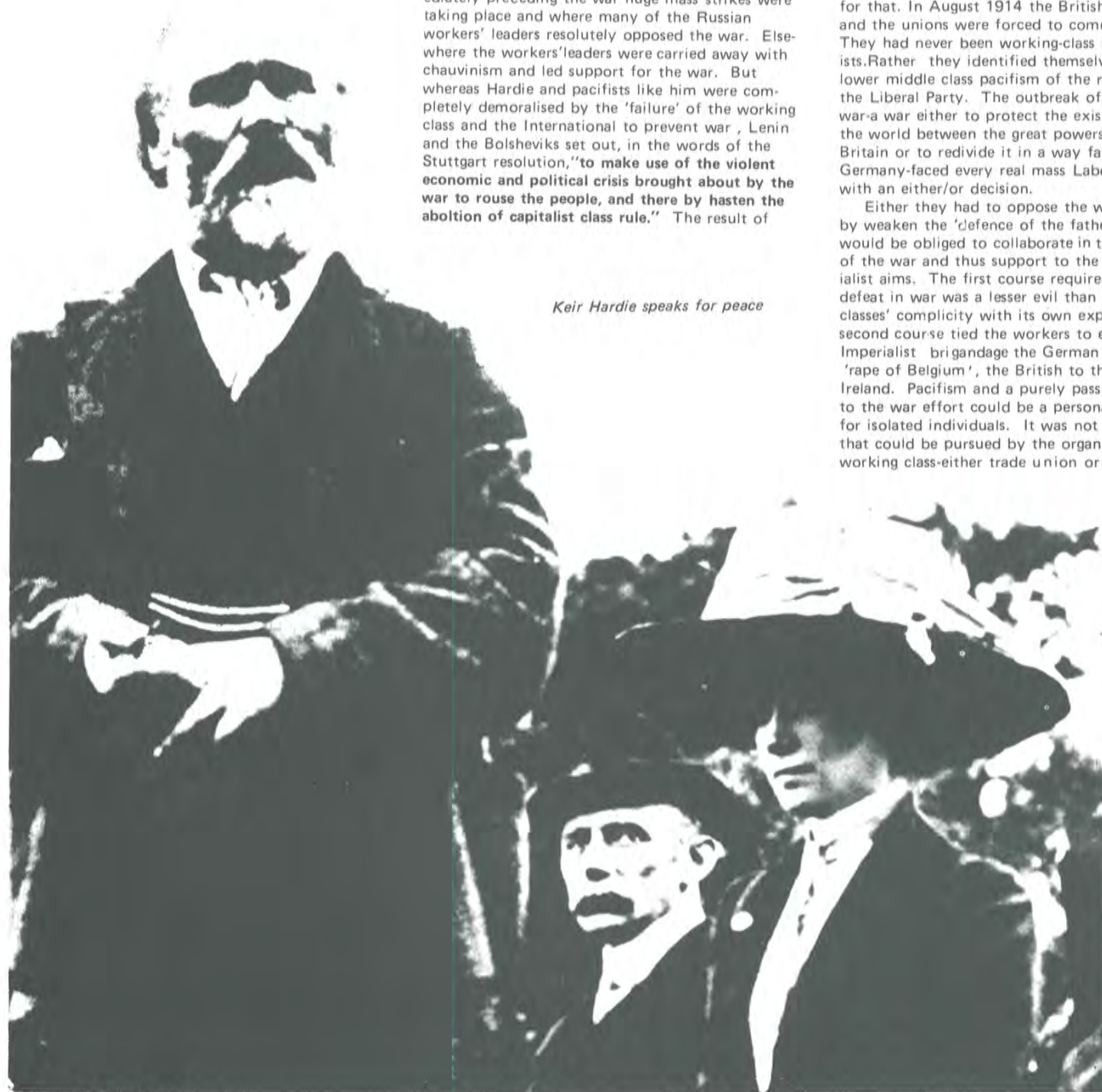
The Labour Party, rapidly chose the option of supporting the war. The transition to war was less dramatic than on the continent. Britain unlike the other major powers had neither been invaded nor yet invaded another power. Most people remember 'poor little Belgium' as the cause of war. In fact it was simply a pretext, a fortunate one indeed since it appeared to cast Britain in the role of defender of small nations. In fact the British ruling class had already begun the process of intervention on the side of French Imperialism and its ally the Tsar against Germany. Since no treaty compelled it to assist France, Asquith, Grey and the Liberal Government were in some difficulty in how to present this war. Even if France was a 'more democratic' country than the German Empire the Tsar's crimes against his own people were only too fresh in the popular memory.

■ EVASION ■

As late as August 2nd Keir Hardie, Arthur Henderson and George Lansbury were denouncing war from the plinth of Nelsons Column to huge crowds. A resolution was passed protesting against the threatened war and against secret diplomacy. The Red flag and the Internationale were sung. Ramsay MacDonald, Chairman of the party in parliament was, however, not there. He was in Number 10 Downing Street. MacDonald's first biographer records that: "he found Ministers still doubtful as to whether there would be popular support for the war, and the he grimly reassured them. This he said, "would be the most popular war the country had ever fought." Here we have the essence of Ramsay MacDonald's opposition to the war. He feared it.

He spoke carefully against war in the Commons on August 3rd "We think he (Grey) is wrong" he said on behalf of the Labour Party. But war was not yet declared. On August 5th the Parties Executive still passed an evasive, MacDonald inspired, resolution which said "We condemn the policy which has produced the war we do not obstruct the war effort, but our duty is to secure peace at the earliest possible moment." Yet that very day Labour MP's fell easy prey to the press propaganda about German atrocities in Belgium. Faced with a hysterical pro-war sentiment they were swept away. The Prime Minister demanded a war credit of £100 million. MacDonald proposed to speak against and the MP's refused to let him. He resigned as Chairman of the Parliamentary Party which proceeded to vote the war credits. MacDonald was replaced by Arthur Henderson—a man for just such a season as this. He patiently threw the party and the official labour movement into support for the war.

On August 29th the Party agreed to a political truce—ie no contested by-elections for the duration of the war. Thus Labour colluded in the suppression of its beloved 'democracy'. It agreed to co-operate in a mass recruiting campaign. The TUC had already declared an industrial truce



Keir Hardie speaks for peace

TS FOR CARNAGE

Part three of a History
of the Labour Party

by Dave Stocking



and the workers take no notice of me

five days earlier and the trade union bureaucracy set about suppressing all strikes.

After "victory by Christmas" failed to materialize and the long stalemate of the Western Front set in, it became obvious to the ruling class that the war was a battle for production. Lloyd George, a wily demagogue with radical 'friend of labour' credentials, was set the tasks of wooing and winning the labour movement to the fullest participation in the war drive. On May 19th 1915 Arthur Henderson entered the coalition government, nominally as President of the Board of Education but actually as the representative of organized labour. Lloyd George summoned the trade unions to abandon all 'custom and practice' that might impede the war effort. All the gains of 50 years of trade unionism were thrown into the maintenance and expansion of munitions production. In July 1915 these voluntary concessions were given the force of law with the passage of the Munitions of War Act. A strike of the South Wales miners was declared unlawful, though the miners called the Government's bluff. Locking up 200,000 miners was no easy task! The Defence of the Realm Act gave the government virtually dictatorial powers.

