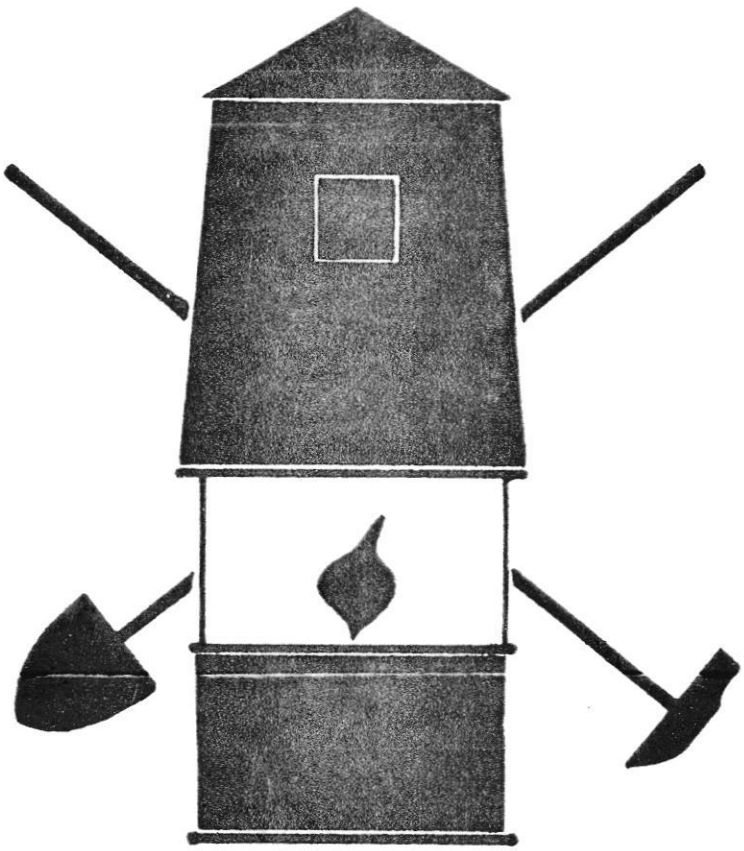
RED MINER

No 16 May/June '87



Workers of the world
UNITE!

in this issue:

* Interview with Terry French
* General Election
* Report on the Bolivian Tin Miners
* Workers Control

workers power

Bulletin for miners and their families

RED MINER

EDITORIAL

Vote Labour
but organise to fight!

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but organise to fight!

The election campaign has started. All the polls and the Tory papers tell us it's a foregone conclusion. *The Sun* says Thatcher will be there till 1997! So they would have us believe. All this hype is designed to make us think that nothing can be done about it. Their aim is widespread pessimism and apathy amongst working class voters, in order to keep the Labour vote down and so help guarantee a Tory victory.

No miner should be taken in by all this - **Thatcher can be defeated.** It won't be done by tactical voting, though. Some leaders in the movement, including some in the **NUM**, are advocating a vote for the Alliance where Labour is the third party. This course of action should be rejected. In no way can we see the Alliance parties as some kind of partner for Labour in a broad anti Thatcher coalition. The **Alliance parties** are *anti* working class. Just remember David Owen's role during the Great Strike. When he wasn't cheering Thatcher on he was lauding the scabs in the UDM. Indeed, both the Liberals and the SDP joined with the Tories in supporting **all** the anti union laws of the last 8 years. All talk of voting for the Alliance is wrong. It fits with the British ruling class's aim of destroying the Labour Party as the main, Trade Union based, opposition in British politics.

The truth is that, in the absence of revolutionary communist candidates, the only working class vote against Thatcher is a vote for Labour. We say this despite the Labour Party leadership's record in opposition, and despite their sickening attempts to ditch working class policies in the hopes of winning the middle class vote. Kinnock's record in opposition has been clear for all miners to see during the Great Strike. He did all in his power *not* to support the strike, and to prevent the TUC doing so. His role was one of betrayal, and that must never be forgotten. Even now during the election campaign he is stabbing militants and socialists in the back. Witness the sickening dumping of Sharon Atkin in Nottingham East for the "crime" of challenging Labour's racist record. Witness his warmed up version of Alliance policies in an attempt to win middle class votes.

What does this mean for miners who want rid of the vile Thatcher government yet are not prepared to trust their future to Kinnock ? **Red Miner** argues that we must organise to fight - whoever wins the election. If the Tories win, privatisation will be top of the agenda, alongside more redundancies and closures. If Labour wins we will have to fight against Kinnock's treachery. In particular we will have to fight to commit Labour to:

* **Reverse the closure programme. Implement a 4 day week with no loss of pay.**

* **Reinstate all the sacked men - with no strings attached.**

* **Refuse to recognise the UDM, and repeal all the anti union laws**

A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT IS NEEDED NOW!

The magnificent fighting spirit of the Great Strike is alive and well. This has nowhere been more true in recent weeks than in the actions of the sacked miners committee. Against the odds, and against the wishes of the do-nothing area officials, this committee has organised solidarity strikes in suppport of the sacked men. At the centre of this campaign has been Terry French, whose courage and refusal to accept defeat has been a driving force and an inspiration, not only to the sacked men but to the rank and file militants throughout the **NUM**.

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...Continued

His actions and attitudes stand in sharp contrast to the passivity and pessimism of area and national officials. This is particularly true in the case of Sammy Thompson, who was instrumental both in blocking Terry's campaign for the vice presidency, and now in spreading scare stories to head off militant action in support of the sacked men. Those militants who still consider that Thompson will provide a militant leadership nationally should look carefully at the record Terry French describes, and also consider the points raised in the letter from Doncaster printed elsewhere in this issue.

The report and interview with Terry French take up many issues that *Red Miner* wants to comment on. Firstly, the call for a national one day stoppage must be supported. Terry is right to say that the only thing the Board understands is strength. No amount of persuasion and negotiation from full time officials can substitute for militant action from the rank and file. The argument for a stoppage has to be taken into the branched and pits. Officials and others advising caution must be openly challenged, and the necessary arguments had out in front of the rank and file. Leaflets and bulletins arguing the case should be circulated by militants to build support. And yes, at the end of the day, if the officials try and sabotage the stoppage, it must go ahead without them. But what must be avoided is the opportunity for these officials to get off the hook by saying the whole thing was kept a secret from them and they were never involved. We must be open, and challenge the existing leadership by winning the arguments.

Apart from mobilising for a one day stoppage *Red Miner* believes the main issue raised in discussion with Terry French is how to build a rank and file movement and attitude to the present leadership. *Red Miner* has consistently argued for such a movement. We *don't* consider that it should be the "last card up Scargill's sleeve", or something that will be built in the long term, and nor do we consider Scargill to be "trapped by the rules".

