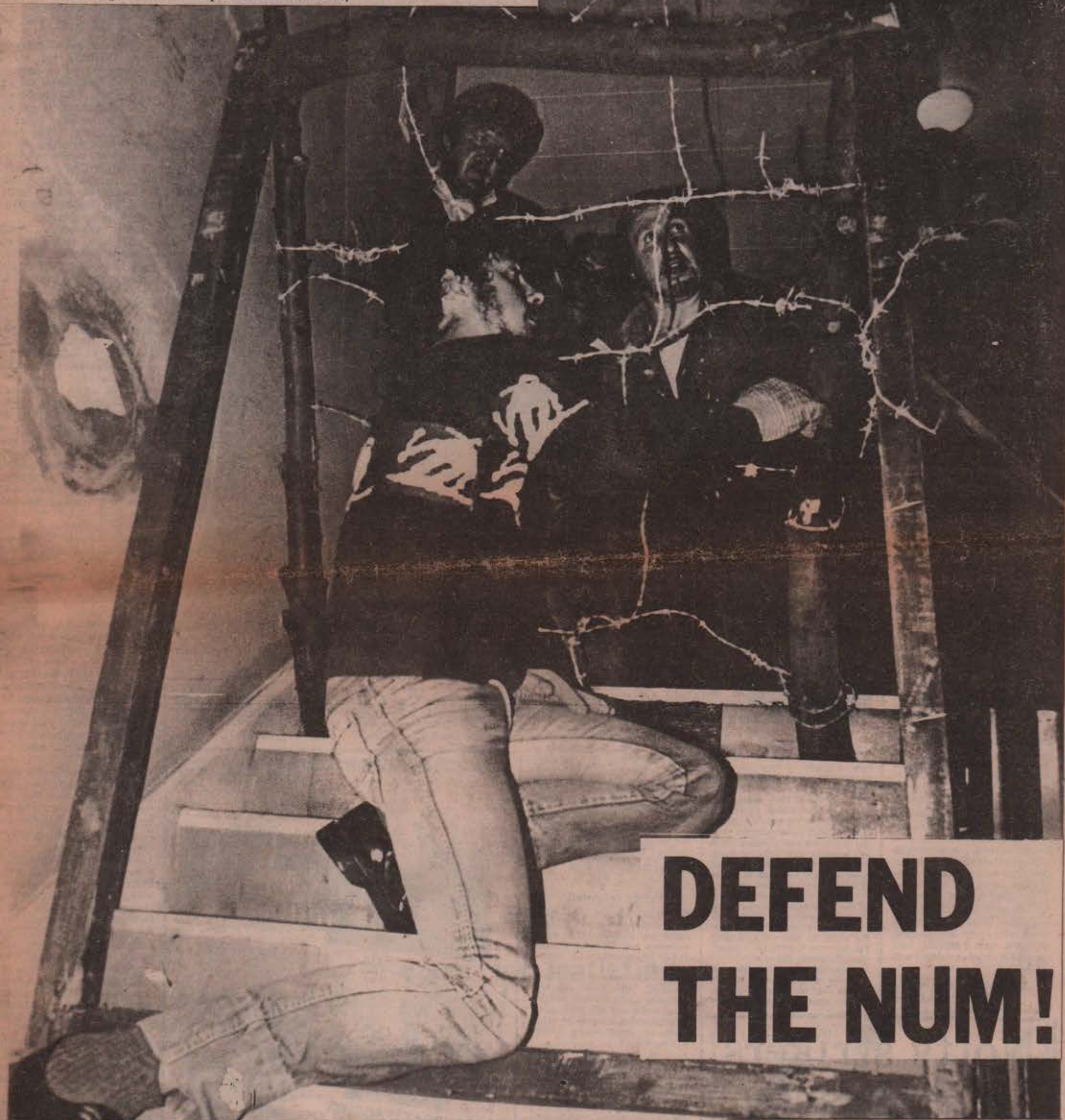


Socialist ORGANISER

No. 191. August 9 1984 25p Claimants and strikers 10p



**DEFEND
THE NUM!**

SMASH ANTI-UNION LAWS!



Back the miners

Remember Davy Jones

Dear Friends,

Since the loss of our son David Gareth on the picket line at Ollerton Colliery our lives have been filled with sadness and pain, and a deep feeling of loss which will be with us for the rest of our lives and can never be filled.

We know, however, that we must go on and carry on the struggle for David's sake and for his friends and comrades in the mining industry.

We have attended some rallies and visited some areas to show our support and solidarity with the miners, and we shall carry on doing so.

With regards to your area (Notts) and especially Ollerton, firstly may we thank you all for your kindness at the time of terrible loss. The letters, cards and flowers were of great comfort to us all.

We all appreciate the terrible times you and your families are having with half your area still working. But don't despair, you are not alone in your struggle. The whole mining community of Great Britain is behind you and sharing your terrible times.

We all have nothing but the highest respect and admiration for you all.

And when this strike is over and we've won, you and your families can walk tall and proud, because you fought against overwhelming odds to defend your union and your industry when they needed you most.

So, dear friends, carry on the struggle with the knowledge that we are with you in spirit and you are in our thoughts and prayers. And remember, your day will come.

Sincerely yours in unity,
Mr and Mrs Jones

Continued from page 12

So far support from other unions has been sporadic. There's been damn good support from some lads, but they've got their problems the same as everybody else. I would hope that when the TUC issues that call that there will be a response. If the TUC makes the call I think there would be the same sort of response that you got in Nottinghamshire when the strike was declared official.

Up until that point there was quite a few lads out, but once it was made official that touched quite a few consciences and quite a few lads, who had been going through picket lines, said 'now it's been made official, I'm out'.

After 22 weeks the strike is still rock solid. There's no way the government is going to get a return-to-work movement. They can pull every 'Silver Birch' tree out of the bloody wood. There's going to be no return to work. They tried it in South Wales with that woman - that was a damp squib. This so-called 'Silver Birch' is supposed to have gone up to Yorkshire and seen some people there - that's turned out to be a damp squib.

He's supposed to have gone to Bilston Glen - that's virtually turned out to be a damp squib. He can't even organise his own county!

There's been no massive drift back to work after the holiday even in Nottingham, nor even at his own pit. So it's not on, it's another gimmick that's just not come off.

There's no way you're going to get the Welshmen back, there's no way you're going to get the Yorkshire lads back - nor Kent and Scotland. Notts itself is down to the hard-core, and I think that they're that far committed now that nothing will get them back short of total victory or total defeat.



Paul Whetton

The hardcore that's out are mainly the key workers - either face workers or craftsmen or people like that. They have these scabs working in Notts but they can't use them. They're breaking every rule in the book to try and use them - by-passing safety laws, training laws, signing a man out as trained and qualified when he's nowhere near - they're doing everything they can but they still can't turn the coal out the same as if Notts was working normally.

I know that the vast majority of the rank and file on strike in Notts are saying they want to see something definite done about the scabs. At least the leadership has got to be disciplined. And not after Christmas, but now.

Picketing the Notts Area is one of a series of levers, but it's a large one. We've got to keep it on. We must make it as difficult

as possible for the Coal Board to turn out coal or to move it.

We've got to tie up the police as much as we can. We've also got to keep picketing the power stations. There's been nothing spectacular and nothing great there so far, but occasionally the lads come back and they've turned a lorry-load of oxygen back - it all counts.

Coal is going through, some oil is going through - and the Central Electricity Generating Board is having to do all sorts of funny things. They make false piles of coal to make it look as though the stocks are there. They've got to keep trying these tricks and all we've got to do is keep trying to put pressure on.

Of course management are trying everything they can, they've tried every little pressure. They

stopped coal to striking miners.

The rent - they paid it straight to the lads, who were then expected to pay the rent with the cheque - now some of them saw other priorities, like buying some food. Now that's been knocked on the head and the rent is paid direct. Another little pressure. 'Silver Birch' is just the latest gimmick.

The actions and attitudes of the government, the media, the NCB and everybody else more or less proves that we can win. They're bending over backwards to try and say that 'everything's alright. The economy is OK, there's no problem, it's just a bit of trouble on the other side of town. Don't worry, everything will be alright'. But it won't be alright!

The figures that the NCB and

the government produce about the cost of the strike - it's a load of rubbish. It's 10 times more than that when it's all reckoned in. Vast sums of money are being spent to subsidise the strike in burning oil, importing coal and all the rest of it - if the true figures were released, to pour those sums of money into keeping a strike going is absolute capitalist lunacy. The sums of money are scarcely believable. It would be enough to keep the five pits they wanted to close - and every other one - open for the next ten years.

With money like that we could make sure of jobs for miners and their kids rather than throw them on the dole. It's economic madness. In other words it is capitalism. It is Mrs Thatcher's idea of a "worthwhile investment".

1984 & 1971

By Pete Gilman

NIGEL Lawson's calling the cost of the miners' strike an investment proves what we already know. The Tory government have deliberately engineered this strike in order to smash the miners once and for all.

From day one of being in office, Thatcher has led a government bent on confrontation with the unions, and the appointment of Ian MacGregor was a political act. He was not chosen by the Coal Board to run the industry but by Thatcher to lead the attack on the miners, and when the time was right he arbitrarily decided to close pits and make thousands of miners redundant, thus provoking the strike the government wanted.

Jane Ashworth's article (SO, 21 June) showed how the Tories planned the strike. Then after, and only after inflicting a crippling defeat on the NGA and smashing the unions at GCHQ the government decided the time was right to take on the miners. Significantly the strike only began when the government considered it was in a position to take on the miners and win.

It also began in March, a time disadvantageous to the miners (if they wanted the strike it would have begun in January). It began with massive stockpiles of coal, and it began only after the government had successfully implemented anti-trade union legislation and successfully fined unions.

The City Press, a stock-brokers' tabloid circulating within the City, stated on 21 October 1971, months before the 1972 miners' strike:

"Mr Derek Ezra, chairman of the National Coal Board, will be told by John Davies (the then Minister for Industry), that no price increases will even be considered by the government. So Ezra will have to refuse the coal miners' demands for wage increases. There will be a coal strike."

"That is what the government wants, and they anticipate that if they import coal... the miners will be beaten to their knees."

In October 1983 the Daily Mirror reported on the "Tory Plan to Crush Miners", masterminded by Energy Secretary Peter Walker to flood Britain with imported coal.

The government's intention now is the same as in 1971. Force the miners out on strike with the MacGregor pit closures; make the strike ineffective with imported coal; render picketing ineffective with massive police operations mounted from a central command network; use the press and media to launch a ferocious and sustained hate campaign against the miners; deny strikers and their families the welfare benefits to which they are entitled and for which they have paid all their working lives. All coordinated and run by the government like a military campaign.

The miners now face the most fundamental challenge in their history. The Tories intend to destroy the NUM and thus cow the entire working class into submission.

They were proven wrong in 1972, it is the duty of every one of us throughout the Labour and trade union movement to prove them wrong again.

Ann Scargill in Ireland



A delegation of British miners' wives is in Ireland to raise funds for the NUM. £60,000 has already been raised in Ireland for the miners. Photo: An Phoblacht/Republican News.

In brief

Food money seized

OVER 500 miners and their supporters marched through Treorchy in the Rhondda Valley last Monday (August 6) protesting at the seizure of £300,000 belonging to the South Wales NUM by court appointed sequestrators. The money was held in bank accounts for the purpose of providing food and clothing for strikers' families and not in the union's general accounts.