RESISTANCE

Indeed towards the end of 1915 opposition to the effects of the war began to mount. Skilled workers resisted the destruction of the gains their powerful unions had wrested from the employers since the 1850's. Since their national officials sat on war production committees and used the whole machinery of the union against them, these workers turned to their directly elected and recallable workshop representatives for leadership. Soaring prices, astronomical war profits, the hardships of the wives and widows of soldiers, shortages and the introduction of conscription added to weariness of the horrific slaughter of the trenches all deflated the balloon of patriotism. In these circumstances local shop stewards committees came to the fore. In Glasgow the Clyde Workers Committee led a series of struggles against rent increases, against dilution, against conscription. In the other crucial war production area the Sheffield Workers Committee played a similar role. Gradually the militants became more political, more openly anti-war.

In Spring of 1916 a series of strikes erupted on Clydeside. The leaders had to be deported to break the strike. Henderson was implicated in this repression. Moreover Ramsay MacDonald despite his "opposition to the war" made it clear that he had no sympathy and gave no support to elemental working class resistance to its effects. He told the House of Commons, in the midst of the Clyde strikes, "unfortunately certain opinions which I have come to conscientiously, have somewhat divided me from old colleagues, but I beg this House to believe me when I say that, rather than that division of opinion should make me an agent to bring men out on strike, I should wish that something should happen which would destroy every particle of influence that ever I have had with the working men of this country." The leaders of these struggles turned to revolutionary Marxists like John Maclean for their inspiration.

The "division" between the old colleagues was more apparent than real. Macdonald tried to keep the anti-war feeling under control and impotent. Henderson allowed MacDonald to hawk his conscientious objections around, preventing any split in the Labour Party over it since it did nothing to upset the war effort. The lengths to which Henderson would go in his service to British Imperialism and the depth of hypocrisy involved in the claim to be fighting for the 'rights of small nations' was revealed over Ireland. The Easter Rising of 1916 failed. Its leaders included not only nationalists like Pearse, Clarke and MacDonagh but

Ireland's most famous socialist, James Connolly. After some brief hesitation the British Government had the captured leaders shot. Not only did Henderson do nothing to save them but he was reported to have joined in the cheering of the rabble in the House of Commons when their execution was announced. The Daily Herald closer to MacDonald and the pacifists sanctimoniously editorialised "No lover of peace can do any thing but deplore the outbreak in Dublin."

In less than a year the disintegrating nature of the war became obvious in a yet greater "outbreak" - the February 1917 revolution in Russia. To the war weary troops and workers of the belligerent countries it seemed a beacon of hope. As the going got tougher for the warmonger politicians like Lloyd George their reliance on their 'labour lieutenants' grew greater. When Lloyd George ousted Asquith and went for total victory he bought Henderson into the inner five-man war Cabinet itself.

FABIANISM

The needs of all-out production for total victory forced the ruling class into far reaching state intervention and control-measures it would never have contemplated in peace-time. War munitions factories were "controlled" by the state. Planning on a vast scale took place with the big industrialists brought into the Whitehall Ministries-as were in a junior capacity many trade union leaders. The mines and the railways were temporarily taken over by the state. The sight of all this state intervention and their own involvement in it, filled the Fabians with enthusiasm and opened the eyes of the trade union bureaucracy to the virtues of "social ownership."

The Webbs, who could never distinguish between the capitalist state and a workers state, regarded it as all good "collectivism" that simply had to be built on after the war. They could not see that these interventions were state capitalist, not socialist ones although the astronomic war profiteering should have indicated that here were no anti-capitalist measures. Moreover they could, and indeed would, be speedily reversed once the war was over. The Webbs, from their positions on the various war committees proceeded to draft a series of projects continuing and extending the war time controls, adding a few of their favourite social reforms. Thus the old laissez-faire liberalism whose influence had been strong amongst the pre-war trade union leaders, declined dramatically during the war and opened the road to Fabianism.

But a more radical shift "from below" was needed to transform Labour into a "socialist" party ie a pseudo socialist party. In February 1917 Russia erupted in Revolution and soon its influence was felt in the British Labour Movement. Russia was covered by a network of soldiers and peasants councils - soviets. Dominated as yet by reformist Mensheviks these bodies were not seen as organs of insurrection or working class power. But they did suggest a means of putting enormous organized working class pressure on their govern-



Arthur Henderson - hated revolution

but learnt from it.



Daily Herald Cartoon 26th June 1915. Its caption reads "Trade Unionist who has discarded what protects him that he may protect our soldiers better "Remember John you will have won no victory if at

the end that shield is not returned intact to me"

Thus the Daily Herald pathetically pleads to John Bull that giving up trade union rights shall be for the duration only.

ment and even bringing an end to the war. On the initiative of the Daily Herald a huge unofficial conference was held in Leeds on June 3rd 1917. The delegates were largely militant anti-war socialists and revolutionary shop stewards. The conference witnessed the curious spectacle of Ramsay MacDonald hailing the Russian soviets! The Conference called for the formation of local workers and soldiers councils throughout the country.

In fact it was, indirectly the Russian soviets that drove Henderson, though not Labour, out of coalition. The Congress of Soviets called for a Socialist Congress in Stockholm to consist of neutral and belligerent 'socialists' to press for an negotiated end to the war. The Labour Party and behind the scenes Lloyd George, despatched Arthur Henderson to Russia to investigate and to help prevent the Russians from making a separate peace.

In Russia 'Uncle Arthur' came face to face with a revolution and heartily detested it. He exclaimed on his return: "The men are not content with asking for reasonable advances. Their demands are so extravagant that it is obvious they are prompted not so much with a desire for economic improvement as to secure a complete change in the control of industry." And that Henderson would not hear of. Why they even wanted "supreme control in the hands of workers themselves." The result of this would be "disaster to the whole concern." He did become convinced of two things. One was that an international 'socialist' conference was needed to keep Russia in the war and to bolster the flagging prestige of the reformist socialists in Russia. The other a longer term question, was that the Labour Party needed a thorough organizational and ideological overhaul if it was to do better than the Mensheviks against its own Bolsheviks, the shop stewards and the hard anti-war socialists like John Maclean. Lloyd George, after some typical duplicity, refused to allow a Labour delegation to go to the Stockholm Conference and Henderson resigned from the Cabinet. Now, combining with the Webbs, Henderson set about reorganising the party. In September he persuaded the national executive to undertake: "the reorganization of the party with a view to a wider extension of membership, the strengthening and development of local parties in the constituencies....and the suggestion that a party constitution be adopted."