Scargill is certainly becoming more isolated. The Communist Party and the Kinnockites on the NEC now outnumber the "Scargillites" - that's perfectly clear. Scargill can only rely on a minority of votes on the main issues. Faced with this situation, *Red Miner* calls on Scargill to break with the NEC majority and appeal over their heads to the rank and file. If this is against the rules then so be it. There is a more important "rule" at stake - that is the militant traditions and policies which are under daily attack from the collaborators in the areas and on the NEC. It is no good having a militant leader as President if he is going to end up a prisoner on the NEC, carrying out policies he doesn't support. The irony is that the "rules" could soon be changed if the NEC majority has its way, and a full scale campaign to defeat Scargill in a new national election will take place. In the wake of that campaign, many of the present militant positions of the NUM could be overthrown, eg opposition to both the six day week and to the UDM.

Red Miner says we can't wait for all this to happen and *then* react. The time to act is now. And the way to fight is to link up the issues and to link up the sacked men with working militants in a rank and file organisation. Those who are campaigning for reinstatement should be alongside those fighting six day working, and those fighting the UDM scabs. As a first step in this direction, *Red Miner* is arguing for a conference open to all in the NUM who are interested in building up a rank and file movement. Such a conference should be sponsored by all the existing rank and file bodies, including the sacked miners committee. Coming out of this conference will be the forms of organisation and militant policies needed to build such a movement in the teeth of opposition from both the Board and full time officials.

At the same time as arguing for a rank and file conference, we can share to some extent Terry French's fears that the movement might end up as the backyard of one or other political party - a danger currently facing the Miners' Broad Left (see article headed *Broad Left Conference*). However, that should not be used as an argument against politics or political organisations being involved. *Red Miner* puts forward its policies openly and honestly. They can be either supported or opposed. What is unacceptable is any idea that politics should be kept out of any rank and file movement. Miners, like the rest of the working class, face political problems and contending political ideas. They must be free to discuss those problems and ideas, making up their own minds after democratic debate as to which policies and positions they are ready to support.

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TERRY FRENCH

TERRY FRENCH ON THE SACKED MEN AND THE FUTURE OF THE UNION.

A committee of sacked miners has been organising unofficial protest action and campaigning on behalf of the 300 men who were denied their jobs back under the Coal Board review. Terry French has been at the centre of this campaign since it began. *Red Miner* includes a report of a meeting addressed by Terry while he was campaigning in Yorkshire, followed by a more detailed interview.

The issues raised in this report and interview are very important for the future of the NUM and for the future of rank and file opposition in particular. We invite our readers to let us know what they think of the views put forward by Terry.

Terry French began his speech to more than 60 miners from the Yorkshire area by taking up criticisms of the secret tactics recently used by sacked miners' pickets. He explained that they wanted to be open but experience of the proposed April 17th action in Yorkshire had seen Sammy Thompson ringing up branch officials telling them that men would be refused their jobs back nder the latest CB review if the action went ahead. This, said Terry, was a lie. The Board had made no such statement. But the action was held off until May 1st. Again Thompson was on the phone, blaming the action for sixteen men not being set on at Rossington (they were not started because the pit wasn't working, and they began instead on the following Monday).

"Next time we'll be sending letters to the Area Council saying we want their support", said Terry, "and by that time word will have got round we mean business." Talking about the sacked men, he said " if we can't stand on our own feet and fight for our own jobs it's a sorry thing!" He dealt with the Thompson "don't rock the boat or we won't get our jobs back" argument, saying "if anyone thinks they can talk to the Coal Board after what we've been through they want their heads looking at. The only thing they take notice of is strength." He reminded us of the two years of fruitless negotiating since the strike, and of the new regime in the pits. The feeling amongst militants up and down the coalfields is strong, he reported. "It's not just sacked men that's the issue; it's the management tactics. It's no good having one day here, one day there - all at different pits and different times. We need a concerted effort."

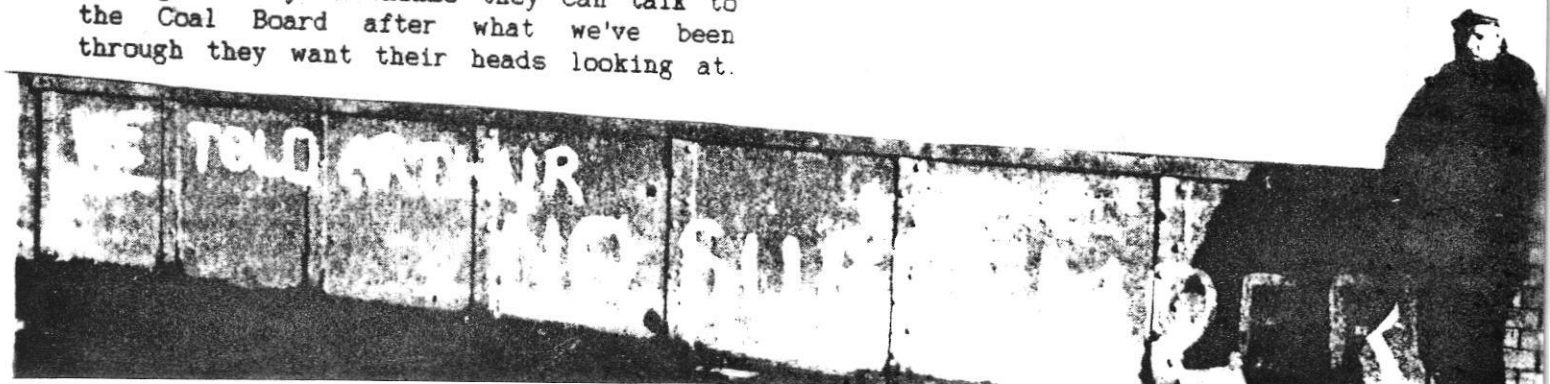
Terry told us the aim of the sacked miners committee was to get one area out at a time and have the arguments with the men in each area, building up to a one day national stoppage in the autumn, with the goal of more concerted action in the winter.

"We've got to build up so we can take the bureaucrats with us like we did in 1972 when the rank and file were strong", said Terry. "What I'll say to the rank and file is, we *can* take our own union back."

He laid the blame for the state of the union on the area barons - always running scared rather than leading the men over the issues important to them. They stood, said Terry, between the rank and file and goood leaders like Scargill and Heathfield.

"I'm a class fighter and proud of it and I just hope you lads can be part of it by coming out with us - and you'll have grievances of your own as well."

Points and questions from the floor took up the secrecy of the organisation and the need to go through the branches and the men so as not to alienate people. The sacked men spoke about how they'd first made approaches to the Area leadership and made demands on the NUM to organise a national conference of sacked miners to discuss a campaign of action, only to be knocked back - the most vociferous of those against often being Yorkshire Area officials, who seemed to want only to concern themselves with Yorkshire sacked men.