Heading the demonstration were local mayor Kate Rees, and Allan Rogers, Labour MP for Rhondda, who announced that they were setting up a hardship fund for the miners to be administered with the help of the local Labour council.

Other Welsh councils are to be approached in the next week or so to try and secure joint action in support of the miners.

A similar march attracted about the same numbers in Aberdare the previous Saturday.

Police censured

KENNETH Oxford, the Chief Constable of Merseyside, was censured by the county's police authority last Thursday (August 2) over his handling of the miners' strike.

He was accused of "over-reacting", since from the very beginning of the strike he had put every uniformed officer on emergency standby - ready to act in force at short notice against striking miners.

Demonstrators stopped

POLICE last weekend stopped miners and other trade unionists from carrying banners on a demonstration through Aberdeen called by Aberdeen CND in a bid to commemorate the dropping of the first atomic bomb by the USA on Japan which is on August 7.

The Labour council and the local trades council are protesting at the police action of refusing to allow the 300-strong march to begin unless only CND banners and placards were carried.

Whose violence?

AT the same time that the identity of the 'Silver Birch' was being 'revealed', and the media was full again of stories of intimidation of scabs, a not unusual incident took place - in the same village of Ollerton - against a striker. Thomas Stone, who works at Thoresby pit, explained what happened.

"I parked my car in the garage at 1 p.m. on Saturday afternoon, and only returned

early Monday morning to go out picketing. When I opened the garage door I noticed white paint flakes on the boot of the car and the back window - from where they broke in. I then found that all four tyres had been slashed, with cuts 1 to 1½ inches in each. I reported it to the police, and have been in touch with the union about the possibility of compensation."

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DEMONSTRATION AND GALA



STOP PIT CLOSURES - SAVE OUR COMMUNITIES

WOMEN AND THE MINERS' FIGHT

WOMEN AND THE MINERS' FIGHT

WOMEN AND THE MINERS' FIGHT

Notts strikers need money

Send money or invitations for fund-raising visits to the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee.

North Notts: Strike Centre, Ollerton Miners' Welfare, Ollerton, Notts.

South Notts: Miners' Strike Centre, c/o AUEW, 218 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

ASSEMBLE 12 noon, Temple Tube, London WC2
MARCH via Trafalgar Square & DHSS Headquarters, Elephant & Castle
GALA 3pm, Burgess Park, Camberwell Rd, SE5
with stalls, refreshments, children's entertainment

Further information: 0742 790385 / 01-582 0557

DURHAM IS SOLID

Mark Copsey and Tony Serjeant spoke to miners in the Easington area of County Durham, hearing their latest news and their views on the strike.

SEVENTY Durham miners were arrested on conspiracy charges at Bilston Glen last week, the week in which George Younger, Tory Secretary of State for Scotland, called on Durham miners to leave Scotland as they were too violent and militant.

These events highlight a new period of militancy among the formerly moderate Durham miners. Even in this dispute the NCB have tried to buy Durham off by promises of markets for their coal and investment programmes. This dispute and the closure threat of 60% of the Durham coalfield has convinced the membership that fighting is their only choice — moderation got them nowhere, losing over 100,000 jobs in the 1950s and 1960s, many under Labour governments.

Young miners then had other pits to go to, but now the NCB has driven them to the coast from which there is no escape. With the closure of Horden Colliery, eight Durham pits are in danger, due to this being the major pumping station for all nine pits in the area, making the danger of flooding a considerable threat.

However, this militancy among formerly moderate workers is not transferred into militancy about the Labour movement. Many are fighting only for a new plan for coal that guarantees them a job. What does it matter if the Tories remain in power, for Labour have given nothing to these miners.

Among NUM officials at Easington, however, there is a little more optimism. They are unsure about Labour's leadership, but realise that it is only through this party that the working class will get representation in Parliament.

This means that, to them, the task of miners, and the working class in general, is to work within the Labour movement to ensure that working class policies are carried out.

For too long now the working class have accepted measures from a Labour government that they would never do under the Tories. This has to change. The former weaknesses of the Labour leadership have been due to the lack of working class participation within the movement. The leadership had better recognise this, for the working class are no longer prepared to accept the crumbs off the table.

The Durham coalfield is solidly behind the strike, extending to the miners' families and the local shopkeepers. A major campaign in

the Easington area was set up before the strike began — SEAM (Save Easington Area Mines). This meant that an organisation already existed to work through, once the strike began. This has proved advantageous and spells lessons for the working class generally — organise!

The local shops, all but one

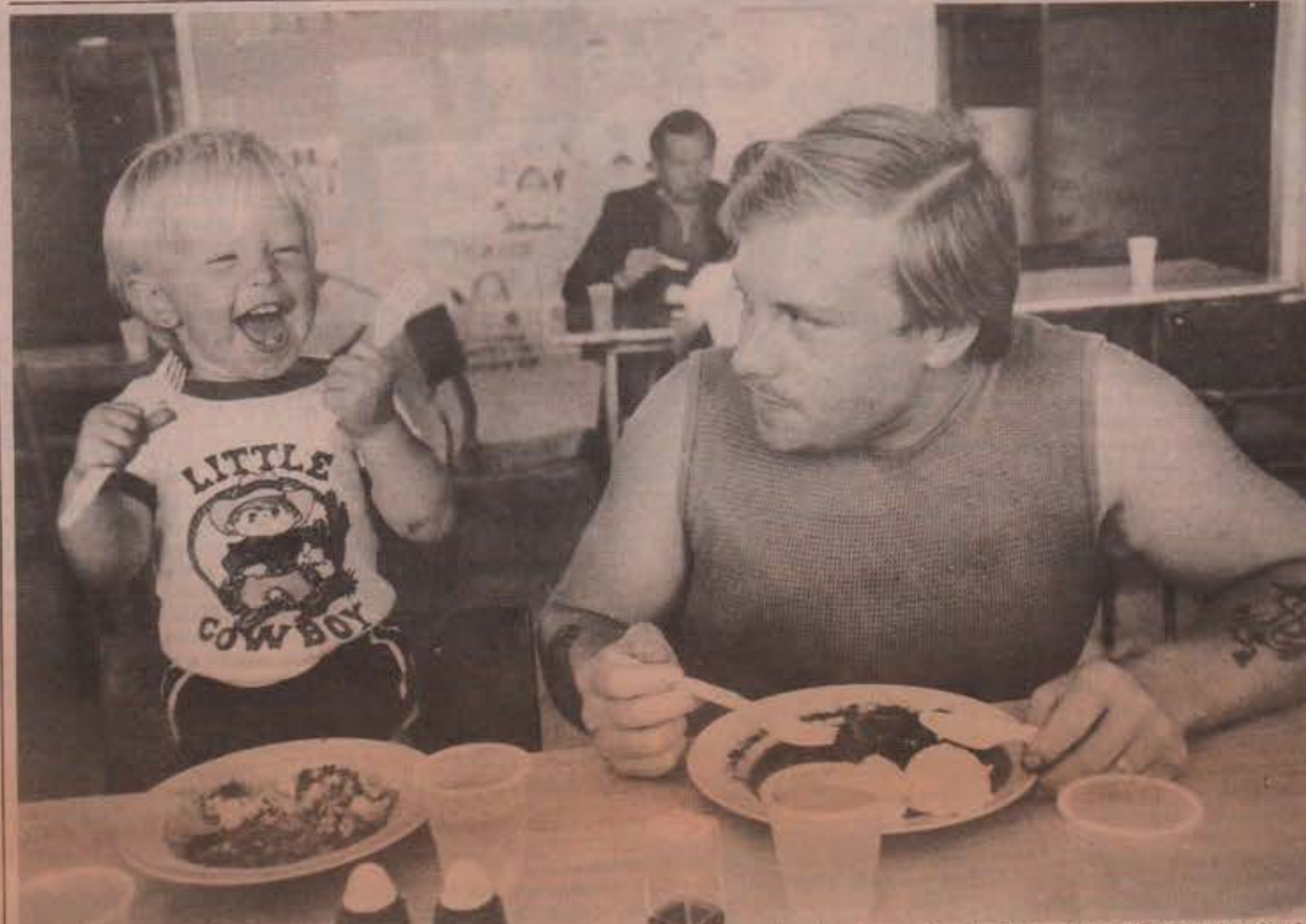
in Easington, wholeheartedly support the strike and are financially and materially supporting SEAM. They too realise the disastrous effects that any pit closures will have in an area dependent on coal, but where there has been no recruitment for two years.

The striking miners are full of praise for the part played in

this strike by women. It was repeated again and again that without their support, the Durham miners' strike would not be so solid. Many believe that this strike will be won or lost on the support of the miners' wives. If this is the case, the Durham miners are in for a major victory.

Easington lodge officials

had one message for Willie Hamilton, MP for Fife, who should know better. Someone ought to tell him to shut his mouth and stick to things that he is better at — Royal-bashing. He is a long way out of touch with the rank and file, he should go down to the picket lines and talk to the miners.



At least £290,000 collected by the NUM to feed the families of striking miners has been seized by the courts. The union's refusal to pay the £50,000 fine levied against it for picketing has led to the indiscriminate seizure of the union's funds. Above: scene at Ollerton Miners' Welfare, Nottinghamshire. JOHN HARRIS

Miners dragged through courts

HATRED of the police is very strong now amongst miners and their families. They have learned that the bobby isn't always friendly or local. Throughout the strike they have had to face large masses of bussed-in blue uniformed thugs doing the dirty work for the Tory government.

The local courts are also being shown up. To them falls the job of backing up the cops in the front line against the miners. In the last five months large numbers of miners have passed through the courts.

Sue Carlyle, a Labour councillor from East London has been to see what is happening in the local courts in South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire and to talk to miners who have been charged.

If you visit the local courts the amount of business taken up with pickets and the manner in which the courts deal with them is a depressing sight. Usually, as in Mansfield, local magistrates come from the pit manager class or local businessmen. The chief clerk does most of the talking, giving them directions. Picket after

picket is rushed through and fined or bound over till the strike finishes. No doubt the courts will soon be pursuing many miners for their money.

In a Nottingham court the morning I was there, 34 of an original 38 pickets came from Kiveton Park to have conditions of bail lifted after four months. They had been arrested when attempting to go into Nottingham to picket. On their way to the court their bus had been stopped three times! A police car followed them all the way to the court, even though they had produced court papers as proof of

where they were going.

They were released from restrictive bail conditions which means that they can now 'legally' picket. Pressure of protests and court work is one reason these conditions were lifted. The courts can hardly deal with the vastly increased workload.

In South Yorkshire, the Kiveton four who were jailed for 13 days in Lincoln Jail are now taking their case to the High Court to contest local magistrates' decisions that the police acted lawfully in turning pickets back at roadblocks and in arresting miners for obstruction on the grounds that a breach of the peace might have been committed

if pickets had been allowed into Notts.

Police action now follows the bizarre pattern of stopping cars leaving Notts after picketing is over and arresting pickets. If they miss you on the way in, they'll get you on the way back.

Two weeks ago, five pickets were arrested at Creswell and they are now remanded in Leicester Jail.

The following week others were detained in a hired van and two of them were accused of unspecified offences which supposedly occurred weeks previously!