By October the outlines of the new constitution were clear-individual membership, not hitherto possible except via the ILP or the British Socialist Party was to be introduced. Thus these dangerously radical organizations with their own conferences and policies could be swamped or disciplined. The election of the national executive was henceforth to be by a conference dominated by the block vote of the unions-ie by the top union bureaucrats-and finally a reformist 'socialist' objective was needed to help outflank the more radical socialists and syndicalists who hitherto had had a monopoly of socialist ideology.

In the midst of this process the news of the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks provided an added spur to Henderson and Webbs' reforms of

the old purely federal ie 'non-socialist' party. These proposals were considered at two conferences - in Nottingham in January 1918 and February. Thus the Labour Party adopted the famous clause 4: "To secure for the producers by hand and by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service."

Alongside this clause went Sidney Webb's programme for post-war reconstruction "Labour and the New Social Order." Obviously a profound change had come over the old trade union parliamentary pressure group which had existed up to that point. The war had dispelled many naive illusions. It had brought Labour into government albeit in a junior role. It had tested and found abundantly present the patriotism of the parliamentary leaders. That is to say it proved that in a conflict between the interests both historic and international but also immediate and material, of the workers and the needs of Imperialist Capitalism, Labour could equivocally side with the "class enemy." The 'innocent' muddle headed opportunism symbolised before 1914 by Keir Hardie was definitely replaced by the cynical chauvinism of an Arthur Henderson and the hypocritical semi-pacifism of a MacDonald. On the surface Labour became 'more socialist' after 1918. In fact this was an adjustment made necessary by the leftward move of the British working class - a weapon against Bolshevism and a disguise of the party's deep, fundamental commitment to "its own" ruling class.

REFORMISM

Lenin was later to sum up the Labour Party's nature quite crisply. Criticising as mistaken those British socialists who called the Labour Party "the political organization of the trade union movement" or its "political expression" he went on: "Of course for the most part the Labour Party consists of workers, but it does not logically follow from this that every workers' party which consists of workers is at the same time a "political workers party"; that depends upon who leads it, upon the content of its activities and of its political tactics. Only the latter determines whether it is a political proletarian party. From this point of view, which is the only correct point of view, the Labour Party is not a political workers party but a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although it consists of workers, it is led by reactionaries and the worst reactionaries at that, who lead it in the spirit the bourgeoisie."

In the years 1914-1918 the Labour Party had become definitively what it remains today, a bourgeois workers party.

SCARGILL'S POLITICS

ARTHUR SCARGILL is unique amongst British trade union leaders. He is worshipped by his militant rank and file and loathed by the ruling class and its press. No other union leader is as capable of militant, class struggle rhetoric as Scargill. No other leaders would have led a charge on the police lines at Orgreave.

Despite these qualities Scargill has been unable as yet to lead the NUM to a decisive victory in the 1984-5 strike. The battle is far from over but if victory is won it will be in spite of Arthur's leadership rather than because of it. Why is this? The truth is that while Scargill's reputation and verbal militancy are unique, the politics that guide his actions are not.

Scargill's politics can be best described as militant but bureaucratic trade unionism. He fervently believes in the need to fight capitalism and the bosses. His weapons in this fight are the trade unions as they exist today - with all their bureaucratic paraphernalia.

In all the trade unions - including the NUM - there is a distinct layer of officials with their own power, privileges and interests. Their function is to bargain between the bosses and the members. Numerous mechanisms ensure that they cannot be held directly accountable to the rank and file. Under the new rules NUM officials are appointed for five years and not recallable. Those already in place have their positions for life.

It is this official machine that Scargill tries to mobilise for purely trade union ends such as higher wages, defence of jobs and so on. He believes that by participating in struggles set in motion by the trade union machine his members will come to see the need for the abolition of capitalism. The end result will be to produce a radicalised Labour Government which will legislate capitalism out of existence through Parliament.

This strategy is seriously flawed. It cannot bring about the change that Scargill hopes for. It cannot even win the solidarity action from the bureaucratically controlled unions, that is necessary to win the present strike. The bureaucratic element of Scargill's politics leads him to place pacts with his fellow leaders above the need to appeal over their heads to the rank and file directly.

These politics are the traditional ones of the Broad Left - the left Labour and Communist Party alliance that dominates the NUM and exists in many other unions. A new book by Michael Crick *Scargill and the Miners* (Penguin 1985 £2.50) sheds some light on how Scargill came to these politics. It also shows how Scargill's personal qualities led him to present these politics in a distinctively militant way. However Crick cannot distinguish the form from the content. Nor indeed can he really understand or explain either. His conclusion is that: "It is impossible to attach any political label to him...Perhaps the best description of him is simply that he is a Scargillite."

A close examination of Scargill's career and the



political background he emerged from exposes the shallowness of this conclusion. Crick's biography does explain the circumstances that turned Scargill into a tough and determined trade unionist. His struggle to even participate in the union was an uphill one.

Scargill's determination was in evidence in his early years as a union activist when as an 18 year old leader of the apprentices he fought hard. His hatred of feather-nesting in the trade unions and of rightwing Labourism was instilled in him early. He was barred from union branch meetings for speaking his mind, expelled from the NUM by his local branch officials and put on awful shift hours at the behest of his union branch. One of Scargill's first strikes was against his union branch in order to change branch meeting times to encourage the participation of the young miners.

Scargill's apprenticeship in fighting the right and becoming a militant did not, however, take place in a political vacuum. His militancy and recognition of the need to win the rank and file to struggle intersected with the developing Broad Left in Yorkshire. This has proved to be the enduring legacy of Stalinism - the politics of the Communist Party - in Scargill's politics.

Crick's book reveals the many layers at which British Stalinism exercises its political influence over King Arthur. At a basic and familial level, his father, now 80, a life long CP member and

now living with his son, is an informal but influential source of ideas. Scargill admits that his father shaped his views on Poland.

Then there was the matter of his seven years membership of the CPs youth organisation, the YCL beginning in March 1955. Within the year he was Barnsley YCL secretary and on the National Committee. Ironically, he had twice tried to join the Labour Party but in its political and organisational decrepitude they had failed to reply to him.

Although equally reformist, the CPGB gave Scargill what he would not have got in the Labour Party; namely a rigorous political education and ideological certainty. This indebtedness to Stalinism has remained with him even after his formal break with the YCL in 1962. (He was never a CP member).

During his industrial relations course at Leeds University between 1960-63 he met and was influenced by Stalinist academics like Vic Allen who later in the 1960s helped in the drafting of leaflets and pamphlets of the Yorkshire left in the NUM. Right up to the present day Scargill has been surrounded by Stalinist advisors such as Peggy Kahn (research), Neil Myers (personal assistant and press officer) and Maurice Jones (editor of *The Miner*).

Crick's book is not very helpful on the rise of the Yorkshire left. A much better source of information is Andrew Taylor's book *The Politics of the Yorkshire Miners* (Croom Helm 1984). Where Crick puts all things down to the arrival in Yorkshire in 1953 of Stalinist full-timer Frank Watters, Taylor explains the history of the left since the war. From nationalisation (1947) there was an organised left in the Yorkshire Area which was a thorn in the side of the Area's right-wing leadership. As early as 1948 the then Rotherham Panel held unofficial meetings to plan a campaign against pay controls and the leaders of the Doncaster Panel were threatened with expulsion.