The meeting asked delegates to Yorkshire Area Council to heed the view that to pass a resolution from Nostell Colliery at the meeting on May 18th calling for unity in action on sacked men could lead to the Area leadership instructing men to go in - a licence to scab was the feeling of the meeting.

Finally Terry scotched the slander that he aimed to split the union. Speaking as a member for twenty years - and after being sacked and serving two years of a five year prison sentence for his part in the strike - he argued that the sacked men's actions could only do the union good. If he thought otherwise he wouldn't be doing it.

INTERVIEW

★★★★★★★★★

Red Miner interviewed Terry after the meeting.

RM: You were considering standing for vice president.

TF: Yes, and I was stitched up by the Kent Area. My nomination was unanimously accepted by the Bettshanger branch, representing the 700 working there, but rejected in favour of Thompson at Snowdown (representing 150 men) during an inquorate meeting where the executive made the decision for the branch. The death of J. Collins left Snowdown officials with a built in majority on the Area Council so Thompson got the nomination. I submitted two letters of acceptance with my nomination and Sammy only sent a three line letter saying he was standing, and would they endorse it.

There was minimum debate as they kept it out of the branches. I'm not saying I'd have been good at the job - I'd have had a lot to learn about negotiation - but I've one thing none of the top men have got, and that's an understanding of the miners.

RM:You said in your speech that you'd follow Scargill to the ends of the earth. Why do you think Scargill hasn't organised the rank and file?

TF: I'd say that's the last card up his sleeve.

RM: Isn't there a problem expecting the rank and file to behave like a stage army in the wings?

TF: Yes, but what else can he do with his hands tied by the rules?

RM: Can I raise the problem of secrecy again - you answered it in the meeting by saying the areas would be informed in advance so the militants could organise for support. But to challenge the officials shouldn't it go through branches and mass meetings?

TF: Yes we may get into the branches and win resolutions for action. We want to go within the branches but they just aren't doing it. They've got to be kicked.

RM: So you see the action as part ofchallenging the officials?

TF: Yes - one day here and one day there can't force the Board's hand, but they lost 2 million at Doncaster and will lose one million tomorrow in Barnsley. The idea is to activate the officials. We will be going to the Area Council tomorrow to demand support. If they were prepared to call a national conference of sacked men within four weeks we would call off the picketting.

RM: Do you see a role for a rank and file movement involving sacked and working miners?

TF: That could come out of this. First we want a national conference of sacked men and if we don't get one from the union before the national conference we'll hold one next door on the same day.

There are problems with Broad Lefts and that is those who are too interested in their own politics and not enough in miners. There's too much backbiting between those on the left.

If we could get a movement of just miners - with all the left wing lads from the coalfield interested in a rank and file movement - that would be fine. But I get sick of people trying to take it over for their own organisations.

RELEASE JAILED MINERS!

REINSTATE VICTIMISED MINERS!

Regional round up

SOUTH WALES

MARGAM

Since the last **RED MINER** there have been some important developments in the Margam situation. Most significant of all is the fact that British Coal now want national union approval of their offer before Margam can go ahead, South Wales support is no longer enough. - So much for Dutfield's sucking up to management! The offer of 6-day working will now be voted on at the NUM's national conference in July. Arthur Scargill had correctly argued that the whole concept of 6-day working should be put to a ballot of the full membership, but his relative isolation on the Executive meant that he lost this important argument.

Meanwhile since the Area conference in March the South Wales leadership has been given the dubious support of Neil Kinnock, who praised their "courage and foresight"; David Hunt, the Coal Minister; and the SDP in Wales - strange "allies" indeed! In addition the recent Wales TUC conference also gave it's backing, with Dutfield remarking that all he had tried to do was "try and practise a little bit of socialism"!!

CONFERENCE

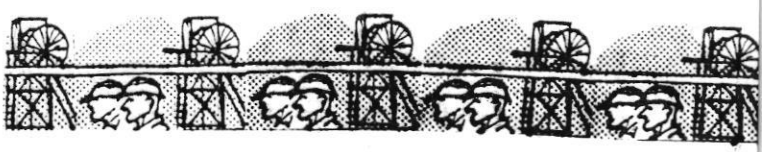
This years annual South Wales conference was dominated by Margam and the outstanding pay rise. Predictably they were used for several veiled (and not so veiled) attacks on Arthur Scargill. Even retiring vice President Mick McGahey was wheeled out to support Dutfield's sell-out. In his Presidential address to conference Dutfield again used working practices in other areas to justify local talks with management on 6-day working and talked of the need for "realism and responsibility ie capitulation to management demands. At least he brought himself to say that if Margam didn't go ahead then it would be BC that would be mainly responsible - so having played into the hands of BC management in their attempt to split the NUM, Dutfield now says he puts union unity before Margam. What hypocrisy !

STRIKES

The acceptance by the Area leadership of the principle of 6-day working is already having implications for S. Wales miners. There have been disputes at, several pits over managements attempts to introduce new shift patterns, most significant of these was at Lady Windsor Colliery where the men went on strike for a week in protest. Likewise, there was a 24-hour strike at Abernant over the same issue. Both strikes were solid. Clearly, management feel that they can now push through attacks on working conditions on a pit-by-pit basis, these will obviously increase if 6-day working at Margam is accepted.

STOP PRESS

The latest news from South Wales was a 24 hour strike at Deep Navigation over underground working. Another strike at Penallta Colliery started on the 13th over wet working conditions underground. So far the three day strike has involved the whole workforce. Men decide over the weekend whether to continue.



INTERVIEW

To get some idea of the views of S. Wales miners on Margam, **RED MINER** talked to a rank and file miner from Trelewis Drift. This was one of the few pits (Tower was another) that discussed Margam before the Area meeting in Porthcawl, mandating their delegates to vote against 6-day working - one of the 7 out of 20 lodges to do so.

* What is the feeling of rank and file miners to BC's offer?

- Everyone I've talked to is dead against 6-day working. If there was a ballot tomorrow in South Wales it would be overwhelmingly against. It's going back 50 years, its bad enough doing a 5-day week, never mind 6 days, and in any case the national policy is for 4-day working.

* What about BC's claim (and Dutfield's acceptance) that 6-day working at Margam would mean less hours and more holidays?

- I don't believe a word BC say after what's happened during and since the strike, we can't trust them one bit.

* And the prospect of 800 new jobs?

- Margam won't create new jobs. They'll shut the other S. Wales pits that supply coking coal - Marine, Six Bells and Oakdale. Nationally, 6-day working would probably mean the closure of around 30 pits.

* What do you think of the role of the S. Wales Executive?