Police rule means that the police make up their own 'laws' on the spur of the moment at their convenience. In Notts this has led them to deprive striking miners of one of the basic freedoms — freedom of movement.

In court for leafleting

Five miners from Cwm colliery in South Wales were charged back in April for distributing leaflets through doors at Blidworth in Nottinghamshire.

Last week they were up in court again, appealing against bail conditions restricting them from visiting any NUM area, i.e. restricting their right to picket and participate in the dispute.

Socialist Organiser spoke to them after conditions of bail were finally lifted after four months.

What was the leaflet you were distributing?

The one written by Jack London — definition of a scab. You could say it's a piece of literature. But someone made a complaint and two local bobbies came up and told us to stop it, or we would be 'stopped'.

We just walked up the road

and the next minute a squad car drew up and they arrested all of us, even though we were walking along the road, some of us with no leaflets or with them stuck in our back pockets.

They were also different officers entirely.

Why did you go to Notts?

We went with the specific intention to try to appeal to those miners still working and putting leaflets through doors was one perfectly legal and peaceful way of doing so. We saw it as one effective way of showing our solidarity. Also the strikers and women in Blidworth were unable to collect and needed our support.

Although now allowed by the courts to picket, the men face an adjourned hearing and more travelling to court from South Wales.



Editorial

Defend NUM

THE startling thing about the savage fine on the Wales NUM is that the other unions haven't come to their defence. The cry for a general strike should have rung throughout the labour movement at every level. Instead we have a numb silence at the top.

Now, two scab miners are appealing for a writ against the NUM and the Yorkshire Area to force them to call a national ballot and to deny the union the right to call its pickets official until after a national ballot vote for a strike. This is legalistic guerrilla warfare against the union.

More and more the law courts and judges, armed with the savage anti-union laws which the Tories put on the statute book, are brutally forcing their way into the affairs of the labour movement. The attempts to bring in the courts are clearly being coordinated.

Yet another attempt by MacGregor to create a back to work movement has flopped.

The miners will continue to fight. But what is the official labour movement going to do about it?

Last week the main left trade union leaders met to discuss what to do but issued no statement afterwards, despite media speculation that they plan large scale action for the miners in the autumn. In fact the speculation was started by Neil Kinnock's office in order to preempt such a possibility. While Stan Orme acts as the good-willed mediator between the two sides, Kinnock tries to use the press to blackmail the left union leaders! The Labour Party NEC should call Kinnock to account.

Friday's NUM Special Delegate Conference has been called to 'lay plans for major escalation of the dispute.' It should call on left trade unions to take the lead in calling a one-day general strike before the TUC conference — using the NUR conference resolution as a starting point and a lever. It should call for maximum support for the lobby of the TUC on Monday September 3.

The Delegate Conference should also make clear the aims of the strike because some confusion has crept in. The other demands spelt out in the resolution carried at the Extraordinary Annual Conference — especially the four day week and the consolidation of the bonus incentive scheme prior to its abolition — as well as the 1983 pay claim should be clearly linked to the demand for the complete withdrawal of the closure list and no closures on 'economic' grounds.



Support committees

Cardiff: c/o Room 219, Transport House, 1 Cathedral Road.
Birmingham: c/o Trade Union Resources Centre, 7 Frederick St., B1 3HE.
South London: c/o Joan Twelves, 1 Alverstone House, Kennington Park Estate, SE11.
Manchester: c/o FTAT, 37 Anson Road, Victoria Park, M14.

Brent Miners' Solidarity Committee, c/o Local Economy Resource Unit, 389 Willesden High Road, NW10. Ken Evans, 459 6221.

Maesteg Trade Union and Labour Party Support Group, Idwal Isaac, 10 Bridge St., Maesteg. (Tel: 738321).

Police against the miners

The Iron fist of the bosses' state

Bob Fine reviews 'The Iron Fist: policing the coalfields in the second six weeks of the miners' strike', by Martin Walker and Susan Miller. Available, £1.95 plus postage, from Paul Holmes, Greenwich NALGO, Staffside Office, Basement, Borough Treasurer, Wellington St, Woolwich, London SE18 (854 8888 x 2771).

THIS second part of a projected three-part series on the police and the miners' strike looks at the background in more detail.

A national riot force has been developed over the last decade. The police are now trained in the use of water cannon, firearms, CS gas, and plastic bullets, as well as more standard techniques like truncheons, shields, and cavalry.

The organisational base for this development was laid with the centralisation of the police around a much smaller number of Police Areas, the building of closer links between the Home Office bureaucracy and the police, the coordination of different forces through advanced information technology, and the building of units like the Special Patrol Groups.

ACPO (the Association of Chief Police Officers) has been coordinating the police operation in this dispute: this reveals how an originally unofficial and voluntary association can be turned into a powerful adjunct of the state.

ACPO is like a secret society, funded by the state, accountable to no democratic body, officially responsible for nothing but de facto the power through which the Home Office directs the police.

ACPO operates from the National Reporting Centre at Scotland Yard. The NRC was first conceived at a meeting of ACPO with senior government officials in 1972. Its aim was specifically to prevent miners repeating the victory they had secured at Saltley coke depot in 1972.

The NRC signifies not only the growth of a national police force through the back door (i.e. without legislation or public discussion), but also the erosion of the democratic prin-



Police and miners outside the House of Commons last June.

ciple of the independence of the police from central government and the accountability of the police to representative institutions like parliament nationally and Police Authorities locally.

Walker and Miller document the long list of illegal police practices in the strike:

- the tightening of handcuffs until they draw blood,
- random handing-out of charges in police stations without any proper procedure;
- almost complete disregard of Judges' Rules (which give suspects the right to make a telephone call, see a solicitor, etc);
- the use of special courts from which on occasions the public have been barred;
- restrictive bail conditions imposed without regard to the individual circumstances of the case;

- roadblocks;
- police posing as solicitors;
- police assault against pickets and strikers.

These activities are currently illegal, but many will be made legal when the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill becomes law.

Roadblocks will be legalised, legitimate use of force by the police will be extended, the principle of magistrates' hearings without public presence will be institutionalised, the power of the police to detain, interrogate, and deny access to a lawyer will be extended.

This is the size of the problem that the labour movement has to get to grips with.

Walker and Miller illustrate the human consequences of this political development with story after story of police terror aimed at striking miners

and their supporters.

Some of the worst incidents have occurred in Nottinghamshire. One Yorkshire miner, for example, crossed the county line to offer help to fellow-strikers:

"What happened that night has left an irreparable mark on his mind..."

A group of Yorkshire miners left a club in Rainworth, and were followed by policemen.

"When the men reached the corner of the road... three police support unit vans arrived. As the vans drew to a halt across the road, uniformed officers ran from them. The officers ran across the road, a number of them holding truncheons. They ran up in twos and threes and set about us individually..."

The miners were beaten and knocked about: one was thrown onto the ground and jumped on repeatedly, others were beaten with truncheons.

A young miner who had not been in the club but in a nearby pub came over to see what was happening. This is his account of what happened after he was arrested:

"I was then dragged out of the van and thrown to the floor. I was circled by officers who began kicking me on the body and one kicked me in the face."

"My lip was cut... and my left eye began swelling. I was very frightened and I began shouting at them to leave me alone."

"I was then picked up and dropped onto a metal fence... one officer was pushing down on my neck and forcing me to lift my feet off the ground. This meant that all my weight was on my stomach across the fence and I couldn't breathe".

The miners were later charged with a variety of offences, from breach of the peace to assaulting a police officer.

The strength of the police during the miners' strike has been boosted by the support they have won from a large minority of non-striking

miners. Walker and Miller trace the divisions which led to this large-scale scabbing and the ways in which the police and right-wing forces have organised this minority and exploited the divisions.

Almost from the beginning the police succeeded in preventing any serious contact between strikers and non-strikers. The miners were not able to outwit the combined forces of the police in order to reach — through pickets and other means — their fellow-workers who refused to strike.

It seems to me, though this is not a question which Walker and Miller directly address, that the union must tackle not only the tactical question of how to break through police lines and defend pickets against police violence — striking miners have shown extraordinary determination and courage in doing this — but also the political problem of neutralising the real threat posed by the success of the right wing in mobilising a section of miners.

Miller and Walker give a lot of detail on the growing strength of the hard ideological right wing in the Conservative Party, and highlight the perspectives of people like Robert Moss and Brian Crozier: "after a long and bitter struggle paralleled with destabilisation the government will fall back on military rule."

Counter-insurgency policing will be endemic to this rule and the cleansing of left elements will be ongoing."

But the growth of the kind of policing that we have witnessed during the miners' strike is not the result of a right-wing conspiracy alone. The ideas and organisation of the right wing have to be confronted, but the key lies in the strength of the contending class forces and the capacity of the labour movement to organise and win.

We are not yet in a police state, and there is nothing inevitable about the drift towards it.

Policewatch

Sheffield Police watch: 73, West Street, Sheffield S1 4EQ.
Kent police monitoring group: Richard De Friend or Ian Grieg Spall, 0227 66822.
Nottingham Co-ordinating Committee Against the Police Presence: c/o Ivan Wels, 11, Osborne St., Sherwood, Nottingham.
Ollerton strike HQ is collecting statements about police behaviour: Mansfield 862790.



Police out in strength against pickets at Port Talbot steelworks.

Photo: Martin Shakeshaft (IFL)

Back the miners



Tinker, tailor
Butcher
Scab!

Who is 'Silver Birch'? (In Yorkshire they call him Dutch Elm). Socialist Organisation spoke to Gordon Darlington, Bevercotes NUM and North Notts Rank and File Strike Committee.

"He's a man called Chris Butcher and he's a blacksmith's labourer at Bevercotes pit. He's not been there long, and he never went to branch meetings until the dispute."

Then every time he spoke he was in favour of a ballot. If there had been a ballot, he says, he would have voted for a strike but I don't believe him for a minute. He's the sort of man who would work 12 hours a day, seven days a week, if he could. He has said that he couldn't afford to live without overtime.

Where's his money coming from? He's admitted that he travelled 4,000 miles in the last fortnight, and that's £250 worth of petrol.

He belongs to the Notts Miners Against the Strike 84. He is linked up with the National Association of Freedom, and they are fronting him up and down the country. With little success. I heard that in Scotland he had an audience of one at a meeting which was quite well publicised. He hasn't been getting much support anywhere — not even in Nottinghamshire.

But these people now have changed from just being interested in scabbing to actually trying to defeat the striking miners. I don't think they are going to be successful."



Butcher

Solidarity and Solidarnosc

By John O'Mahony

"THE slave labour of the Polish miner serves to break the resistance of the British miner. British miners! . . . in the prevailing conditions of terror, the Polish workers' movement is at present not in a position to undertake protest actions. But you may be certain . . . that we are in solidarity with you".

These words are addressed to striking British miners from members of Solidarnosc, the banned and outlawed underground Polish trade union movement. They come from the inter-factory network of the Mazowsze region, which includes Warsaw and the surrounding towns.

Silesian miners, some of whose comrades were shot down when they struck in protest against the declaration of martial law in December 1981, broadcast this greeting to British miners over the underground radio in Upper Silesia on June 17:

"The Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarnosc miners sends you fraternal greetings and our support and solidarity for your struggle for the right to work . . . we will do everything possible to support your struggle including in action. The protest we have sent to the Polish government and parliament is an initial measure taken in support of your struggle."