These threats were repeated in 1951. The rank and file were in revolt against wage controls and productivity increases justified by their leaders because a Labour Government was in power and the mines were "socially owned."

GROWTH

Isolated in many unions because of the anti-communist atmosphere of the cold war, the CPGB saw the potential for growth in the Yorkshire NUM. They hoped to use it as a base to reinsert themselves into higher echelons of the trade union movement. The strategic importance of Yorkshire led them to invest in a full-timer for the coalfield, Watters. He organised backup for CP miners such as Jock Kane and Sammy Taylor. Kane in particular played a pivotal role through the Doncaster Panel in the construction of the left in the Yorkshire Area.

As early as 1955 (and again in 1961 and 1969) Kane and the Doncaster Panel of which he was the chairman, led the unofficial revolt against the NCB and the Yorks NUM. In May 1955 the Panel brought out 44,000 miners unofficially in support of strikers at Armthorpe through the use of flying pickets.

Throughout these years there was enormous scope for a genuine rank and file organisation to be built. It had the potential to thoroughly democratise the NUM and transform it from top to bottom into a class struggle union able to fight the decimation of the industry. In the mid 1950s the NUM accounted for over 3/4 of all recorded British strikes! Yorkshire alone accounted for 46% of all days lost by the NCB, yet it only employed 20% of the miners. Sitting on top of this militancy and desperately trying to contain it was an extremely right-wing area leadership around Joe Hall, Sid Schofield and Sam Bullough.

Yet a genuine mass, pit-based rank and file group was not built. The attempt was not even made. As Watters said the aim was to get "our best cadres as delegates to the Council". An original member of this Broad Left grouping - Don Baines - put it even more succinctly: "The main thing was to get people elected to vacancies in the area where they could exert influence. Policies were secondary at that stage."

The entire strategy of the Broad Left was electoral. The rank and file revolts were channelled into a campaign to capture the area machine not transform it. The left leaders wanted to be the bureaucrats.

Jock Kane and Sammy Taylor were the first successes. The conservative and self-limiting nature of the CP "broad left" strategy is well illustrated by Kane's remarks quoted in Taylor's book. He strenuously denied that in the unofficial actions of the 1950s and 60s the left were seeking to challenge the existing control and structure of the NUM. During a 1961 unofficial strike Kane stated: "There has never been any intention to negotiate through any other channel than the legitimate one. We are not seeking to start a war inside the union."

By the mid-1960s the CP had refined its broad left strategy. The witch-hunt atmosphere of the 1950s had to a large extent receded and sections of the Labour Left were prepared to organise against the right in the unions. In the NUM non-CP miners were drawn into the left caucus. Arthur Scargill was one of them, joining the caucus around 1965.

The Yorkshire left was politically *exclusive*. It had no project for involving as many of the rank and file as possible. It openly vetted potential members in a way that went beyond the requirements of security.

When Scargill joined and became Secretary of the more public Barnsley Miners' Forum in 1967, he did not try to change the orientation of the group. In 1968 the main concern was to gather votes in the Yorkshire coalfield for Lawrence Daly, the left's candidate for NUM General Secretary.

After that the majority of time was spent co-ordinating who was going to move which resolutions in which area to make maximum impact upon Conference.

While Scargill was concerned to build up a network of militants across and between coalfields to fight the right-wing he was doing so in order to capture existing branch/NUM structures.

All that was seen as being wrong with them was that they were in the wrong hands. He heeded Watters' advice that the key was not organising your own rank and file but rather getting yourself known as an electoral commodity. Watters recalls: "I told Arthur there wasn't much point in being king of your own men. You will only get known throughout the coalfield by your contributions as a delegate in the Area Council."

MACHINERY

Known, that is, to other delegates. The extent to which Scargill refused to build a base in his own pit to fight the right was revealed after he became the delegate: "I came to an amicable understanding with them (the right-wing-WP). I went along with the majority decisions at the pit, and they were content to let me speak for them on area council."

His eyes were firmly set on the area union machine.

The belief that the NUM as it exists is sufficient is the key to understanding Scargill's bureaucratism. By capturing the machine first the left would set about changing policies and, if necessary, command a hopefully obedient membership to fight for those policies. The membership exist really as electoral fodder at worst, or a union-loyal army at best. Never are they so organised as to hold officials to account and able to control decision taking through mass meetings, in this scheme of things. Scargill was quite candid about this in an interview he gave to *New Left Review* in the mid 1970s. Seeing the apparatus, not the membership as the decisive factor he stated: "No-one will deny that, whether it be a right-wing union or a left-wing union, the fact that you're able to channel out information, ideas, propaganda, is of immense benefit to the membership or of immense harm to the membership."

The revolutionary draws the conclusion - then the membership must control the apparatus. Not so Scargill. Capture it and then command: "If we gave an instruction to come out on strike tomorrow, they would come out. There would be no argument, they would come out on strike. They may well ask a question afterwards: 'Well what's this all about?' But they would trust their union leadership sufficiently to say 'All right, if they say we have to come out, then the reasons must be good enough for us to come out.'"

This approach to the membership is not only arrogant and bureaucratic. It is downright dangerous. It is nonsensical to believe that union loyalty alone can overcome the doubts that many workers are riven with in the crisis torn 70s and 80s. Only workers' democracy, enabling the clear expression of socialist politics and answers to these problems' can overcome these doubts and win the bulk of the members to the need for action.

Keresley class war prisoners

ON JANUARY 29th 4 striking miners from Coventry Colliery and the ex-miner brother of one of them, were convicted on an affray charge. They are now in Winson Green Prison serving 6 weeks of a suspended 8 month sentence. The brother of the strike committee chairman is serving 6 months as he had a previous conviction. They were told almost immediately that the NCB has sacked them "for causing an affray outside a working miners home." There are now 11 sacked militants at Coventry Colliery. Clive Ham was sacked months ago before his case even came to court. When he was arrested his 18 month old baby was taken to jail with him! He was eventually acquitted by the jury but the NCB refuses to let him have his job back!

The latest convictions arose from an incident last June when police raided a party at Colin Ward's house. The scab living next door called the cops and the party was raided. The "crime" of these lads was to defend themselves against the brutality that followed. The police waded in and Dennis Evans was hospitalised with a suspected broken neck after the police repeatedly banged his head on the bonnet of a car. He wore a surgical collar for weeks afterwards.

Judge Blennerhasset said the men were "decent men" who had acted "out of character" because of the strike. But he said that the police "have an extraordinarily difficult task to perform...and have to be protected." And just who have the police been protecting in this strike? Coventry miners and their families know it's not them!

It doesn't matter how "decent" you are; if you are a strike militant you will be sent down in the hope that the most active members of the strike will be put out of action. Nev Bell, one of the prisoners, has saved numerous lives as a St. John's ambulance man and a mines rescue worker but no, the police are more socially useful than him! Nev's wife has now given up her job as barmaid at the colliery club as she cannot stomach serving scabs.