- They are so out of touch with the membership it's unbelievable. It's **they** who are the collaborators Scargill talks of, not the rank and file miners of South Wales, I resent the accusations that have been made about us. Since the strike the Area leadership has done nothing but retreat and now they are backstabbing on Margam. Even NACODS in South Wales are unwilling to discuss Margam at area level, only at national level.

* Will you be supporting Tower Lodge's campaign against the decision of the S. Wales conference?

- Yes of course, but I don't really think it's needed, the mood of the men is so against the whole idea of 6-day working.

COVENTRY & DAW MILL REPORT

A further strike in support of sacked lads took place on April 21st with good support - 8,000 on strike in this area. Even Daw Mill turned no coal on day shift that day, in spite of management threats to the small but growing number of NUM members there.

But there's a problem - Coventry NUM secretary Barry Daynes was reported in the local paper as saying the strike was well supported and "official" but "futile", since the management won't budge. A militant few from Daw Mill admitted truthfully that "we've got nothing to pressurise them with here at the moment". It's true that the men will not continue one day stoppages indefinitely with no prospect of getting the sacked lads reinstated. But there's plenty to think about - Coventry broke records and the men all got a free plate to hang on their walls (see last issue for details!). Why does this happen when NUM members remain sacked?

Superpit Daw Mill and the proposed new pit near Coventry will be earmarked for privatisation and six day working if all attacks on the NUM aren't fought, and that includes reinstating the sacked lads.

The April 21st strike was a great response but it needs to be made national. Regional and national officials should be pressurised into campaigning for the sacked lads, instead of letting McGahey tour the coalfields trying to further isolate Scargill. The will to fight exists - no real campaign on the one day strike took place as the ballot for it was only announced three days before the voting took place - yet there was a 51% vote in favour of striking in this area.

Also of interest to Daw Mill members in their continuing struggle with the UDM was the following news from a steward at General Industrial Cleaners, Borrowdale, Derbyshire. As from July 31st, 1987, Sketchely Cleaners have got an important contract, previously done by the above firm, to launder British Coal overalls. Sketchely managed to undercut for the contract as they are paying only the minimum wages laid down by the Laundry Wages Council. The UDM are recruiting Sketchely workers in South Derbyshire Are they being taken to the cleaners?!?

Back the sacked miners

Apology

It was unfortunately stated in our last report that the president of Coventry Branch NUM crossed a picket line put on in support of the sacked lads in the power group, and supported by the vast majority of NUM members. The *secretary* went in to work, not the president, Robbie Wilson, who wouldn't cross a picket line: ballot or no ballot! Our apologies to Robbie Wilson.

INTERVIEW WITH ERIC LIPPITT

At the Birmingham May Day rally, Red Miner caught up with Eric Lippitt, a recent candidate in the NUM vice presidential election.

Red Miner: How do you view the situation in the NUM since the vice presidential election? And in particular, what's the position of the sacked men?

Eric Lippitt: locally, on Easter Tuesday, the whole of the Midlands area took a day of action ,in support of the sacked men. Of the 114 who have been reinstated, not one has been in the Midlands area. We think they are singling out individuals they want to keep out - even men who've won tribunals for unfair dismissal.

RM: What is likely to happen after this one day strike?

EL: One option is the possibility of a Labour government coming into office - resolved to reinstate the sacked men. But the main point is that the 350 lads still sacked throughout the country will only be reinstated as a result of *national* action on the Midlands model. That's the best way of going forward. Despite the problems of having been on strike for 12 months, we must never let the issue go away.

RM: Has the message been taken to other areas of the NUM?

EL: To get 100% support in the Midlands area - which is supposed to be "moderate" - gives over a very strong message. Our example should give the other areas the kind of moral support needed. And we shall take this message to the annual NUM conference on behalf of the Midlands Area Council. I must also say that the Midlands area considers its own action to be the start, not the finish.

RM: What's your view of talking to UDM leaders?

EL: NUM policy of winning the rank and file back to the NUM is correct and in our area is successful. The UDM membership is virtually down to nil - and of the handful left, some joined our one day strike. As far as the UDM leaders are concerned they should never be allowed back into the NUM. They are traitors. They tried to put people in jail. NUM officials will replace them.

RM: What's your view of the arguments around Margam?

EL: We should negotiate at national level. Of course we want the pit at Margam But we should do it as we have ever since 1947 - sort it out at national level. I understand the position of the South Wales leaders but the decision should be taken by the rank and file, perhaps in a ballot. Not to do this is to play into the hands of the Board, who want to break the NUM into small area units. And in the case of Margam, if we're not careful the 800 jobs talked about will come from closures and redundancies elsewhere.

RM: What's your view of Sammy Thompson's victory in the election?

EL: I've known Sam for quite some time and I'm glad he won. My own personal choice would have been Sam if I'd been a voter. I don't think the rumours of him being anti Scargill are true. Sam is a proper, national, NUM leader. Sam shares the same views as me about the South Wales issue, about pay, about the UDM leaders, ad about conciliation procedures.



YORKSHIRE

All 8 pits in the Doncaster area solidly supported the sacked miners on May 1st by taking unofficial strike action in response to the pickets at the gates. 9,000 men were on strike.

The action planned for the Barnsley area was sabotaged by the area officials who, having found out about the proposed protest pickets, and knowing they wouldn't get men to cross picket lines, went for the sacked men. Men were warned off by their area officials, leaving insufficient pickets for the day (May 18th). The men decided to call it off rather than confuse the rank and file by putting out only three quarters of the pits.

YORKSHIRE, CONT.

Armthorpe: Men returned to work on Monday, May 18th, after a successful stoppage involving safety and the management's right to manage.

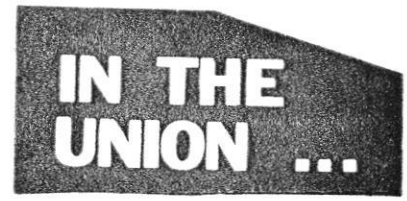
A chargeman was told to open a gate that he considered unsafe. He said he would make a walkway or go round, but not through. He was ordered to ask the two men with him to go through. He refused and was sacked. The two men with him were also sacked. The union found the safety work being done by deputies. At a subsequent meeting the men were reinstated - with the manager claiming they'd never been sacked, adding that the manager runs the pit, nobody else, and if he says it's safe then it's safe. This was obviously the thinking behind the next move, when they moved the chargeman off the unit, saying he was a bad influence! It seems the men were more inclined to do what he said than what the management said. The shift walked out at this news and no other shifts worked on Friday, May 15th. Management withdrew at the meeting on Monday 18th with the union.

More pit closures have been announced, with Treeton and Manvers - both in South Yorkshire - to go.