The Stalinist rulers of the Polish police state send cheap coal to help Thatcher and MacGregor beat the miners and starve them back to work. The harassed and persecuted Polish workers' movement sends words of encouragement and solidarity.

The workers in the Mazowsze region send their regrets that they can't take action to support the British miners because they live under police state terror, the Silesian miners, who recently faced the bullets of dictator Jaruzelski's soldiers, keep

open the possibility of solidarity action, despite the police state terror.

The voice of the underground Polish labour movement is clear and unequivocal: solidarity with British miners on strike and condemnation of the Polish government for helping Thatcher.

The NUM has placed a picket on the Polish embassy in protest against the sending of strike-breaking Polish coal.

But the NUM has yet to come out loud and clear in support of Solidarnosc against General Jaruzelski's police state.

An NUM conference rose on Mick McGahey's suggestion to observe two minutes' silence for miners shot down in December 1981.

But Arthur Scargill has at best been equivocal about Solidarnosc, and has often seemed to take the side of the Polish state against Solidarnosc, because he believes the Polish state to be 'socialist'.

More recently, however, he was reported as saying in Sheffield that he "owes Lech Walesa an apology".

Arthur Scargill is far and away the best trade union leader in Britain. There has been nobody like him for a very long time. He deserves the respect and support of every militant and socialist in the labour movement.

Scargill's basic error lies in the belief — common in the labour movement — that states like Poland and the USSR are socialist. True, there are no capitalists there. But they have been replaced by greedy, grasping, parasitic, anti-working class bureaucrats who suck the workers' blood and run vicious political dictatorships.

These ruling bureaucrats can tolerate neither real labour movements, nor the



When they occupied the shipyard at Gdansk in August 1980 the workers organised their own defence guards, some of whom are seen carrying clubs.

liberties we in Britain have won over centuries of struggle with the ruling class and are now defending against Thatcher, nor any form of democratic accountability.

In these states it is especially the workers who are ruthlessly kept down. Sometimes, as in Poland, some intellectuals and priests can sometimes have a degree of freedom. But never the workers.

In all the Stalinist states the "unions" are rigidly controlled state agencies for controlling and regimenting the workers and for preventing — with the additional help of police repression — workers organising a real labour movement.

Take the recent experience of Poland, for example.

Solidarnosc was created in a great wave of strikes during the summer of 1980 which culminated in a general strike.

Polish workers rejected the official police state "unions". In Britain, union leaders frequently scab and rat on us; in Poland in 1980 the leader of the official police state

"union" threatened to have his members shot down. It was no idle threat. An unknown number of workers were shot down in the Gdansk shipyards when they went on strike in 1970.

But in 1980 there were too many to shoot down. Poland was paralysed. The working class organised their own "parliament", centred on Gdansk. It was the most democratic parliament ever seen in Poland, and a lot more representative and democratic than what we have now in Britain.



The Polish workers wanted to overthrow the Stalinist dictatorship, but not to replace the bureaucratic parasites with capitalist parasites — that is a lie spread by the Stalinists.

Why didn't they overthrow it? Because of the threat of a Russian invasion like the invasion of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968. For Poland, like the other "socialist" states in East Europe, is not really independent but a Russian dependency. So they compromised.

They scaled down the great workers' liberation movement of mid-1980 and tried to turn it into a trade union. The scared and then helpless Polish bureaucracy signed "a solemn and binding" agreement to respect and recognise the union — Solidarnosc.

Of course Solidarnosc was always more than a union. In a muted way it played the role of a workers' political party defending the interests of the working class.

But the Polish bureaucrats recovered their nerve, made their preparations and struck back. Martial law was declared in December 1981 and Solidarnosc outlawed. Its leaders and activists were rounded up and interned. Solidarnosc went underground.

As dictatorships go Poland even now is a great deal less airtight and less repressive than, for example, the USSR.

Some opposition is still tolerated. But they have tried to do to the Polish labour movement what fascist regimes do to labour movements in capitalist countries. For the Stalinist bureaucrats the workers' movement is the main enemy.

This is not socialism, nor anything like it. Our people in Poland are not the "socialist" bureaucrats but the oppressed workers whose organisation is Solidarnosc.

Any differences we, as trade unionists or socialists, might have with Solidarnosc, or parts of it, or with its leaders, or with some of them, are like differences within the British labour movement. Just as we would defend any part of the labour movement against the ruling class and its state, regardless of our differences with that part of the labour movement, so, too, we should defend Solidarnosc against the Stalinist police state.

Solidarnosc is the Polish labour movement. Its right to exist — and even its right to make what we might think were mistakes — override every other consideration in Poland.

In fact the stories that Solidarnosc wants to restore capitalism are Stalinist lies. Its leaders are tremendous working class fighters. The Polish strikes of 1980 are amongst the most important events in the history of the working class of the world. A man like Lech Walesa, in his own way, is the Arthur Scargill of Poland.

Miners owe a debt of solidarity to the persecuted Polish labour movement.

NUM militants must see to it that the union throws its full support behind Solidarnosc and against the bureaucratic dictatorship. The NUM should back the persecuted pioneers of independent labour movements in the USSR and other Stalinist states, like the late Vladimir Klebanov, who recently died in captivity in the USSR.

The message from Warsaw states the principle involved very well:

"We strongly oppose every case where force is used against workers struggling for their rights and interests".

The British labour movement must support other workers against police state oppression wherever it occurs; whether in Chile, South Africa and El Salvador, or in the USSR, Poland and Cuba.



Solidarnosc backs the miners

Resolution by underground Solidarnosc in Mazowsze Region.

FOR four months the British miners have been on strike against a programme of mass closures of mines for economic reasons. The miners are threatened with unemployment. The government has rejected compromise solutions and has resorted to severe police methods against the strikers. Thousands of miners have been arrested; hundreds have been hospitalised and one has been killed.

The government of the Polish People's Republic, despite hypocritical condemnations of the activities of the British police in the columns of the regime press and by the regime's pseudo-trade unionists, is profiting from the export of coal to Britain. It sells dirt cheap coal which has been mined in scandalously neglected working conditions and with reckless exploitation of the labour force and the coal field. The slave labour of the Polish miner serves to break the resistance of the British miner.

British miners! The true sentiments of Polish trade unionists towards the authorities of the Polish People's Republic and their practices was shown in the recent electoral farce which was boycotted by the workers. In the prevailing conditions of terror, the Polish workers' movement is at present not in a position to undertake protest actions. But you may be certain that as you have supported and are supporting our struggle, so we are in solidarity with you.

We strongly oppose every case where force is used against workers struggling for their rights and interests.

Long Live Trade Union Solidarity!

Warsaw, 26 June 1984.



Lech Walesa signing Solidarnosc's agreement with the government, August 1980

'Only capitalists and dictators act this way'

Resolution by underground Solidarnosc in Upper Silesia. THE Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarnosc miners vigorously protests against the present policy of the Polish People's Republic on the management

of our major source of wealth — coal. Selling it on foreign markets at competitive prices (i.e. at less than world market prices) is first of all a violation of the Jastrzbie Agreements (August 1980) in which it was clearly established that coal is

a national resource which must be used rationally.

Coal distribution and trade is organised outside of any social control. The Polish government has no right to behave like a mine-owner and to dispose of the national wealth as it pleases. Only the damned capitalists and dictators act in this way.

The Polish government's policy in this field affects the basic interests of brother miners from other countries who lose their jobs as a result of it.

To the striking miners of Great Britain: The Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarity miners sends you fraternal greetings and our support and solidarity for your struggle for the right to work. We know from our own experience what it means to lose job. For this reason we will do everything possible to support your struggle, including in action. The protest we have sent to the Polish government and parliament is an initial measure taken in support of your struggle.



Silesian miners



NHS dispute 1982

Unions outside the law

THE 1980 and 1982 Acts make it possible for unions to be prosecuted for a large number of reasons. It is individual employers or individual scabs who take the initiative to prosecute, so shifting the target for opposition away from the government itself.

The Acts mean that industrial action is now legal only if:

- *It is between workers and their own employer.

- *It relates wholly or mainly to pay and conditions, dismissal, jobs, discipline, union membership or a similar issue.

- *It is to do with a dispute in the UK.

In other words, industrial action is illegal if:

- *It is in support of other workers.

- *It is political.

- *It is to do with a dispute outside the UK (e.g. in solidarity with workers who are employed by the same multinational company).

Solidarity action is under almost all circumstances illegal. Picketing is severely restricted. And it is up to the 'discretion' of the police to enforce legal guidelines about

the size of any picket. 'Secondary' picketing is, of course, illegal.

The closed shop is also severely weakened legally by the laws. Anyone with a 'deeply held personal conviction' against the closed shop is legally protected and has the 'right' not to join the union.



Tebbit: Tory axe-man

Anyone who faces reprisals (from unions or employers) can sue the employer, union or named individuals.

To have any real legal status, a closed shop agree-

ment has to have been approved by 80% of the workers covered by it, or 85% of those voting.

And 'union labour only' clauses in commercial contracts, or industrial action in support of them, are illegal.

The new law introduced last month makes it illegal to strike without secret ballots.

The aims of all these laws are to make strike action itself extremely difficult; and to make effective strike action impossible. They are also designed to isolate the militants by taking big decisions out of mass meetings, and to encourage the trade union leaders to police their own membership.

The 1982 Act reversed British law since 1906 by making unions liable for damages. That means fines of up to £250,000 for big unions. And if fines are not paid, all union funds can be seized ('sequestered'). Apart from the fact that this law could mean bankruptcy for unions, it also makes it unlikely that timid union leaders will fight the bosses or their courts for fear of the cost.

Clive Bradley describes t

The T Union-bl

THE ruling class and the Tories went into battle with the miners well prepared. The Tories now have, and even before they came to office in 1979 already had, a fairly worked out strategy for the revival of British capitalism at the expense of the working class.

The Tories, and the ruling class as a whole, may have their own dissidents, mavericks and fainthearts. But the Thatcherites have been dominant and the 'Iron Lady' and her cohorts have stuck pretty firmly to their overall aims.

The core to their strategy is to restore profitability by driving down the living standards of the working class and to reduce public expenditure. To carry this through they have to take on, weaken and defeat the organisations of the labour movement.

In part, they have been helped by the 'natural effects' of capitalist recession itself — namely, by mass unemployment which serves to reduce the willingness of sections of workers to fight. But it is no secret that the Tories have deliberately made unemployment worse to intensify this effect.

And mass unemployment alone is not enough to beat down and defeat well-organised resistance by the labour movement. For that, a direct assault on the trade unions themselves is necessary.

And so, in a carefully planned and orchestrated way, the Tories, in alliance

with sections of organised big business, have set about seriously undermining and destroying the strength and effectiveness of the labour movement.

In 1977, Tory MP Nicholas Ridley produced a report on the nationalised industries which outlined a careful Tory strategy for taking on the unions. According to Ridley, 'in the first or second year after the Tories' election, there might be a challenge from a trade union... in a vulnerable industry such as coal, electricity or the docks'. The report goes on to argue that 'the eventual battle should be on ground chosen by the Tories in a field they think they could win (railways, British Leyland, the civil service or steel)'.

In order to deal with a strike in the coal industry, the report advised the Tories to 'a) build up maximum coal stocks, particularly at the power stations; b) make contingency plans for the import of coal; c) encourage the recruitment of non-union lorry drivers by haulage companies to help move coal when necessary; d) introduce dual coal/oil firing in all power stations as quickly as possible... There should be a large mobile squad of police equipped and prepared to uphold the law against picketing.'