It's a terrible blow to the Midlands strikers, as Nev Bell and Colin Ward are very active in the "Midlands Minority" rank and file movement,

which hopes also to reach out to rank and file militants in the majority NUM areas. Coventry Colliery has been crucial in linking up with the railmen at Coalville and Saltley as well. Obviously one of the reasons the police wanted their conviction was to put them out of action. When they thought the previous GBH charges would not stick, they came up with the new affray charge the week before the trial started - half a year later!

We owe it to all the militants now sacked and in jail, to mobilise labour movement support so that they get their jobs back, at the very least. Their families and the rest of the Coventry strikers are right behind them, and the Coventry Colliery strikers voted months ago not to return to work until all sacked militants were re-instated. Other branches should do the same. Unfortunately some have caved in since then and gone back, discouraged by the isolation of the NUM. Of course this is not just a problem for Coventry: militants all over the country have the same fight. The only way we can really help all these prisoners is to make sure the strike wins! In all areas we should campaign on behalf of victimised militants in order to get massive strike action in support of the NUM. We cannot stand by and let the best fighters be thrown out of work and out of a union where they can do so much good for the whole of the working class.

Messages of support to:
Colin Ward C54234
Nev Bell C54233
Dennis Evans C54230
Bill Jackson C54231
Les Ward C54232

H.M. Prison Winson Green Rd,
Winson Green Birmingham

Donations to: Baz Hindson,
98 Exhall Rd.,
Keresley,
Warwickshire.

WELSH POPULAR FRONT

fig-leaf for surrender



MacGahey, Williams and Scargill

AFTER NEARLY A year, resistance in the South Wales coalfield to Thatcher's 'Plan for Dole not Coal' is as solid as ever. The NCB's carrots and sticks have persuaded less than 2% of the area's miners to break the strike. The South Wales miners have once again lived up to their militant reputation.

Yet, despite the bitter determination of the area's 20,000 miners and the support that exists for them amongst the rest of the region's working class, there is little cause for complacency. Those who exercise leadership over the South Wales coalfield have proved themselves in the course of the 84-85 strike to be incapable of advancing a strategy to defend the remaining 28 pits from the NCB's hatchet men.

It is the South Welsh leadership - more than any other - that has clutched at the straw of the Church Peace Plan and tried to persuade the national executive to embrace it as an honourable settlement. Even if the bosses had accepted the deal it would still have meant the NUM selling the miners down the river.

It was little different from the NACODS deal: it merely requested a moratorium on pit closures while an "independent" inquiry was conducted into the coal industry. Yet Emylyn Williams heaped ecstatic praise on it: "I commend the initiative of the Church. I've read their formula...I believe they are genuine honest people and I think their suggestions will be heard by the people who count in Westminster." *Western Mail*, 24.1.85

Emlyn Williams might not know it but the only people who count in Westminster are the Tories. The Church Plan received a predictable and brutal reply from Peter Walker and a Government hell-bent on destroying the NUM: "The idea that there is a group of independent men with divine wisdom who can produce some totally acceptable viewpoint on every aspect of energy is nonsense." Quite.

This was not the first time the South Wales NUM has sounded the retreat. Aside from treating with clerics, Emylyn Williams has spent much effort protecting his "national" steelworks. Like MacGahey in Scotland, Williams struck a deal with the regional ISTC whereby coal and oil was allowed to flow unchecked into Llanwern and Port Talbot. After early fighting at Port Talbot the South Welsh executive reached agreement with the police to limit picket numbers down to six per gate. To Scargill's request for the resumption of mass picketing at the South Wales steel plants, Williams blustered "I run South Wales and no-one else." Rank and file miners might not wish to thank Baron Williams for this. Steel production actually increased in Wales during 1984.

MASS ACTION

Baron Williams' attitude to mass picketing at the South Wales steel works was not a quirk of his personality. There has been a marked reluctance on the part of the majority of the SWNUM leadership to engage in such activities. In fact, the SWNUM research officer and Area spokesperson, Dr. Kim Howells, brazenly admits that mass picketing is an outmoded tactic and that we "have got to look at our tactics anew. Now I think it is down to making alliances before you ever go into a dispute." (*Daily Telegraph* 21.1.85). Incredibly, Dr. Death-to-the-mass-picket-Howells was the picketing organiser for the SWNUM. It is beyond the ken of Dr. Howells that mass pickets properly organised and defended can do their job.

The ailing Communist Party has played a major role in this history of misleadership. While nationally the CP has one foot in the grave, it still retains considerable influence in the South Wales coalfield, particularly in its old bastion around the Rhondda.

While the days when the CP used to absolutely dominate the Area leadership are gone (both Communist National NUM presidents, Horner and

Paynter came up through the SWMF) much of today's leadership, including the President Emylyn Williams, was trained in the Stalinist school.

The Communist Party has set itself implacably against a policy of winning industrial solidarity action and mass picketing. Instead they set their sights on creating a Welsh Popular Front. This is the kind of alliance that Howells wished he'd made before going into the dispute.

The CP is the driving force behind the grandly named "Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities". One of its chief architects is Hywel Francis who chairs the Welsh CPs energy and mining advisory committee. In the most recent copy of *Marxism Today* he commends the tactics adopted by the Congress to mobilise public opinion as an alternative to old-fashioned industrial militancy.

He describes how the Congress grew out of an alliance of - among others - farmers, teachers, Welsh language activists, poets, folk singers, communists, members of Plaid Cymru and the Labour Party as well as ministers of religion. This alliance originally concocted on the Eisteddfod's field, combined with "a myriad of other new alliances" to form the Congress.

The Congress is deliberately counterposed to what Hywel Francis snootily dismisses as "old fashioned trade union solidarity". Taking Llanwern's lack of support as his cue Francis hails this "popular front" as an alternative to "a 'syndicalist' strategy of industrial confrontation and regular sectional calls for a general strike and mass picketing to resolve the situation." He revels in the failures of the Trade Union movement in order to push the ever newer and ever larger alliances the author sees the Welsh Congress blazing the trails for: "Fortunately the miners' strike has been far more than that (Industrial confrontation etc -WP) it had to be because of the inadequacy of the Triple Alliance and the ineffectiveness of the TUC in enforcing Congress decisions."



The Welsh Congress: Born on the Eisteddfod's field

What exactly is this something "more" that the CP is after? It is a broad alliance that ties together the CP and the NUM via Plaid and the Labour Party with ministers of religion in order to mobilise Welsh "public opinion" behind the miners. Francis dismisses the industrial militancy of 72 and 74 as the real causes of the miners' victory then: "Even though the two strikes of 1972 and 1974 were of relatively short duration, the victories were not achieved by industrial action and industrial solidarity alone. Despite power cuts, the miners won broad public support which ultimately led to the fall of the Heath Government."