The Area Council had several interesting resolutions to discuss on Monday, May 18th. A resolution from Nostell called for a unified area policy on unofficial picketting. This was withdrawn. Possibly, delegates had heard of the hostile reaction such a move would receive. Some argued, at a meeting of rank and file miners in Wakefield, that the resolution was tantamount to a "licence to scab". Jack Taylor spoke out against such meetings, saying they had no right to know about or discuss Area business - well Jack, I don't know whose business it is, if not that of **NUM** members.

A resolution on an overtime ban on the pay issue, and another demanding a special delegate conference on wages, were both lost.

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MINERS' BROAD LEFT CONFERENCE

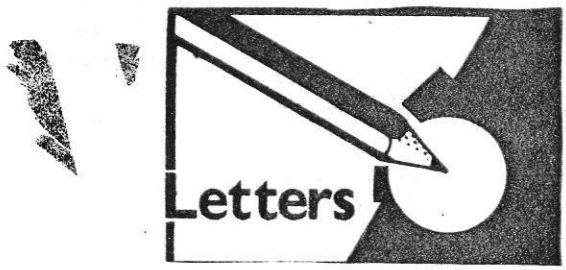
Miners from Durham, Lancashire, Wales, Staffordshire, Yorkshire, Scotland and Nottinghamshire attended the second miners' Broad Left Conference in Chesterfield on March 28th. 59 delegates (about half the number who attended the first conference in the autumn) discussed privatisation, the Wheeler Plan, **Margam**, union democracy and organisation, and the future of the Broad Left.

The major disagreement centred around the **Militant Tendency**'s vision of the Broad Left's role versus the **Socialist Worker Party**'s vision. Both organisations agreed on support for disputes and the need to campaign against the Wheeler Plan and the 6 day week. Both groups recognised the threat posed by privatisation. But a key difference emerged over the question of a Labour Government. **Militant** argued for a campaign for a "Labour Government committed to bold socialist policies"; the **SWP** for a "campaign against any illusions that a Kinnock government will solve the problems of the miners", and "to develop an understanding of the role of many union officials in strengthening the reliance on the return of a Labour government and in selling out strikes".

A *Red Miner* supporter's resolution on fighting for a "national overtime ban as the way to begin a national fightback against the Board's attacks" was passed 43 to 16, but there was no commitment to take it up at branch level

The **Militant**'s main concern, it seems, is to continue the Broad Left as an organisation around their own miner supporters - while the **SWP** had come to continue their debate with **Militant**.

The set piece argument between these two organisations failed to address the question of the need to build a rank and file movement capable of challenging the officials and winning the action necessary to stop the Board's attacks. A real working rank and file conference would have taken up the questions of how to build the movement's paper in the areas; the use of the paper; and the use of bulletins to link up and support disputes.



THOMPSON -

Dear Comrades,

having just come across th March/April edition on the vic presidential elections, the matter is, suppose, somewhat academic now. However just for the record your comment: "... Thompson has never been a leading critic of Scargill..." is not actually true at all.

In the secret society of that national assembly of careerists and professional "militants", the "Broad Left" - not to be confused with the open, rank and file, Broad Left - Thompson has on more than one occasion savagely criticised Arthur. At the same time he has mercilessly attacked the *Rank and File Miner* and its supporters, and accused Arthur of secretly supporting it too.

The *Financial Times* of December 30th, 1985, in a "learned" article by John LLoyd, put the knife in right up to the hilt with the headline: ***The Decline of Mr Scargill***. It went on to report the secret "Broad Left" conference of December 14th and 15th, quoting Thompson as saying: *"I don't know what world you're living in* (ie Scargill) *but it ain't the one I'm living in."* The article went on:

"Backed by Ken Homer, the Yorkshire financial secretary, and others from that coalfield, Thompson revealed a particular grudge against his president - that he had backed a new ultra left "rank and file" miners group at Barnsley, hostile to the Yorkshire leadership. The accusation, in short, was that the NUM President was organising an alternative left in Yorkshire."

The article goes on to tell us that Thompson told Arthur he was "out of touch with the realities of post strike pit life."

You surely cannot have forgotten the disgraceful attempt last year to ban Arthur from any official presence at the Yorkshire Miners' Gala - a snub carried out personally by the Area's General Secretary with the approval of the other officials. It was only when Hatfield invited Arthur to march with them as a guest of the branch - making a public showdown,with Arthur and the rank and file on the one hand, Thompson *et al* on the other, a real possibility - that they belatedly invited Arthur along.

Being the absolute careerist he is, Thompson saw a rung up the ladder to the vice presidency by lashing himself to Scargill's mast. Suddenly he has become the great Scargill's man. It was a winning formula, not least because Arthur, fearing the Communist Paty's "new realism", threw his weight behind Thompson in the belief (mistaken in my view) that he could be more easily kept on the rails than Clarke. This remains to be seen.

Of late Thompson has spread the poison thick and fast against the sacked mens' inspiring efforts to organise industrial action - phoning up Branch Secretaries and telling them to ignore picket lines; and threatening all sorts of isolation to those officials thought to be "in league" with the sacked pickets.

Thompson hasn't changed. We've only to see how he uses his position as vice president. I doubt if he will assist the sacked men, the rank and file or, for that matter, Arthur Scargill.

A Doncaster miner



THE BATTLE FOR BOLIVIA'S MINES

"Miners need rank and file control over their unions; they need a revolutionary party." With these words, a Bolivian trotskyist involved in the Bolivian tin miners' struggles ended an inspiring meeting in Dunscroft, Doncaster - near Hatfield Main pit - on May 3rd. The meeting was part of a successful visit to Britain of three Bolivian revolutionaries, organised by **Workers Power**. During the visit they spoke at May Day rallies in Birmingham and Leicester, and met British miners to pass on the experience of the militant resistance of Bolivia's miners to their government's attacks, and to build support for their victimised comrade, Eleuterio Guttierez .

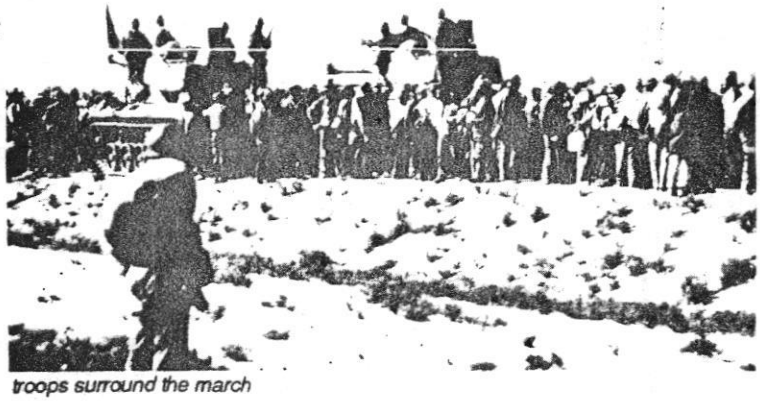
At the Dunscroft meeting and in an interview with ***Workers Power*** newspaper they stressed the similarities between the situation of Bolivian and British miners. Both have been taken on by their government because they are in the vanguard of resistance to the bosses' attacks. The number of Bolivian miners has been cut from 27,000 to 6,000 in the last two years, and the government is trying to privatise the remaining pits. Both have courageously resisted these attacks, only to be betrayed by the official leaders of the labour movements - in Britain the TUC; in Bolivia the C.O.B. - and by the reformist politicians who claim to represent their interests. But here the similarities end. Bolivia is under the domination of imperialist countries like Britain and the USA; in fact it was the collapse of the tin prices on the London Stock Exchange, and the demands of the International Monetary Fund, which sparked the attack on the Bolivian miners - workers who earn less in a month than British miners do in two days. With no social security, the alternative to fighting redundancies is starvation.