That was 1977. Its foresight is considerable (particularly when you think that the 'law against picketing' was yet to be introduced). And it shows that the Tory government has

been planning for the situation that now exists for a very long time.

They did choose their battleground. They managed to defeat strikes in steel in 1980, the civil service in 1981, in British Rail and the NHS in 1982. On the other hand, in February 1981, the Tories backed down in the face of a strike by 50,000 miners against pit closures. They weren't yet ready for the miners.

Also, they were careful to avoid long strikes in gas and electricity and gave way to the waterworkers' last year.

A key element in overall

Attac the sho

IN THE situation of economic recession, a class conscious Tory government, and weak and vacillating labour movement leadership, the bosses have organised to break down those areas of working class control over the work process.

In fact this process began under the last Labour government. Productivity bargaining started in earnest in 1977. Productivity has increased faster than employment has fallen, so keeping many companies profitable.

In 1977-8, 1500 productivity deals were signed. Many included financial penalties for strike action. Attacks on 'indiscipline' (i.e. a certain, limited freedom in the workplace) has been head-on at BL, Ford, Peugeot-Talbot, Vauxhall and many others.

In the nationalised industries, the attack on shop floor organisation has been venomous. It has entailed, in addition to the introduction of schemes and plans to reduce

Unempl

MASS unemployment — which in real terms now is about four or five million — has led to a decline in union membership of the biggest unions. Only NUPE has grown in size since 1979; the rest have shrunk.

Most unions have failed even to try to organise the unemployed — even their own ex-members, never mind new unemployed, especially youth.

Job loss has bitten very heavily, especially in the private sector. Along with the decline in manufacturing industry, there has been a growth in service sector unionisation. But often this is very weak, especially in the private sector.

Nevertheless, the British trade union movement



The steel strike 1980

he plans of

Tory clusters

Tory strategy has been to weaken trade union strength and effectively reorganise the unions themselves in such a way as to isolate the militant sections of workers.

They have approached this aim in a number of ways. Most obviously, they have introduced stringent new anti-union laws. They learnt a lot of lessons from the struggles over the last round of such laws in the early 1970s. In contrast, the leaders of the labour movement learnt little or nothing.

The new anti-union legislation — Prior's 1980 Act, the Employment Act of 1982, and

Working up floor

the workforce, control 'indiscipline' and increase output, determined resistance to any working class protest. The defeat of BL workers over the dismissal of Derek Robinson in 1979 is a good example.

There has also been a shift to more centralised bargaining in order to weaken the power of shop stewards in the workplace. The shop stewards' movement has declined rapidly in recent years. And it was the 'Social Contract' negotiated between the trade union tops and the last Labour government that gave particular impetus to this. As a result, real rank and file organisation is relatively weak.

And bosses in the US have developed a whole 'union-bashing' industry which is starting up in Britain. They run courses in anti-union management, take unions to court and organise campaigns to drive unions out of the workplaces.

the recent laws on secret ballots — are far more subtle than the Industrial Relations Act of 1971.

There is nothing comparable to the hated Industrial Relations Court. And the Tories were careful to introduce the laws in phases and to pick the occasion to go in for the kill.

Serious action against them was not prepared by the labour movement. Even before the Industrial Relations Act was introduced there were big political strikes in protest, and a big campaign was organised. Rank and file pressure on the leaders led them to oppose the government. In turn this created a mass of general support for the sort of actions the leaders wouldn't take but militant section of the rank and file did, as in July 1972 when 300,000 workers walked out when they heard that five dockers had been jailed.

But the union leaders let the new Tory laws through without serious opposition. When it came to the crunch over the NGA last winter, the TUC betrayed the NGA and the labour movement.

But now, with the attempt to use these laws against the miners, the bosses have bitten off more than they can chew. We can defeat them, and once again make anti-working class laws unusable. We can tear up those laws as we did with Edward Heath's anti-union laws.

But what the labour movement needs to do fundamentally is to take on all the aspects of the Tory government's strategy and begin to impose a solution to the crisis that is in its own interests and at the bosses' expense. Victory in the miners' strike will cripple the government. That's why the miners' strike is the front line right now.

Unemployment and the unions

remains extremely powerful and well-organised. Over 50% of the workforce is unionised

(compared to only 18% in the USA for example). And many new recruits are the most mili-



NHS dispute 1982

Much of the information in these articles is based on a new report issued by the Counter Information Services, CIS Report no. 34, Summer 1984, price 95p. CIS can be contacted at 9 Poland St., London W1, tel 01-439 3764.

tant sections, especially women, and especially in the public sector like the NHS.

Various other factors in addition to unemployment are affecting the unions however. Privatisation is a favoured means to both reduce the size of the workforce and to replace it with non-union labour.

There is a growing trend for the signing of no-strike agreements, a trend being set in particular by leaders of the EETPU.

Also, low pay helps to undermine the strength of the unions — in particular the employment of youth in YTS schemes, who are generally unorganised and difficult to organise, the super-exploitation of many women workers and so on.

How to fight back

*Build solidarity with the miners. Organise for solidarity action, and strike action now to win immediate demands. Organise a general strike.

*Break the law. Mass action in defiance of the anti-union laws can make them unworkable. All sections of workers should take action in defiance of the laws. The leaders of the labour movement must be made to stand firm, not give a penny of any legal penalties.

*Build and defend the picket lines in defiance of the law.

*The labour movement must take steps to weaken the police.

The police must be withdrawn from the coalfields. Labour councils should stand on the line. No money should be paid to finance the police state operation.

*Defence of picket lines needs to be organised so that the police can be defeated and prevented from helping scabs. The labour movement must organise its own defence squads so that the police can be beaten.

*Fight all redundancies with strike action, occupa-

tions. A determined fight can stop pit closures and all other closures.

*Shorten the working week with no loss of pay. Share out the work. The labour movement should control employment.

*All wages must be linked to inflation, and committees should be set up to establish a genuine cost of living index.

*Link up all strike committees, trades councils, Labour parties, tenants' associations to organise working class action.

*Recruit the unemployed and super-exploited youth to trade unions.

*Demand that the leaders of the Labour Party fight for workers' interests.

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French workers in occupation during the earlier general strike of 1936

IN 1967 the living standards of French workers had been seriously cut: social security charges were raised by £250 million. Consumer prices had in ten years risen by 45%. National wealth since 1958 had risen nearly 50% but workers had benefited little. One fifth of the total industrial labour force had a take-home pay of about £50 a week in today's money.

Despite expansion, the French economy was sick: the only West European country in which the share of employment in manufacture had declined. With a decline in industrial investment, France was at the bottom of the league for industrial expansion. Stagnation in the building industry had led to the most chronic housing shortages in Western Europe.

Unemployment was at its highest level in 15 years. In January 1968 it was half a million, having increased in 12 months by 32% (51% in the Paris region, and 59% in the run down northern mining areas).

Most indicative of a sick economy and a sick system, then as now, was that 23% of the total unemployed were youths — many of whom had never had a job.

The first spectacular explosions were among the students. Not integrated into a bureaucratised, domesticated routine of day-to-day struggle, and sensitive to ideological movements, they were the first to respond to the growing crisis.

The French labour movement has a history of revolu-

tionary outbursts of class action going right back to the first workers' state, the Paris Commune of 1871, when the Paris workers seized power for two months.

Traditionally, the French Communist Party was the workers' party, and got 25% of the total vote. But despite its name, the CP was a rather tame party seeking small reforms. It differed from an ordinary social democratic party only in its allegiance to Moscow and its rigidly undemocratic internal regime. At that time the present day 'Socialist' Party of President Francois Mitterrand did not exist. The socialist left was fragmented.

Not more than 30% of French workers were unionised, split into three blocks: Force Ouvriere ('Socialist'), with 600,000 members; CFDT (Catholic), 750,000 members; and the biggest and most important, the CGT ('Communist'), 1,900,000. (It had declined from 5 million at the end of the War).

Had the CP and the CGT been revolutionary, with a realistic perspective of mobilising workers in class struggle, then the discontent of the French workers would have developed openly in mass struggles. But the antics of the CGT in day-to-day industrial issues have made them past masters at repressing the militancy of the workers.

For example, the CGT deliberately divided the workers, factory from factory, grade from grade, conducting separate, isolated, limited

WHEN TEN MILLION FRENCH WORKERS TOOK CAPITALISM BY THE THROAT MAY '68

strikes instead of serious united struggles. Such demoralising tactics as half-hour strikes in a single shop, token one-day general strikes and extreme timidity in demands (with one-fifth of the workers on less than £50 a week) led to the catastrophic decline in membership since the War and contributed to the explosive frustration within the working class.

As unemployment grew, as social shortages like housing remained chronic and social benefits and real wages were cut, the meanderings of the CGT only masked and disguised the workers' resentment and thus prepared the violent and sudden character of the explosion that occurred in May 1968.

Token strike

In the Autumn of 1967 they called for a general strike against the cuts, a token strike like so many others. There was little response. This must have encouraged the union leaders to explain their own behaviour in terms of working class apathy. But the working class isn't an orchestra to play to order. It must develop confidence in itself and in its leaders before it will respond — and there had been too many token strikes in France.

The whole behaviour of the CP and the CGT since the end of the War and earlier, and particularly the industrial antics of the 'Communist' union, the CGT, had been designed to destroy the workers' confidence in their own ability to win. They needed a fighting lead, the prospect of a struggle rather than a charade, to rouse them with the hope of winning.

This hope the student movement, with its magnificent struggle on the barricades and in the streets — in the great tradition of the Commune itself — gave them.

The students, many of whom were influenced by revolutionary propaganda (Trotskyist, Castroist, Maoist) and by the demonstrations against the US war in Vietnam refused to let the police occupy the Sorbonne university. They build barricades and defended them using stones and petrol bombs on the 'Night of the Barricades' (May 10).

Unemployed

When they stood up courageously in protest against police occupation of the Sorbonne, they were joined on the barricades by many unemployed youth. These fought most bitterly and, of the 30,000 on the barricades, were the last to retreat.

The heroism of the students and unemployed against the brutal police riveted the attention of the workers, who loathe the police, especially the strike breaking CRS, a special force

During the months of the miners' strike, militant workers have again begun to discuss a general strike. Now that the Tories have escalated the conflict by bringing their anti-union laws and the law courts into play against the Wales NUM, more and more workers are becoming convinced that the best working class answer to the Tory offensive is a general strike. Therefore we must study the experience of past general strikes. In the first of two articles, Jack Cleary tells the story of the greatest general strike in history.

set up after World War Two to beat striking miners back to work. A wave of sympathy swept through the working class.

To head off moves for serious solidarity action the union leaders called a one-day token general strike — one more token strike. But the response on May 13 was anything but token. Ten million workers, three times

workers in the most militant factory in the country, Renault at Billancourt, took control.

By the weekend a million workers throughout France had seized the big plants. The Red Flag was hoisted over the means of production. The strikers demanded wage rises, shorter hours and 'a real policy to deal with unemployment'.

A great wave was rising.

crush the guerrilla challenge of their left than to overthrow M. Pompidou's government".