This is rubbish. It was mass picketing and mass solidarity action that brought Heath to his knees. For Howells and Francis the miners must trim their tactics so as to win public opinion to their side. That is the logic they have won the

Scargill's commitment to lead in struggle will eventually count for nothing without workers' democracy.

Indeed, when the membership, or part of them, do not respond to the command Scargill has no answer. This has happened in the present strike. The fact that the union was split from the start is partly because of the absence of rank and file democracy which, alongside picketing could have won the political arguments with the now hardened scabs. A tradition of mass pit-head meetings with voting rights could have been the positive alternative to a national ballot. Instead Scargill too readily retreated into the union machine content to use the constitution to call the strike on. It made him blind to the real political weaknesses within his own union.

Again the absence of real rank and file organisation has prevented the strikers taking the strike forward, out of its isolation.

This isolation is mainly a function of the conscious sabotage of the TUC and LP leaders. But this could have been and can still be overcome by the massed ranks of the NUM going out directly to other workers with the arguments for strike action. Scargill's broad left bureaucratism has crippled him. His whole political outlook forces him to do things by the book, always through and never around the official trade union leaders.

Where Arthur Scargill differs from most union leaders, is that he is not afraid to use militant tactics to achieve his aims. In 1969 and 1970 he played a major role in the unofficial strikes that led many miners to feel renewed confidence in their fighting strength. In 1972 he placed himself at the forefront of the historic picket at Saltley. He was arrested at the mass picket of Grunwicks in 1977. Most recently he was present at the battle of Orgreave. Not many Broad Left union leaders have a record like this. Yet again, however, the militant gestures do not display a break with Broad Left politics.

Scargill's militancy stems from two sources. First, and most decisive, is that it is a reflection of the militancy of the miners themselves. Their struggles in the early 1970s ended in victory. The victories were associated with militancy. Scargill was an authentic representative of that militancy. The second source of Scargill's militancy, however, comes from his belief that it can transform people's ideas. Struggle, so long as it is controlled by him and people like him, can radicalise people.

STRUGGLE

Scargill is right in one sense. Thousands of miners have been and are being radicalised in struggle. However his politics restrict the scope of the struggle and therefore the extent of the radicalisation. His politics are limited to the goals of trade unionism - decent conditions and wages within capitalism. He has no conception whatsoever of how to link the wages/economic struggle with the political struggle. Indeed he hands over responsibility for "politics" to Tony Benn.

The end result of this strategy is to continually postpone the struggle for socialism. Instead you promote the sectional struggle of your union. In the *New Left Review* interview he explained: "Our priorities, in my opinion lie in winning for our membership and maintaining for our membership the best wages and conditions possible. Once you have that foundation, you can then start to develop into other spheres."

The problem is that the minute you fight on wages and conditions during a period of capitalist crisis like today you are immediately confronted with other spheres. In trade union terms the cost of the miners' strike should by now have assured its victory. It has not, because the Tories are making a political stand. Unless we confront that fact, explain to our members and appeal to the rest of the working class on the basis of it, then we will remain isolated. Indeed in essence it is the failure to fully politicise this strike on our part that has kept us isolated.

So militancy is not enough. Sticking to trade union principles is not enough. Scargill's politics are not enough. They limit today's struggle to one within capitalism and are incapable of developing a perspective of struggle against capitalism. In a nutshell this is the fundamental weakness of trade unionism.

Scargill's own belief that trade unionism is sufficient has led him to make two errors. First he rejects the need for political organisation other than the Labour Party. He believes control of the unions by the left will then, in his words, "change the Labour Party." Secondly he thinks that bureaucratic control of the NUM is enough to advance his members' interests. He rejects both the need for a revolutionary party and the need for a rank and file movement to democratise and transform the NUM. It is on these vital questions that we differ with Arthur Scargill and many of the best militants of the NUM. We refuse to hide this difference. We think it could well decide the outcome of the strike. So when militants say to us that he is the best leader the NUM has had, we reply maybe so, but not good enough.

by Keith Hassell and Mark Hoskisson

majority of the South Welsh executive to.

The two main aims of the Congress are:
1) To oppose the present 1984 National Coal Board closure programme so as to defend Welsh Mining communities.

2) To co-ordinate and increase the fund raising throughout Wales and beyond...
(Wales Congress conference leaflet 20.10.84)

In essence, support for the miners is to be limited to finance only. Although this is manifestly inadequate, anything else, such as campaigning for industrial action alongside the miners would scare off the CP's friends in the church. So the "marxist" CP cuts its cloth to suit the prejudices of the guilt ridden clerics of the bourgeoisie.

In return for respectability and a dog-collar on the platform, the CP limits the activities of its members to fund raising. Worse still, by example it suggests to those militants who support the miners, that giving money is enough to help win the strike.

The involvement of Plaid Cymru gives the Congress an added refinement. According to the above aims, the Congress seeks to defend *Welsh mining communities*" (emphasis added-WP). Similarly the Congress is preparing leaflets arguing the case for the "Welsh coal industry." (Sian Evans). In a peripheral coalfield, with its own particularly strong traditions, these nationalist sentiments find a ready ear. But Plaid Cymru's petty bourgeois nationalism, in promoting an exclusively Welsh solution, cuts off the Welsh miners from their natural allies - the working class in the rest of Britain. Thus the programmes of Plaid Cymru and the CP overlap: both fete the unity of the Welsh people - despite the fact that these "people" are split into two antagonistic and irreconcilable classes.

The Popular Front Congress ties the miners to "unity" with the so-called democratic or left wing of the bourgeoisie (Plaid Cymru, the Church etc). As in all such alliances it will be the miners who have to limit their demands and actions so as not to upset the "new alliances"

NO ABERRATION

The Congress is not some "Eurocommunist aberration." It is entirely of a piece with the CPs "Popular Fronts" of the 30s and 40s. Francis has spent much of his life demonstrating and praising the deep traditions of Popular Frontism within the South Welsh coalfields. It bore bitter fruit in the Second World War for example. CP leader Arthur Horner and the South Wales Miners leadership accepted that a "popular front" with the British bosses against German fascism meant they should cease to defend their members' immediate interests against the coal owners. They actively campaigned to stop an unofficial strike wave against the Porter award in 1944 which spread to 175 pits and 90,000 men in the South Welsh coalfield alone. His Majesty's Communist Party viciously attacked the Trotskyists who openly sided with the strikers as "traitors": "They are a greater menace and far more dangerous than a fascist paratrooper." (West Wales CP pamphlet: *Trounce the Trotskyists*). In the name of "new alliances" the Welsh CP are treading an old and well worn path.

Francis openly boasts that there is no friction within the Congress. "Its steering committee embraces all these organisations and meets weekly to discuss strategy. As yet there are remarkably few differences over tactics or politics."

More's the pity. South Welsh miners must disagree with and organise against the tactics of their leaders and their allies.

Williams and Co. have conspicuously failed to provide the leadership necessary to take the strike forward in South Wales. Instead of organising mass pickets of strategic points, and campaigning for solidarity action among local militants, the Area Executive have struck useless deals with fellow bureaucrats and prayed for divine intervention.