As in Britain, the Bolivian government's attack on the miners was part of an attack on the whole working class. In 1985 the "New Economic Policy" of President Victor Paz Esterissoro aimed at abolishing state subsidies on basic foodstuffs and controls on prices, as well as the complete dismantling of nationalised industry including COMIBOL, the Bolivian Mining Corporation. After a defeated general strike in August 1985 the miners fought back again only a year later, this time joined by teachers, textile workers, peasants and students. 5,000 miners set out from Oruro, the mining centre, on a long march to the capital city, La Paz, to make their views about pit closures and privatisation known to President Esterissoro in person! (It was the miners, armed with dynamite sticks from their pits, who led the 1952 nationalist revolution by occupying La Paz.) After six days of marching the miners were joined by factory workers, teachers and students - numbers grew to 12,000. Despite real poverty, peasants and local townspeople gave food and shelter to the marchers.

With regional general srikes breaking out and the marchers nearing La Paz, the government ordered the closure of all "non productive" (ie non profitable) pits and increased intimidation of the marchers by the army. The march continued, despite a lack of leadership from the C.O.B (Bolivian TUC), who did next to nothing to spread the growing resistance to the government's austerity. The Stalinist dominated FSTMB (miners union) officials bureaucratically controlled the march and tried to slow it down, shirking their leadership responsibilities by giving no advice on what to do in the face of government armed intervention. A marcher described what happened next:

"At Callamarca - only 57 kilometres from La Paz - three army regiments surrounded the march. The soldiers had special orders to allow nobody to enter or leave the circle. They allowed no food or drink to reach the marchers for two days and had orders to shoot anyone breaking through the cordon. The mass of the miners wanted to stay there - to refuse to retreat - but the bureaucrats called for an 'orderly return' to the mining centres."
The marchers eventually returned to Oruro where "the populace gave a very warm welcome with constant applause but also many people were in tears. They had a deep feeling of the scale of things because, in an important sense, the future of the vanguard of the Bolivian proletariat had been decided."

Despite this the Bolivian miners have fought on to this day, replacing the bankrupt leaders of their own union and leading a two week hunger strike against the government's attacks.



troops surround the march

Their continued resistance in spite of the odds should be an inspiration to British miners. So too should the revolutionary conclusions many of them have drawn from their struggles. In the words of another of the Bolivian revolutionaries who spoke at the Dunscroft meeting, "if the proletariat does not resolve the question of political power and take it for itself then the bourgeoisie will wait and sieze the right moment to claw back any concessions it has been forced to make."

CLASS WAR PRISONERS

FREE ELEUTERIO GUTTIEREZ

It is now 18 months since he was arrested in the midst of a general strike against the government's austerity programme in Bolivia. Despite the case against Eleuterio falling apart at the seams, with the main witness against him admitting his statements were untrue and made at the instigation of the mining police of the State Mining Corporation, Eleuterio remains in prison and in danger of being given a gaol sentence.

The campaign in Britain has been hampered by misinformation from a 'human rights organisation in Bolivia'. Baroness Young, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, used this to incorrectly claim that Gutierrez had only been arrested in May 1986 and had been caught 'red-handed', with five others, stealing from his pit. None of this is true and evidence from official records in Bolivia exposing this misinformation has been given to the Labour MPs who have taken up the case. Unfortunately the NUM using the same source has refused a request from the NUM Group No.1 Area to take up the case. This is also being contested.

We call again on Trade Union and Labour Party bodies to take up this case and once again protest to the Bolivian Embassy in Britain at 106, Eaton Square, London SW1.

Financial assistance is still desparately needed for Eleuterio's family. All donations and further information from Free Eleuterio Gutierrez Campaign.

c/o Steve Masterson,
14 Dennington House,
Dennington Park Road,
London NW6.

SOUTH AFRICA

RELEASE MAYEKISO!

Moses Mayekiso is general secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union in South Africa. He is on trial for supposed treason against South Africa's racist apartheid regime. If he is found guilty he may be hanged.

Red Miner urges all its readers throughout the country to join a mass campaign to free Moses. Resolutions need to be passed, letters sent, and demonstrations and pickets attended to help force his release.

Moses' trial comes at a time when the apartheid regime is turning the screw on anti apartheid activists following the recent general election. That is why renewed efforts should be made to build a serious campaign for workers' sanctions against apartheid. To this end the Campaign for Trade Union Sanctions Against Apartheid (CTUSAA) is holding a conference later this year which we urge all *Red Miner* readers to support.

WORKERS' SANCTIONS AGAINST APARTHEID

SATURDAY 26th, SEPTEMBER

BIRMINGHAM

Carrs Lane Church Centre
Carrs Lane
(Near New Street)

11am to 5pm

For further details write to CTUSAA
c/o 17 Porden Road Brixton London SW2 55A

Or ring 01 733 7063 (ask for Bronwen Handyside)

Trade Union and Labour Party delegates particularly welcome.

MARCH

DURHAM SATURDAY JUNE 13TH 2PM

STOP STRIP SEARCHES!

Irish solidarity must be built in Britain

In Maghaberry Prison in Northern Ireland, and in Durham Prison, Irish women prisoners suffer regular strip-searching.

The women who have been through them say that the searches are extremely imtimidating and humiliating. They are part of the British Government's attempt to break the morale of women it suspects of resisting its control of part of Ireland. The searches are part and parcel of the repressive measures that are necessary to control a population that wants an end to rule by Britain and is fighting back.

Other women who are seen as a threat to the state are being strip-searched too. Black women such as the Southall Black Sisters, Greenham women, and Women Against Pit Closures have all suffered this degrading practice.

As part of the campaign against strip-searching a demonstration has been called to demand an end to state violence against women. It is being held in Durham to support two Irish women held in Durham Gaol. *Martina Anderson* and *Ella O'Dwyer* were each searched 25 times a month on average, as well as having body-searches, cell-searches and cell-changes while they were on remand in Brixton in 1985-86.