First target

The students, who had detonated the workers' revolt, were the first target in its campaign to reassert its control. At the beginning of the upsurge L'Humanite (the CP's daily paper) had denounced them; now it resorted to demagoguery about outsiders interfering in the affairs of the workers. The student leader Danny Cohn-Bendit was consistently referred to in their usually chauvinist press as 'the German'.

Refused

Students were refused the right to participate in workers' demonstrations.



Students fight back against tear-gas throwing cops — May 1968

and more the number organised in trade unions, struck. Meanwhile, the students' insurrection, and the very threat of a general strike, had forced the government to retreat: it capitulated — the students had won.

And the workers, who had earlier ignored the call for a token strike, suddenly had found a blueprint for their own needs — they too would go out to win. The single spark of student action had landed on dry tinder.

Meant by the leaders as a safety valve, May 13 only convinced the workers of their own strength. Immediately an aggressive mood built up. In spite of the general return to work ordered for May 14, some strikes continued. From May 16 they began to occupy the factories. Workers seized Sud-Aviation; the students seized the universities. The

one which placed in question the very foundations of the capitalist system: its property and political rule by the capitalists.

This was entirely spontaneous. The CGT and the other unions had remained in the background. Now the CGT endorsed the strikes and take-overs, moving quickly to catch up with the workers. But it made it plain that at that stage, with only a million out, it was not calling a general strike.

But still the strikes continued to spread like a grass fire. Desperately now the CGT fought for control over the workers' movement. In the words of one British newspaper correspondent:

"The behaviour of the Communists has been fascinating to watch. From the beginning of the crisis they have been more concerned to

Later, the only official CGT posters at Renault were numerous warnings against... sellers of 'ultra-left' literature! A student plan to march on the Radio building on the 18th to protest against government news control had to be cancelled because the CGT denounced it as a 'provocation' and warned all workers against taking part.

Yet despite all this, the CGT and CP had to run very fast just to keep up with the growing wave of workers' action.

The newspaper correspondent quoted above wrote:

"The paradox which underlies this controlled chaos is that the Communist Union and the Gaullist government they appear to be challenging are really on the same side of the barricades... only in this way (i.e. by endorsing strikes) can the apparatus which leads the Communist unions retain

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Workers in France seized the big plants. The Red Flag was hoisted over the means of production.



Riot police during the fighting, May 1968

its control and protect its base from contamination. Economic dislocation and incredible inconvenience are the price which French society is having to pay to head off an insurrectionary movement which no one saw coming and few have yet understood."

By mid-week, May 23, the peak of the wave was reached with 10 million workers in possession of the factories up and down the land: control seemed to have slipped out of the bourgeoisie's hands.

By its scope, tone and temper, the mass strike was insurrectionary — the workers' drive was clearly for a total reconstruction of society.

It raised inescapably the big question: which class is to rule? A choice of two perspectives faced the workers: keep physical control and take over entirely and go forward. Or else, settle for big concessions by way of ransom from the powerless bourgeoisie, which would — for the moment — gladly make them.

To attain workers' power the necessary steps were these:

1) To prepare organs of workers power by generalising the factory committees (already taking many decisions not normally taken by workers) into local, regional and finally a national council of workers' deputies — thus opposing an embryonic workers' state to the bourgeois state.

2) Begin to actually run the factories under control of the workers' councils.

3) Decisively smash and dismantle the bosses' state and consolidate the new order as a workers' state.

Was this physically possible? What was the relationship of forces?

The workers had the factories. On May 23 the Police Union declared itself in sympathy with the strikers, and unwilling to be used against them. The unknown quantity was the army: because of military discipline the only way to test the conscript soldiers was to confront them with a struggle which forces them to choose — and gives them an opportunity to cross over.

As a Defence Correspondent of the Times wrote: "In an extreme emergency

the troops could be brought into operation, but it is appreciated that they could be used only once, and then only for a short while, before the largely conscript army was exposed to a psychological battering in a general campaign of subversion which it would probably not withstand."

This would confirm all past revolutionary experience.

The nominal armed strength of the bourgeoisie was: 83,000 police including 13,500 CRS; 61,000 gendarmes; 261,000 soldiers in France and Germany. In a clash they could only rely on a few battalions of regular soldiers and presumably the CRS.

But there were 10,000,000 strikers and over 400,000 members of the CP alone.

Yet the CPF and their apologists say the workers would have faced massive defeat had they attempted revolution.



President De Gaulle

In fact, it is clear that with a minimum preparation, during the mass strike, the bourgeois state could have been smashed and dismantled. The strongest element of 'material' force that protected the bourgeoisie was the reformist, social democratic routine, the anti-revolutionary legalist-pacifist theory, and plain funk of the CPF leadership.

A party aiming at leading the working class to power in that situation would face the following tasks:

1) To raise the slogan of a workers' and farmers' government as the immediate objective of the strike.

2) Popularise the idea of workers' councils of self-administration to organise the life of the country and begin to elaborate a counter-state, leading to dual power such as that in Russia between the rise of the workers' councils

(soviets) in February and their victory in October 1917.

3) It would begin to form workers' militias, drawing in militants from all the factories — thus arming the workers to disarm and suppress the paralysed organs of bourgeois power and establish the workers' state.

A revolutionary party would have propagated this long before the upsurge. But even in the middle of the strike, such a programme of action, by a party with the ear of the masses, would have galvanised the workers — and at least led to a period of dual power.

But the "revolutionary party" chose a different course: initially it did not even dare pose the resignation of De Gaulle and his government as an objective of the strike!

Amidst the greatest workers' movement for decades, and France's biggest ever general strike, the CP/CGT concentrated on getting wage concessions!

Running hard to keep control of the workers and to isolate the students and revolutionaries, the CGT and CFDT from the start of the upsurge demanded talks with the government.

Even the recently Catholic CFDT went further than the 'Communist' union in demanding structural reforms to the system, as well as bread-and-butter concessions: and in fact they remained con-

sistently to the left of the CGT!

By the morning of May 27 they had got their big concessions: 10% all round increase; 35% rise in minimum wage; progress to a 40 hour week; social security cuts rescinded, etc. (By way of a tip, CGT leader Georges Seguy was promised that henceforth the CGT too would be eligible for a government subsidy for the training of its officials...)

The size of these concessions is the measure of the bosses' desperate need to enable their labour lieutenants to placate the workers.

The happy band of trade union bureaucrats, smiling and giving the thumbs-up sign for the cameras, hurried to Billancourt, symbol of Labour Militant, to bring the glad tidings — and call off the strike!

But the proletariat is an ungrateful class! Seguy and Franchon, the CGT bosses, were shouted down, and their 'big concessions' scorned.

All over France the same thing happened: the workers refused to call off the strike. They wanted more — in fact they wanted everything. But the CP and its union — built over decades on talk of socialism — stood four-square across their path, dithering and wriggling.

Instead of advance, there was stalemate. And now? Who could control the workers and end the bosses' period in limbo?

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Labour youth summer camp

Class Fighter editor Jane Ashworth reports on the recent YS summer camp.

THE annual YS summer camp was held last week in the Forest of Dean. Coming as it did at the same time as the South Wales NUM were about to be robbed, half way through the week the camp changed tack and from then on the most regular discussions were about the possibilities of a general strike.

The morning after the fine on the Wales NUM was announced all workshops were cancelled and the whole camp met to listen to speeches from the YS national committee about the revolutionary potential of a general strike and how all YS branches should start now collecting duplicating paper ready for their intervention should a general strike happen.

But unfortunately, during that rally not one word was said about how to actually get a general strike. All the discussion was about what to do if a general strike takes place.

Ireland and Labour Party black sections were the other two big debates.

From the platform SO supporter Keyvan debated Bob Lee from Militant on the question of black sections. Keyvan argued that while Militant correctly stress the need for working class unity, we shouldn't presume that it already exists, because it doesn't and we have to fight for it. Class unity is something that has to be built, so rather than black sections dividing an already united class, they could help draw black workers into the labour movement. We must, he said, talk to them as workers who face special discrimination and call on them to join the Labour Party to make it fight for black workers' demands.

Answering the Militant's point that the only people who will benefit from black sections are black careerists, and the Labour leaders who will use them to ghettoise blacks, Keyvan argued that it is the role of the Marxists in the movement to act as a chain, linking the black sections to the wider movement and winning them to class politics. Black sections should be used as a tool to change the traditions of our movement and fundamentally shake-up the passive attitudes towards racism in the Labour Party and trade unions.

That is the decisive argument in support of black sections. Their possible use by careerists is a potential future



Jane Ashworth

problem: racism in the labour movement is a burning problem now.

The Irish workshops and the Class Fighter meeting on Ireland, where the main speaker was Tony Dale, were far less heated than in the past. Class Fighter pointed out that socialists in Britain have a duty to fight for the withdrawal of the British army and support the Catholic community in its fight for united Ireland and against state repression. Militant still believe that socialists in Ireland should ignore, or dodge the issue of partition.

The Scottish rep on the YS national committee made typical Militant attack on Class Fighter — ignorant of the issues, loud-mouthed and bigoted.

There was no room for position in the YS concluded. The usual fare. Some of the comrades from Irish Militant disagreed with him; they insisted that our position did have a right to be heard in the YS.

In the fringe events of the camp Class Fighter teams did very well. In the quiz our team — Richard Bailey and Mark Morrison, York YS, Deb Williams, Manchester Central and Tony Sergeant of Durham YS — was narrowly defeated by two points in the quarter final, having got down to the last eight from an initial entry of over 70 teams.

In the five-a-side football tournament, Class Fighter got as far as the semi-final, losing on penalties to Merseyside after extra-time. Our team: Dan Duncan, Harrogate; Mark Copsey, Durham; Tim Anderson, Newham; Tony Rigby, Peckham; Geoff Ward, Derby; Chris Hickling (Not NUM), Alan Johnson (Manchester Central) and Andy Barrett (Selly Oak) went through four rounds, defeating one of the favourites, R. Clydeside, with Dan Duncan saving three penalties.

Alan Johnson won the "Player of the Tournament" award.

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SCIENCE

Windscale

By Les Hearn

THE Black Report on the possibility of increased cancer rates in the area surrounding Windscale (Sellafield) is a curious affair.

The report acknowledged a high level of childhood cancer in the area since 1950 (roughly when nuclear operations started). In particular, it noted the approximately ten times greater incidence of childhood leukaemia in Seascale. Recognising that leukaemia is usually caused by exposure to radiation, Black took British Nuclear Fuels' figures to calculate how many extra cancers would be expected and came to the conclusion that the excess radiation could only explain one-fortieth of the increase.

The conclusion of the report then was that the extra cancers seemed to have no identifiable cause and might in fact be due entirely to a chance "cluster" of cases.

BNFL predictably claimed the report to be a vindication of their innocence.

But the report begs several important questions.

Firstly, some nine cases (at least) in 30 years is quite a big 'cluster' for a small area. Other clusters usually consist of two or three cases. Unfortunately for the nuclear industry, one such cluster occurs in the village of Leiston, near Sizewell nuclear power station.

Secondly, there may be more cases since children born in the area may have moved away. Black had access to data on this but did not look at it.

Thirdly, Black accepted BNFL figures for radiation releases. But even supposing BNFL actually *know* on how many occasions radioactive material escaped and that they have *truthfully* reported this knowledge, they still cannot say *exactly* how much material was released. A re-examination of the Windscale fire of 1957 recently showed that some types of radioactive material were not even measured, while other types may

have been underestimated.