Rank and file involvement in the strike has been kept to a minimum. In the most solid coalfield in Britain only 1,000-1,500 of the area's miners are actively involved in the strike. Williams' bureaucratic bluster that "I run South Wales" was more than a warning to Scargill to keep out. It was also a warning to the South Wales rank and file to leave the running of the dispute in the hands of the officials. This is a recipe for disaster.

The South Wales leaders have shown they are looking for peace with honour from Thatcher and the NCB. Their clerical friends and Welsh opinion will not make her budge. Either the South Wales leaders will buckle or rank and file miners will have to change the course of the dispute.

In order to prevent a sell-out the South Wales rank and file have to organise themselves. In the past the historic "Left" leadership of the SWNUM has made rank and file organisation seem unnecessary to many.

But the present strike has shown that rank and file miners in South Wales can have no trust in their "Left" leadership and that it must be brought to account. Militant miners from all over the South Wales coalfield are beginning to do just that. They need the backing of militant miners everywhere.

by Jan Lewis

NCOs for the bureaucrats

The refrain that it is impossible to win strike action by workers in support of the miners is common in every support committee in the country. It is repeated by the loyal NCO's of the trade union bureaucrat the misnamed Communist Party of Great Britain. Both factions - the wretched Fabians who call themselves Eurocommunists and the junior trade union apparatchiks who run the *Morning Star* are bitter foes of any serious attempt to bring the decisive forces of the labour movement into the battle.

The Euros have no faith in the strength of the working class. They hardly believe in its existence except as a quaint historic relic to be included as a subordinate partner in a broad alliance of new social forces (like the church) and minorities.

The misnamed 'hardliners' around the *Morning Star* have little faith in the fighting powers of the working class either. Worm eaten by decades of belief that the decisive force for socialism was the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy of the USSR they have long settle down to the role of protecting the 'progressive' and 'left' wing of the trade union bureaucracy. Sometimes they protect it against the right-wing, shamelessly pro-capitalist union leaders. Often they protect it against the cruel exposure that major class battles subject the

likes of Todd, Knapp and Buckton to.

In both cases though they have a deep hostility to workers democracy. Their alibi is often the alleged "backwardness" of the membership. Of course the rank and file members often are backward. The task of real communists is to educate them, to agitate for struggle and to organise for it. Workers democracy is a tremendous weapon for overcoming backwardness. It has a price - answerability, responsibility and accountability. And this all bureaucrats and aspiring bureaucrats cannot abide.

The chosen instrument of the Stalinists in the unions for 'general questions' which go beyond the vote catching and office winning Broad Left machines has been the LCDTU, Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. This body did sometimes mobilise for struggle in the famous 'Kill the Bill' period of the early 1970s. Since 1974 however it has been a demobiliser.

The LCDTU has actually met - once on January 17th in the miners strike. The existence of the conference was kept a virtual secret to non-party members until the New Year. Its delegates were carefully vetted to prevent a repetition of the 1980 conference when Party hacks were outnumbered by militants from other left organisations like the SWP. No resolutions were taken. The statement issued and (sur-

prise, surprise) adopted unanimously could have been written on day one of the miners strike. Beyond the call to implement the blacking of all fuel it says nothing. It offers no way whatsoever of breaking the isolation the miners face. It does not even address the problem.

Under pressure from the Mine-workers Defence Committee the LCDTU agreed to support the February 11th day of action. But its agreement was half-hearted, at best. It is already trying to withdraw any commitment to strike action alongside the miners and divert attention to a Sunday carnival parade on February 24th!

The CP leaders have obviously got the thumbs down for strike action from the 'left' leaders of SOGAT, NUR, ASLEF as well as feeling the TUC's pressure on the regional TUCs. The CP fellow travelling bureaucrats and their closest supporters in the union branches trades councils and shop stewards committees do not wish to offend their influential friends amongst the union tops.

Rank and file miners, railway workers printers, dockers - including the honest and militant members of the Communist Party must throw off the paralysing influence of the whole gang of leaders and go all out to win mass industrial action alongside the miners.

WORKERS IN ACTION



FIGHT FORDS PLAN

Ford Europe are rationalising at the moment. They are planning to centralise their soft trim operations in order to reduce labour costs and at the same time ensure that soft trim components, like others, are dual sourced. Dual sourcing is used by management to break strikes at any one plant.

Fords did their sums before deciding where the cheapest redundancies could be made under the various statutory arrangements - Britain is cheaper than Europe. They have also based their plans on a careful measurement of where they are likely to meet the stiffest union resistance. An internal management document states that, "The sewing machinist group at Dagenham has a history of militant independence and has been prepared to take strike action."

So the plan is to threaten Dagenham with the movement of their operation to Berlin to bring them to heel.

If the plan goes ahead the management expect resistance to the placing of the women on shift-work at Dagenham. The idea is to freeze the women out altogether "...through a continuation of normal

attrition and selective early retirement action between now and 1979.... working more overtime and recruiting temporary labour would overcome minor production shortfalls in this period."

To dampen the chances of a fightback the bosses want to "demonstrate that the sourcing of work to Berlin, Cologne, Valencia and Dagenham has generated 'equal grief' at each location." Management are expecting strikes but after that hope to push through the new arrangements using selective early retirement and voluntary redundancy arrangements agreed by the union bureaucrats.

Most significant of all is the absence of any plan for continued soft-trim operations at Halewood. A fight against these plans must be launched now. Militants in every Ford plant must begin a campaign to defeat the rationalisation programme through strike action: They must counter the bosses' attempts to divide workers in Britain from those in Europe by building international rank and file links and co-ordinating international strike action.

Solidarity in France

FRENCH RANK AND file rail workers in Solleville, near Rouen (normandy) are mounting a determined campaign in support of the British miners.

In December 1984 they set up a local miners support committee on the railways. With the Rouen support committee, they have just organised a highly successful week long speaking tour involving two British miners, a miners wife from Bold Colliery Lancashire and a Nottingham railworker

The Sotterville public meeting on Tuesday 29th January attracted 180 workers (rail, car, post and other workers). Forty people attended a similar meeting on Friday night in the village of Bernay.

Members of the delegation also received a warm welcome from rail workers at workplace meetings. Eighty attended the one in the Quatremare depot, in spite of management banning

the entry of the miners. When the boss tried to stop the delegation entering the railmen came out and escorted their comrades safely inside. The delegation also addressed town council office workers and a meeting of 100 post office workers. They were also interviewed on TV and radio news programmes.

Debate at these meetings focused on current problems facing the strike and on how to step up solidarity efforts. Comrades from Pouvoir Ouvrier (the fraternal grouping in France of workers power) argued the importance of learning the lessons of the strike, in France and in particular the need for a united cross union rank and file solidarity campaign. At present it remains firmly in hands of competing union bureaucrats. PO also stressed the need for British miners and French workers to fight in the unions for a rank and file movement to transform them into

real combat organisations and foil bureaucratic attempts to sell-out.