During their trial last year this was stepped up to 60 searches a month! Now as sentenced prisoners, they are being held in Durham top-security gaol - and the searches continue....

Red Miner urges all miners and women of the mining communities to mobilise for this demonstration and support the demands for:

* Troops Out of Ireland Now!
* Self Determination for the Irish People!
* Stop Strip-Searches!
* Free All Republican Prisoners!

There will be coaches to Durham leaving Sheffield at 10.30am (which will include a women only coach). Seats are by ticket only and cost £6 (£3 unwaged).

Tickets are available from The Independent bookshop, Surrey Street, Sheffield 1, or by post from P.O. Box 104, Sheffield 1.

WORKERS' CONTROL

Over the years the question of workers control has been discussed a great deal in the NUM. Two of its most prominent left leaders have held opposed opinions about it. *Peter Heathfield* has argued for workers control as a sort of joint partnership between the NCB and the NUM through an increased level of union representatives on the Management Boards.

Arthur Scargill on the other hand has rejected this as a procedure that would blur the distinction between bosses and workers and tie the hands of the unions.

As far as it goes Scargill is right. He is right against the advocates of workers' participation in capitalist management.

ONE BIG CAPITALIST

After 1947 for decades many miners thought or hoped they had escaped from the bad old days when coal owners represented the most ruthless expression of capitalism. But as pits closed and the number of miners decreased from 716,000 to just over 200,000 by the 1970's, miners began to realise that they had swapped hundreds of little capitalists for one big capitalist.

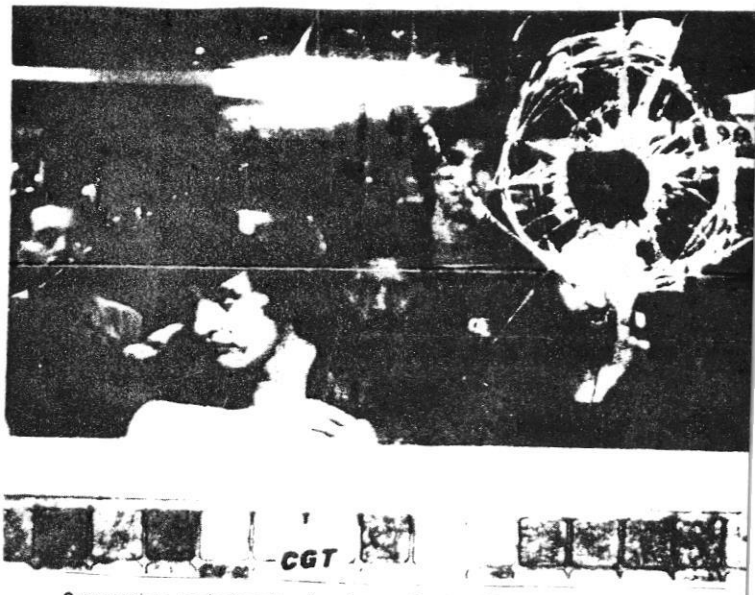
The NCB was always run for the benefit of the capitalist class as a whole, not the miners. Compensation, interest payments, cheap fuel for private industry, rake-offs for contractors as well as profits bled the industry just as had the old royalties and dividends.

So Arthur Scargill was right to oppose all talk of "industrial democracy". The experience of these schemes in other industries - militant ones like the car industry - has proved him correct. The Ryder Participation Scheme in British Leyland enthusiastically backed by the Communist Party destroyed a powerful shop stewards system and enabled management to chop up the satate combine inflicting terrible job losses.

TRAP?

But what is Arthur Scargill's alternative? Just militant trade unionism. He argues that under capitalism workers' control is impossible or is a dangerous trap but under socialism it wouldn't be necessary - you'd have management by the *workers'* state.

What he doesn't answer is how to get from capitalism to socialism. Nor is this an unimportant question. Capitalism is destroying jobs, communities and attempting to destroy effective trade unionism.



Occupation against redundancies at Peugeot-Talbot's Poissy plant, 1982

Pure trade union strength, be it as militant as that of the NUM, is insufficient on its own to protect workers against a serious attack by the capitalist class. Why? Because unions like the NUM represent only a section of the working class. Its funds and resources are only such as its members can save through subscriptions. The 84/85 strike showed how vulnerable and insufficient these resources are.

Against the NUM is arrayed capitalism as an economic system - the laws of the market, profitability, the ability to import commodities from parts of the world where costs of production are lower. The argument of "economic viability" is a powerful one for other sections of workers not involved in a particular fight. It can only be fought with a total alternative for society of planned production for need.

BOSSES' STATE

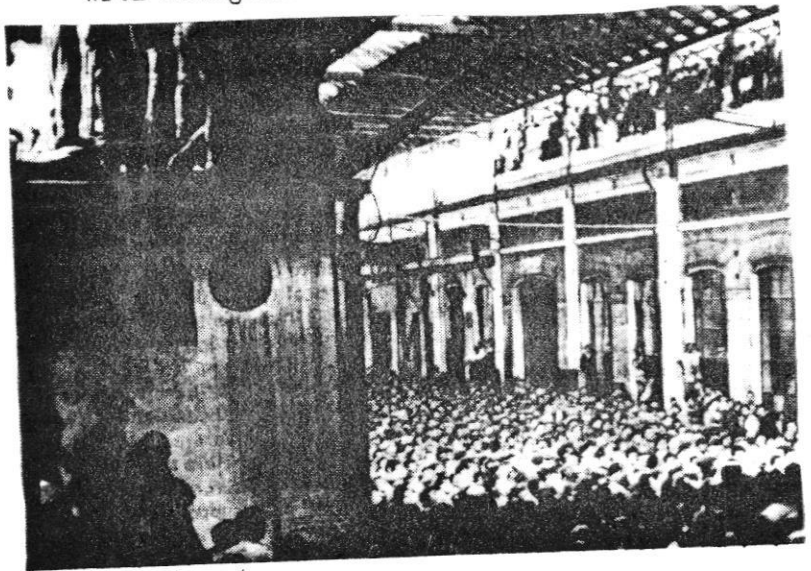
In addition the militant trade union has arrayed against it the capitalist state in all its branches - judges, police, government etc. The "democratic state" - as the 84/85 strike showed - is clearly a bosses' state. Law was bent, twisted, and made up to deport , arrest and imprison miners, and seize NUM funds. The Government did not play the game according to democratic rules. They went all out to win.

Worse - in a sense - we also discovered ,that the bosses and Tories had their agents in the Labour movement who isolated the miners from the mass, decisive help which would have ensured victory.