Fourthly, accepted figures for how much leukaemia can be caused by a given amount of radiation may underestimate how susceptible young and unborn children are to radiation.

It has been known for decades that radiation causes cancer — in particular cancers of the blood and bone. In fact, it was 50 years ago last month that Marie Curie died of leukaemia, induced through her pioneering work with radioactivity and the science column hopes to take a look at her life and work in the near future.

It would therefore seem elementary that a firm like BNFL would take the utmost care to protect its workers from radiation and at least keep accurate records of exposure so that any future health problems might be explained.

However, at the inquest, recently, into the death from bone cancer of Joe Corrie, BNFL had to admit they had no records for him in the period covering the 1957 Windscale fire. Joe Corrie had worked throughout the fall-out and his clothing had been contaminated.

This led the inquest jury to record an open verdict (as opposed to "natural causes"). This was no doubt highly embarrassing to BNFL, particularly since it has also come to light that their workforce has suffered a significant excess of cancer deaths over the expected level. Their own study had originally claimed no excess deaths.

However, since BNFL invariably pays compensation for such deaths *without* admitting liability, it was still possible for the government to make the ludicrous claim as recently as May 14 that "there have been no fatalities as a result of exposure to radiation arising out of accidents in the nuclear industry since its inception."

Organise the Marxists!



"All the newspapers are poisonous". Poster from the French General Strike of 1968.

By Martin Thomas

PEOPLE don't accept capitalism just because the media tells them it is a good thing. The fact that they live within the system itself is much more important.

Such are capitalism's ways working that — from the point of view of any single individual within the system — it appears essentially free, fair and equal.

Trade union struggles, so long as they confine themselves to the idea of 'a fair day's work for a fair day's wage', do not challenge the basic assumptions of capitalism.



Karl Marx

Larger-scale trade union struggles, when they become *class confrontations* rather than just sectional disputes, do tend to push workers towards socialist conclusions. But that tendency is often neutralised or diverted by the bureaucracy of the labour movement.

So what is the answer? How can militant socialist ideas win a majority in the working class?

Most of the time, they can't. In normal conditions under capitalism, militant socialists will be a minority in the working class.

But capitalism also — and inevitably — produces *abnormal* conditions. And what socialists do in the previous years or decades of 'normal' conditions greatly affects what we can do in those 'abnormal' times.

Take an example: May-June 1968 in France. Ten million workers struck, in what was by far the greatest general strike in history. Eventually they settled for wage rises. But many workers knew that a lot more than wage rises was at stake.

At one shipyard workers occupied — and when management came to ask what their demands were, they refused to give an answer. For three days they refused. They knew they wanted more than better wages and conditions — but they couldn't see how to put their aspirations for a better society in the form of a routine demand to the management!

When the trade union leaders of the no-longer-revolutionary Communist Party reported back on the wage rises they had negotiated, they were booed and jeered in the great car factory of Renault Billancourt, a CP stronghold.

The strike continued despite the wage rises. But eventually it petered out. Why?

The revolutionary Marxist groups in France in May-June 1968 made some mistakes. But — as it happened — that was not crucial. What was crucial was that they were simply too small.

In factories and workplaces where revolutionaries had some influence, there were action committees, workers' councils, attempts to make links with other workplaces. But there were very few such workplaces.

For most workers, the choice between the revolutionaries and the established trade union leaderships presented itself as a choice between a few students of whom they knew nothing and the existing organisation of their class. And they knew that the strength of the working class depends on organisation.

What was required for the situation to develop towards a revolution was not that the revolutionaries should somehow in the previous years have developed an 'alternative leadership', a rival machine to the CP's. It was that they should have had a sufficient foothold in the workplaces to be able to get a hearing for their arguments about rank-and-file, strike committees, workers' councils, revolution — to make those arguments sufficiently convincing to give the rank-and-file the self-confidence to develop forms of organisation and demands different from the CP's.



It was no special fault of the revolutionaries of 1968 that they did not have that foothold. Their relatively small numbers and their isolation were the product of the defeats and disasters of many decades past.

1968 itself changed the situation. Revolutionary ideas are far better known in France today than they were in 1968. Another explosion today like that of 1968 would develop differently.

No books can of themselves tell revolutionaries what to do in a situation like May-June 1968. Yet books — and the crystallisation of what can be learned from them into an organisation — are vital preparation for such situations.

And not just books. More limited struggles than those of May-June 1968 can also push limited numbers towards socialist ideas. The hold of the labour bureaucracy is not leakproof. Only by involvement in the actual labour movement and its actual struggles can a socialist organisation learn and develop into more than a literary sect.

A phrase from Friedrich Engels sums it up very well. The class struggle, he said, proceeds on three fronts — economic, political and ideological.

The economic struggle is a more or less automatic product of capitalism. A struggle over political rights is also inbuilt within capitalism.

But the ideological struggle depends on an active minority. *And its result determines the shape of the economic and political struggles.* In all capitalist countries a drive to form trade unions will be found. Whether they are 'non-political', religious, social-democratic, or Marxist depends on the ideological

struggle.

The irreplaceable job of a Marxist organisation is to wage the ideological struggle as part of an integrated whole with participation in the political and economic struggles.

Some people on the Left think that this whole notion is 'elitist'. What arrogance, they say, for a small group to think they are the only ones who know what's what.

It is true, some would-be Marxist groups are arrogant and sectarian. But their arrogance and sectarianism comes not from too much attention to theoretical self-clarification but from too little. There is nothing arrogant about the idea that conscious study and a collective effort to learn socialist theory is likely to produce clearer ideas than no such effort.

Nor does an attempt to be clear and precise about our own ideas prevent us learning from others. On the contrary: the notion that everyone has a little bit of the truth and the answer lies somewhere in the middle allows no-one to learn anything from anyone.

The opponents of Marxist organisation in fact end up with a very manipulative sort of politics. They avoid being what they call "sectarian" only by talking down to the working class.

It's easy enough to score points at the expense of the disputes among the Marxist left. But it's a very cheap realism that ends up talking only about common sense 'bread and butter' issues.

"The struggle for the 'maturing' of the mass", as Trotsky put it, "begins with a minority, with a 'sect', with a vanguard. There is not and cannot be any other road in history".

The Tories' millions

POLITICAL donations to the Conservative Party from British industry rose to £4.9 million in election year, 1983. That was an increase of 80% over the previous year, according to the latest edition of Labour Research.

*124 companies, or over a third of those listed by the magazine, gave more than half as much again to the Conservatives in 1983 as they did in 1982. Among these firms the food giants Brooke Bond gave £34,000; Rank Hovis McDougall gave £30,000 and the pharmaceutical producers Beecham also gave £30,000.

*Over 50 companies who had not given to the Conservatives since the 1979 election produced large gifts in 1983. Tube Investments (£25,000), Marley tiles (£25,000) and Debenhams (£25,000) are among them.

Labour Research also discovered nine companies making donations of £31,750 to the Liberal and SDP Alliance parties. These included insurance companies Commercial Union, General Accident and Norwich Union as well as Tate and Lyle, the sugar firm.

Labour Research's survey is based on an examination of the



(photo: John Harris)

accounts of the top 3,000 British public companies. These revealed donations to the Conservative Party directly of £2.7 million and to British United Industrialists (BUI) of £580,000. Conservative Central Office claims to receive 80% of the money sent to BUI. This gives a figure of £3.2 million.

Labour Research is the monthly publication of the Labour Research Department. It is available price £1 (including p&p) from 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF.

IRELAND

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Self Determination For The Irish
People As A Whole

A fascist in Israel

ISRAELI politics is pretty peculiar at the best of times. But the current spectacle of prolonged behind-the-scenes deals between different parties to form a new government is messy even by Israeli political standards.

Shimon Peres, leader of the Labour Alignment, is to form a 'government of national unity' with the Likud, who lost their majority in the Knesset at the recent elections. Peres is also carrying out parallel negotiations with smaller parties to see if a different coalition is possible.

Whatever the outcome in the end, the prospect of a coalition between Labour and Likud puts the lie to Labour's posturing that it has any significant differences.

A place in the Knesset was won by Rabbi Meir Kahane of the extreme right Kach movement.

Kahane openly calls and campaigns for the expulsion of all Arabs. But he has met with much opposition. The Israeli president broke with normal custom by refusing to meet with Kahane who now has the status of 'an elected party



Meir Kahane

leader".

Far more encouragingly, a mass demonstration against Kahane in Umm al-Fahm last weekend united Jews and Arabs in opposition to Kahane's Jewish racism. The shock of having a Jewish fascist elected to the Knesset in "the only democracy in the Middle East" is having a sobering effect on many Jews. The Jewish-Arab unity should be built on and developed.

END turns outwards

From back page.

All of the papers presented for this discussion recognised the right of the Palestine Liberation Organisation to exist. However, only one, presented by the Anti-NATO Commission of Madrid, supported the demands of the PLO for a democratic secular Palestinian State in place of Israel. The rest supported a Palestinian State and an Israeli State.

Another statement said that the struggle of the Kurds may cause instability in the region. The democratic principle of self-determination was again subordinated to a notion of 'peace' through general conciliation.

Charter 77 makes a similar point when it criticises peace activists going along with anti-democratic speeches from official Soviet bodies when they slander unofficial activists as 'hooligans'.

The main drawback of the Convention was the difficulty of sorting out the principle of democracy and self-determination from the ploys of diplomacy.

The position of the Anti-NATO Commission of Madrid was however explicitly internationalist: 'For bringing together the struggle for peace and the struggle against imperialism'. Some of the unofficial East European delegates had similar ideas.

A paper on 'The Peace

Movement in Japan Today reveals that there has been a long tradition of autonomous peace groups in that country. They have been able to unite the peace activists of the Japanese Communist Party and Japanese Socialist Party around a declaration which states 'The peace we are demanding is not merely the absence of war. Peace implies the creation of a world without colonialism, racism, oppression, poverty and sexism'.

The force and potential of such ideas were often subsumed by rhetoric at the Convention.

Whether this rhetoric was of the Stalinist variety — endless words about 'peace' and 'progress of peoples' — or of the kind that assumed that all delegates were pacifists, the result was the same — no dialogue.

Set speeches came one after another without any attempt being made to take up issues or differences as they arose.

But the END Convention's attempt to turn to world issues — like nuclear free zones in the Pacific and Latin America — and to the struggles of working people like the miners in Britain is a step forward.

Still there are questions. What about Ireland? What about a moratorium on the building of nuclear power stations? What about Polish coal scabbing on the miners?

Perhaps these questions may be discussed at next year's END Convention.

THORNTON VIEW — ONE YEAR ON



Max Madden MP speaking at a meeting to commemorate the first anniversary of the occupation of Thornton View Hospital in Bradford.

GCHQ: the fight goes on

WHEN the High Court declared the Tory ban on unions at GCHQ to be contrary to "natural justice" it was a bad blow to Mrs "Law and Order" Thatcher. The Labour Party and trade union leaders were jubilant.

But the judgement rested on a very flimsy basis. It was "contrary to natural justice" because the unions hadn't been consulted.

Now the Tories have won their appeal against the judgement. This time the basis of the judgement was that the issue was one of national security and on that the government need consult only itself. The government and only the government knows what is needed for national security, ruled the Appeal Judge.

Now, the banned GCHQ

unions will have to fight out their case in the House of Lords.