The weeks visit allowed French and British workers to meet and discuss the issues raised by the strike. Financial support was not lacking either. The Lancashire miners went home with well over £2000.

One of them, Geoff, gave French workers this message "If we had received the same support from British union leaders as we have got you then we would have won this strike six months ago."

He also gave special thanks for support received from a group of exiled Chilean workers living in Rouen. Such international rank and file support is vital for the strike and cuts against attempts by the bosses to divide workers along nationalist lines. It provides the basis for an international working class onslaught against austerity and the system that creates it.

from page one

The future of the strike is down to the thousands of militants who have sacrificed all to win this dispute. They have been turned into a giant army of wandering collectors by their officials. They have seen the dispute wound down and ground to a halt by the leadership. They can see the alarm signals coming from the executive now. Last week's mass picket of Cortonwood - attended by miners from all over the country was a clear message from the militants that the leadership should brook no surrender on the initial demands of the struggle against pit closures. The burning task of the day is to turn these militants into a conscious and organised fighting force that can stop the rot and take the strike forward once again.

This means creating an organised movement of this Militant Minority of Miners. If it is to play an effective role in directing the course of the strike it cannot remain a loose network of militants in the 'minority' areas. It

must be organised in the areas where the members are most solid and the leaders most keen on a climbdown. Vitally this means organising in Yorkshire and South Wales in particular.

Militants in every pit must organise to force their strike committees to recommence weekly mass meetings of the strikers to involve and inform the members as well as planning and allocating the tasks. Involving the stay-at-homes in collections and logging is vital if we are to free the best militants for the task of spreading the strike.

They must organise to restart mass picketing at the pit gates to prove to the waverers and the broken men that the dispute is not over as far as the militants are concerned.

They must organise to commit their branch to resolutions reaffirming their determination to stop the closure of all pits except on the grounds of proven exhaustion. They must mandate their delegates now to accept no terms for a settlement that does not secure this condition. They must similarly commit their branches and delegates to stand by the victimised miners. A condition of any settlement must be that all sacked men are fully reinstated to their old jobs. Any other deal would condemn hundreds of the best militants to the blacklist and unemployment.

But it is not enough for militants to organise to change the direction in their own pits alone. That, still leaves the initiative in the hands of the area and national leadership. It leaves the future of the dispute with those who want to call it off.

Militants must organise across the pits and across the coalfields. They must build a movement that can prevent any attempt to surrender.

* They must stand by the militants of the minority areas. The NEC is set on peace with Chadburn, Toon and Jack Jones as long as they will stay with the

NUM. But these men have consciously sabotaged and betrayed the striking minorities. The striking minorities need the help of the strongest areas if they are not to be delivered back into the hands of scab picket busting officials. They must be expelled from the union and barred from membership for ever. So too must scab organisers like Lynk and Prendergast. A reconstituted union must be put into the hands of those

who have stood with the union through out the strike. When the strike is over the strikers through their local committees should be the ones who decide who can and cannot return to the union and on the conditions of any return. *They must hold the area officials and delegate recall conference to stand out for full victory against the Tories. Lobbies and demonstrations must be organised to press the point home. Branches must coordinate the passing of resolutions to area and national conference so as to force the question to an open debate and vote.

* More is needed than simply holding the line. The strike must be taken forward. Its isolation must be broken. A militant minority must wait no longer for the TUC or Arthur Scargill to deliver solidarity for them. They must get out to those workers who will be hit the hardest should the miners lose - railworkers, council workers, Austin Rover workers. They should go straight to the rank and file by all means possible. They should go direct to all those workers who take action on February 11th or regularly contribute to the collections. And the message they take should be simple and direct - "together we can beat off the Tory's planned attack on all of us. divided we will be powerless to defeat them There's no use waiting to fight your battles if we go down, now is the time to strike together."

STOP VICTIMISATIONS

The bosses at Austin Rover are pressing on with the victimisation drive that began under Michael Edwards. In the last couple of weeks two more militants have been sacked for their trade union activities.

At Cowley a deputy senior steward, Bob Cullen, was sacked for an alleged picket line incident - even though he has witnesses to prove he was picketing a different gate at the time.

He was sacked before Christmas but no action was taken because the appeals procedure had yet to be gone through. This delay proved fatal. Last week the trim shops, the section being called out in Bob's support, voted 70 to 50 against a strike and against a stewards' recommendation.

The management at Cowley are now pressing home their victory. With the workforce weakened after the sacking of a leading militant, the management are threatening to meet any further unofficial stoppages (of which there have been many at Cow-

ley) with further sackings.

Aggressive tactics have also been used in Rover Solihull. A militant Patrick Slaney, was given a 'preventative suspension' after issuing a leaflet in his own name. Significantly the leaflet called on carworkers to link up their own struggles with that of the miners. Brother Slaney himself had been campaigning against the use of scab coal in Austin Rover plants.

Despite support from a recent Miners Support delegate conference, action has not been called in Solihull. The appeals procedure will undoubtedly find against him too.

The less in from these and previous victimisations in the Combine is clear. Management's tactics are to isolate militants, trap them in appeals procedures and then sack them. To fight such victimisations there should be no waiting for appeal results. Any appeal should be backed up by immediate strike action as soon as there is a sacking. That is the best way to put a stop to the campaign of victimisation.

BLOODY SUNDAY BAN

Following on from David Blunkett's example set last year, Leicester's "socialist" Labour council last week banned the 1985 Bloody Sunday Commemoration march. In doing this the council has shown its total inability to stand up and fight.

Last year there was a sustained witch-hunt after the Harrods bomb. This year's anti march campaign consisted of counter demonstration threats by the National Front, British National Party and Conservative Students and a feeble campaign by the local rag, which had little support amongst local workers.

The forces opposing the march, knowing that their counter demos would be pitiful affairs, aimed to try and get a state ban on marches. The council dutifully obliged and the Labour group voted by an overwhelming majority to ban the march. The deputy leader of the Labour group, Graham Betts, gave as the excuse, "the extreme right were obviously out to cause trouble."

This is a bare-faced lie. The real reason for the ban is that the council does not want any bad publicity while conducting its so-called fight against rate-capping. So any rights

we have to demonstrate against the murder of Irish people by the British army, go out of the window if the Labour Council think it will lose them votes. Indeed, they are prepared to line up with the police, media and even the fascists in having the march banned.

This approach has only encouraged the fascists to crawl out of the gutter. The local BNP organiser gleefully announced that, "the ban is really a victory of the ordinary British people in Leicester."

Despite the ban a rally in fact went ahead with over 800 people. The rally was addressed by various Irish solidarity organisations and political groups including black organisations in Leicester who themselves are in conflict with the Council; and a miner from the "Dirty Thirty" Leicester striking miners. The rally was followed by a large picket of the goal, with participants marching from their coaches despite the Labour/po-lice ban.

The Leicester mobilising committee is asking all labour movement bodies to send resolutions condemning the ban and demanding the Labour council desist from banning future marches.

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