In the end militant trade unionsm was not enough. It could work when and where capitalism was reasonably prosperous and could be coerced into making concessions. This is what happened in 1972 and '74. But when the Tories set out to claw back these concessions - when "economic factors" were on their side, when they had defeated other sections of workers (steel, cars, health, etc.) - then the miners for all their matchless courage and strength were painfully vulnerable.

Militant trade unionism in the mines as in the car factories had indeed limited 'management's right to manage'. On the car assembly lines the shop stewards won "mutuality" - speed and manning levels couldn't be changed without their approval.

In a sense this control, this check on management's prerogatives, was an underdeveloped form of workers' control. But in the long run trade union control can only be defended by advancing it to a whole new level without in the slightest entering into collaboration with management.



Mass meeting of occupiers



Only workers control can make technology serve the workers

CONTROL

Workers' Control is the fight to establish a veto, a check over allsignificant management decisions. This includes hiring and firing, speeds and intensity of work, health and safety conditions, lenght of work time, and the expansion or contraction of production. All these "prerogatives" are weapons in the bosses' hands that they use against us. We need to mobilise our full conscious strength to wrest them from their hands.

To do this effectively we need to break open the business secrecy of the management. To send in workers inspectors to open the books, the computers, and the management boards and committees where they plot and conspire against us.

This would not mean sending isolated NUM officials to sit on boards as a junior partner bound by commercial secrecy but sending delegates elected by the rank and file to collect and publish information and to intervene to block managements' dirty tricks.

But surely, people will say, management will never wear this? 'They must be made' is our answer. But how? By mass mobilisation for these objectives and by that we musn't just limit the struggle for workers' control to one industry.

Unlike the "Plan for Coal" which really could only galvanise the mining areas the fight for workers' control against all redundancies and the destruction of industry can draw in millions. It can unite the whole working class behind militant vanguard sections like the miners. It can make a reality of otherwise empty slogans like "people before profit". It can make millions aware of both the need and the possibility of overthrowing capitalism.

For when millions have risen up to check the butchers of jobs and communities then nationalisation can be posed in a totally different way. We can practically pose the need for a planned economy that allocates resources to meet need centrally but which is based on the democratically organised workplace. Workers' control against the bosses in every workplace can become the training ground for self-management, workers' management.

Of course the great obstacle of the bosses' state will have to be overcome, to be broken up, to allow for the expropriation of the big banks, the giant firms with no compensation to the millionaires who have fattened themselves from our labour for two hundred years or more.

But the struggle for workers' control can link today's struggles against unemployment, against closures against the dictatorial plans of management to speed up and intensify work while millions are on the dole to the decisive battle to abolish capitalism.

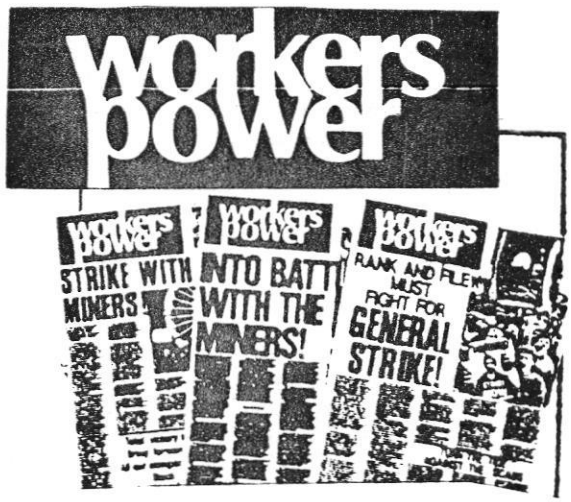
It can act as a bridge for the working class from today's isolated, defensive struggles to the great revolutionary upsurge that alone can despatch capitalism into the historic past for good and all.

OUT NOW!

THE CLASS STUGGLE AND THE ELECTIONS

Vote Labour but organise to fight!

A Workers Power pamphlet 75p



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WHERE WE STAND

Red Miner

The Red Miner is produced by members and supporters of Workers Power. Workers Power is a revolutionary organisation fighting to build 'a new revolutionary party to overthrow capitalism - at home and abroad.

Workers' struggles

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

Reformism

The trade union and Labour leaders believe capitalism can be reformed, made better, but they do not aim to overthrow capitalism. They act as go-betweens for the bosses with the workers. Even militant leaders limit their struggle to the fight for gains within capitalism. For this reason we are for building rank and file movements politically independent of the bureaucracy and committed to transforming the unions into democratic, class struggle unions.

Revolutionary Party

A revolutionary party will be a workers' party, a party that, built in stuggle, can learn and pass on the lessons of the 1984-5 strike and other struggles. We stand for miners taking their place in the front ranks of building such a party as they did in the 1920's. Only by building a new revolutionary party can we create the class army that can fight and destroy the stinking capitalist system that threatens us with always having to fight to protect our jobs, conditions and organisations.

Internationalism

We are committed to fighting capitalism internationally. We strive to build an international organisation of revolutionary parties. (Workers Power works with Irish, German, French, Austrian and Chilean revolutionaries in the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International.) In particular we fight nationalist solutions to the crisis put forward by reformists like calls for import controls. Such demands merely divide the working class.

Divisions

We fight all divisions in the working class. Divisions are fostered by the bosses to weaken us. We are implacably opposed to racism, immigration controls, fascism, discrimination against and oppresion of women, lesbians, gay men or black people.

The oppressed

We support all struggles by people oppressed by the bosses of Britain, America, France, Italy and the other capitalist (imperialist) countries. Immediately in Britain this means we support the right of the Irish people as a whole (not just those in the North) to determine the fate of their country. We unconditionally support the republicans and socialists in Ireland fighting for this right and demand the immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland.

Workers' states

The USSR, Eastern Europe, etc are workers' states. Capitalism has been abolished. However, in each of these states a bureaucracy, based on the Stalinist Communist Parties, holds political power. This situation arose out of the international isolation of the Russian Revolution in the 1920's. The revolution degenerated at the hands of the bureaucracy headed by Stalin. The other workers' states were degenerate from birth in that they were created in the bureaucratic image of the USSR.

Therefore we call for a political revolution in all of these states to overthrow the bureaucracy and realise the full potential of these non-capitalist economies through democratic planning. At the same time, in order to preserve the gain for the working class represented by these economies, we defend the USSR and degenerate workers' states unconditionally against imperialism which, through war, will seek to re-introduce capitalism in these countries.

Overthrow capitalism

The revolutionary party we seek to build will have as its strategic goal the overthrow of capitalism by workers organised into workers' councils and armed so as to defeat the police and army that the bosses have used, and will use again, against us. We are for a socialist society in which all property is in the hands of the workers' state and all production is directed towards the meeting of human need, not satisfying the profit greed of the capitalists. We stand on the old slogan of Karl Marx:

Workers of the world unite.
You have nothing to lose but your chains,
and a world to win!