It's yet another example of the way the courts can — with the odd freakish exception — be relied on to side with the government and employers when it matters.

The unions' appeal to the Law Lords may be heard on August 13, although some time in

October seems more likely. But the Tories seem quite satisfied with this week's judgement and seem to think that it's all over but the shouting. They know whose side the Law Lords will be on.

The lesson for the unions should be, rely upon and use your own strength or let the bosses and their police, law courts and judges drive you to the wall.

Rail workshops: action needed after Aug 10

By Rob Dawber

of the decade, outside the workshops.

The NUR has no plans for workshop action after August 10, pointing to (probably correctly)

obstructiveness on the part of Confed officials who represent around 40% of workshop members.

The members themselves can see no reason to be obstructive. Every pressure must now be put on the national unions to

step up the action, drawing in those railworkers in other grades who are now to begin non-cooperation from September 10, along with a strike in London on September 12 for 24 hours unless BR back down on line closure proposals.

AUGUST 10 is the day of a 24 hour strike by workers in British Rail workshops. After the closure just a year ago, of three rail workshops, Shildon, in the north-east, Horwich, near Manchester, and Temple Mills in London, and the lack of any effective fight to prevent it, this action is a welcome change.

It comes after a month of non-cooperation with management, consisting of overtime bans, work-to-rule, and other forms of action.

This reflects the diversity the workshops cover — ranging from the large wagon and coach building establishments such as at Derby, to the small regional workshops made up of joiners, plumbers, etc.

The day of strike action will be marked by a demonstration in Derby, now considered the weak point in the union's fight.

Five years ago BREL (British Rail's engineering subsidiary) employed 35,000. But a policy of rundown, closure and an attempt to open it up to outside competition aims to reduce that by 13,000 in three years' time.

The latest move by BREL which provided the push for this action was the decision to split the order for 50 x 2 car diesel multiple units equally between BREL and Metro-Cammell.

The original plan had been for a lengthy trial period of each company's model and then a decision on who to allocate the whole contract to.

However, pressure from the government with cash restrictions and the demand that BR's five-year corporate plan of closures and redundancies be completed in three years, forced a decision much earlier.

The 50/50 allocation was made despite the fact that the "outside competition" bid from Metro-Cammell was 15% more expensive.

The workshop action has already scored a victory. After arranging an audit of BREL's costs, no doubt in the hope of finding something to increase the price, BR has backed down and placed the entire first order with BREL.

As with the NUR/ASLEF pay claim last May, BR are no doubt under government instructions to make concessions while the miners are on strike, in an attempt to undercut action and so keep the NUM isolated.

This small victory is an argument not for now calling off the action, but for stepping it up.

The closure and rundown threats still remain. The workshops are being prepared for privatisation.

BR has overall cut 1,000 jobs per month for the last three years, and plans 18,000 more by the end

Cowley

2,500 workers were laid off for two days last week at BL's Austin Rover car plant in Cowley.

This followed a walk-out by 14 Montego testers at the assembly plant last Tuesday (July 31) when management refused to withdraw verbal warnings made to them because of a walk-out earlier in the week when a worker objected to being switched between jobs.

1,500 workers on the Montego lines were laid off immediately, and were then joined a day later by 1,000 workers on the Maestro line.



Fighting the pirate privateers, the walk-out at London's Barking Hospital goes on, almost into its sixth month. Since the hospital opened, Crothalls have monopolised the cleaning services. But when they were told to put in a tender again to compete against other possible contractors, Crothalls announced a projected cut of 60 mainly women workers out of a workforce of 100.

Strike against rate-cap

OVER 10,000 workers employed by the Merseyside County Council staged a 24-hour strike this week on Tuesday, August 7, in protest at the government's "rate-capping" plans and proposed abolition of the metropolitan authorities.

The strike, called by the Merseyside County Council Joint Trade Union Committee and supported by Liverpool City Council workers, closed road tunnel and ferry operations and seriously affected bus and local rail services.



Liverpool demo, June 1983

This strike — the fifth day of action on Merseyside this year — follows a 24-hour strike last

Thursday by more than 2,000 NALGO members employed by Greater Manchester Council.

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Labour should say NO TO NATO!

LABOUR'S latest statement on defence consists mostly of confusion and flabby compromise.

The party is to keep its commitment to NATO at the same time as 'de-commissioning' Polaris, arguing for a "no first-use" of nuclear weapons commitment from NATO and a European nuclear-free zone.

These policies just do not add up. NATO is an aggressive military alliance, whose policy is based on a nuclear war fighting capability. It

By Tom Rigby

cannot be peacefully transformed into something different.

It is the absence of a clear commitment to pull out of NATO that is at the root of this confusion.

Good, clear and firm unilateralist resolutions like the one from the TGWU adopted at last year's party conference will mean very little in practice if they are not combined with a

campaign to get Britain out of NATO.

It is the Party's continued commitment to NATO that gives the right wing and soft left the room to manoeuvre and fudge on the basic unilateralist policy supported by the vast majority of Labour activists.

Vague statements about "appropriate action" to get rid of US nuclear bases from Britain don't mean much when they are mixed up with support for NATO membership.

END discuss strike against Cruise

By John Douglas

THE MOST important idea to come out of the European Nuclear Disarmament (END) convention in Perugia, Italy, in July, was a proposal for a 24 hour general strike against the installation of Cruise missiles which was raised at the Convention by Danish trade unionists.

Given the reasonable success of five-minute strikes in West Germany, Finland, Belgium and Denmark, they are calling for this proposal to be discussed in every trade union throughout Europe, the fact that they are also calling

for Employers' Associations to support the action should not stop us from raising the demand!

The Convention also attempted to explore new areas of activity with new allies and new tactics.

For example the banner of West Yorkshire END, who organised the bus 1 travelled on, had the slogan 'Coal not Missiles'.

The Convention wanted to develop 'dialogue' between

peace organisations East and West, official and unofficial. The Convention organisers invited 59 supporters of END from Eastern Europe.

Many of these activists were not granted visas by their governments, although three independent Hungarian activists were able to attend.

Others did not apply, either because they wanted to avoid conflict with their governments, or because they were protesting at the invitation of 56 delegates from official peace groups to the Convention.

Some delegates protested against the refusal to issue visas to the unofficial activists by mounting the platform and draping banners on behalf of Solidarnosc, KOR, Charter 77 and the Moscow Trust Group.

This action was brought to an end after the Chair, Ken Coates, asked the protestors to withdraw in order that 'dialogue' could continue.

The Liaison Committee for the Convention officially condemned the refusal of governments to allow visas to the unofficial activists and left seats in the hall empty 'for absent friends', while disclaiming all knowledge of the protest action.

The following day's Convention News quoted a Soviet delegate as condemning the demonstration as 'primitive anti-communism' and threatening that their delegation would withdraw from the Convention.

The siting of Cruise missiles at Comiso in Sicily and the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Force throughout Europe caused part of the Convention to examine developments outside Europe. The Comiso Cruise missiles could be targeted anywhere from Chad in the west, right through the Middle East.

Now, the governments of nuclear weapons by letter threaten the creation of a nuclear war in the Middle East.

Now they threaten to use nuclear weapons in Japan.

Continued on page 11

'Broaden the agenda'

Tony Benn spoke to John Douglas at the European Nuclear Disarmament Convention

What do you think has been most important about this conference?

Firstly, there are peace movements here from Eastern Europe — countries have to make peace.

Secondly, the importance of sharing experiences, discussing our differences and successes.

And, thirdly, the peace movement is in danger of becoming a narrow new movement when it is really a very old broad movement — not only against nuclear weapons but also about fighting fascism.

The peace movement should discover its history. It should



broaden its agenda and include civil liberties and the oppression of women and black people — be a liberation movement rather than a disarmament movement. Disarmament is negative, liberation positive.

When people fight they become self-confident — that's why the peace movement should be supporting the miners.

What do you think about the refusal of the Soviet government to issue visas to unofficial peace activists?

There is no country where people have human rights. After all, the Russians only say to British people attending the conference — what about Northern Ireland? What's needed is dialogue — a sense of proportion.

Others could say to American leaders, what about Germany? But I don't expect in the demonstration making their point.



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Birmingham anti-deportation demonstration last Saturday, August 4.

General strike!

By Paul Whetton, Notts Rank and File Miners Strike Committee, Bevercotes NUM.

THIS Friday's NUM delegate conference will be a very important one for the strike. We need to say clearly which direction we are going in.

I think we should be talking about going to the rest of the trade union movement and raising the issue of the general strike. We must get it raised from the rank and file to put pressure on union leaders. Many union leaders may well say: "Well, yes, we support you, but..." The pressure has got to come from the rank and file.

They should say to the union leaders "You bloody well support them". They must be put under real pressure so that the ground is prepared for the TUC conference when Scargill will be making his appeal for full support from the rest of the labour movement.

It's not just money we want but real support. That means action. Right now it means action being promised by rank and file trade unionists.

A general strike is closer now than it was at the beginning of the strike or even two months ago.

The miners' strike has had a tremendous effect in shaking up the whole labour movement. Militants throughout industry who felt that the movement was beaten and close to being on its knees now see that it is possible to fight back.

On the other side the Tories can't afford to budge. For them it is a political strike that they must win. Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson blew the gaff on that in Parliament when he said that the cost of the strike would be a 'worthwhile investment' if it led to the defeat of the miners. A worthwhile investment to starve miners and their families into surrender and break the spirit of the labour movement!

That's why they are escalating the war on the miners. For months they keep the courts and the anti-union lawfront of it. Now they have opened up a new legal front with the fines on the Wales NUM.

That wretched bastard firm wasn't just a bunch of cowboys — it was the NUM's expense. They are here clearly advised by the state bosses' organisation, the Confederation of British Industry.

The union labour movement is being attacked. The union labour movement must stand up to it. It must be a general strike on the NUM.

The TUC should call for a general strike. They will be in a good position to do so. They will be in a good position to do so. They will be in a good position to do so.

to stop it going beyond a one-day affair.

In the past the NUM has been wary of letting the TUC near the strike in the belief that if they touch it they will sell it out. That's still a real danger. The rank and file must stop them selling us out.

And if they call a one-day general strike it's for sure the TUC will be screaming — "Right, you've had your day, now everybody go back!" But by then the rank and file might well be saying "Well, no, we are going to back the miners".

In the last five years the Tories have built up a great reservoir of bitterness in the working class. The miners' strike might well be the detonator that makes the dam explode in their faces.

Getting the TUC to pass a resolution saying that workers shouldn't cross NUM picket lines is probably the best way to start

it. Yes, the TUC should call a general strike. But if you get that resolution through, the rank and file militants can go round sticking up picket lines everywhere. The people who can get others out then — with the authority of the TUC, but not under its control — will be the rank and file activists.

The left trade union leaders met last week. The rank and file should demand that they come out with a firm commitment.

They can't play it close to their chests. You elect leaders to lead, and what they should be doing is giving a lead. They shouldn't just be going into smoke-filled rooms and saying OK when the time comes we'll be there. They should be 'there' now.

They should be standing up and banging the table, doing what they were elected to do — lead. Not just weakly calling their members out but — as far as they can — demanding, instructing their members: "you elected me to lead, I'm leading, I'm telling you to come out".

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Miners occupying NUM headquarters in Pontypridd last week to stop the organisation seizing union property. Front page: inside the union offices miners erect barbed wire barricades.