RED MINER

No 19 December '87

VOTE SCARGILL

— but organise the rank and file!



election special!

10p

workers power

Bulletin for miners and their families

RED MINER

EDITORIAL

ARTHUR SCARGILL'S DECISION to stand for re-election in the NUM presents an opportunity to rebuff the claims from every quarter that the NUM now favours 'new realism'. John Walsh, Scargill's opponent is a thorough-going new realist. No miner should vote for him. But nor should miners vote for Arthur Scargill in the belief that his re-election in and of itself will solve the problems facing them.

Walsh's campaigning slogan is 'negotiation not confrontation'. Anyone who looks at his record will realise that his slogan should really be 'sell-out not struggle'. One of the leading Yorkshire officials to oppose the stand of the Cortonwood miners which started the Great Strike, he has done nothing since the end of the strike to fight pit closures in North Yorkshire.

Without a doubt Walsh is, in this election, the candidate of Haslam, Lynk and Thatcher.

However, as any miner knows, the main opponents of Scargill on the Executive, and the leaders of the retreat in the NUM, have not been the right wing but Scargill's old allies in the Broad Left.

Des Dutfield and the South Wales leadership have been leading the campaign to introduce six day working in the coalfields. George Bolton, Eric Clarke and the Scottish leadership have presided over the massacre of jobs in their area to the level where there are now less than 3,500 miners north of the border.

The response of these gentlemen has shown exactly how cowardly and treacherous they really are. Dutfield has gone running to the same courts that stole the NUM's money, in an attempt to get the election called off,while George Bolton has led the Scottish area into publicly refusing to back Scargill in the election. So far the soft left hasn't dared to come out and publicly support Walsh. They know that Walsh, if he can split the Yorkshire vote, has the best chance of beating Scargill, and that is the real reason for them refusing to take up Scargill's challenge by standing a candidate. They want Walsh to do their dirty work for them, and privately they want him to win.

> Peter Heathfield, at a meeting in Yorkshire, said that 'Arthur Scargill is a loyal servant of the National Executive' . . . And that is the major flaw in Scargill's politics.

But a real danger for militants is that they will rely on Scargill to see off the right and soft-left single-handedly. He may believe he can do this. But the past period shows he quite definitely cannot. He has confined himself to a bureaucratic strategy that has contributed to his isolation on the Executive. His decision to stand does not signal a break with this strategy.

Since the end of the Great Strike, rank and file miners have shown a willingness to take up the fight against the Board. In 1986/87 only 15 pits were not involved in industrial action of some sort and only last week, miners at Deep Navigation in South Wales struck in defence of conditions. The national and area leaderships have spent the last two years trying to keep the lid on the explosion of anger in the pits.

This summer's strike in South Yorkshire over the implementation of the disciplinary code at Frickley had, with its likelihood of spreading to the rest of Yorkshire, the best chance since the strike of turning back the Board's offensive. These few weeks saw Sammy Thompson, Jack Taylor and the Yorkshire Executive working overtime to get miners back to work in return for a completely useless national overtime ban. Throughout those two weeks Scargill was silent.

The weekend after Scargill announced his resignation, Peter Heathfield, at a meeting in Yorkshire, said that 'Arthur Scargill is a loyal servant of the National Executive'. And that is the major flaw in Scargill's politics. He has refused to break with the Executive, appeal over their heads to the membership, and actively organise those militants who want to fight. Even his resignation, while obviously giving him the chance to campaign for his policies amongst the membership, remains a bureaucratic manoeuvre to safeguard his position on the Executive.

At the recent S O Davies memorial lecture in South Wales, Scargill made one of his most left wing speeches for many months. He denounced trade union leaders who during the Great Strike 'betrayed the miners by accepting deliveries of foreign coal and oil, and actively encouraged their members to break our picket lines'. He attacked the 'new realism' of Des Dutfield as 'absolute nonsense' and stated that 'only direct action—including industrial action—can halt the utter destruction of those basic institutions such as the NHS or, indeed, the coal industry'.

We certainly agree with many of the things Scargill has said over the last months in favour of industrial action. But the question we ask of Scargill is this: how do you propose to get industrial action when the union leadership is stuffed fulll of 'new realists'? The National Executive meeting where Scargill announced his resignation refused to even call a special delegate conference to discuss the situation in the pits. Only the rank and file miners organised in a rank and file movement can halt the Board and the right in the NUM.

Arthur Scargill himself was once in favour of organising the rank and file. He played a key role in the old Barnsley Miners' Forum and the old Broad Left. But the political objective of these organisations was to gain control of the union machine—not to fight for genuine socialist policies and rank and file control of the union. Having got Scargill elected, the rank and file organisations withered away and the Broad Left became a semi secret bloc on the Area and National Executives. This 'Broad Left' is now leading the retreat.

Militants must use the opportunities offered by the election campaign to build a rank and file movement that can begin a campaign for the national strike that is necessary to hurl back British Coals's offensive. Otherwise the re-election of Scargill will change nothing.

If Scargill refuses to break with the union machine and to actively organise the rank and file then rank and file miners must organise without him. Taking inspiration from the Miners' Minority Movement of the 1920s a new rank and file movement can mobilise thousands of miners around: resistance to all pit closures, against six day working and for a four day week, no to the disciplinary code, and for workers' control in the pits. In addition, the rank and file need to control the NUM. Five-yearly elections do not represent genuine democracy. The NEC should be elected by, and accountable to, a delegate conference composed of representatives elected directly from each pit. The president, vice president and secretary should be elected at pithead meetings, after a full debate, and for one year only.

Only if these issues are taken up in the election campaign can the tide be turned and 'new realism' defeated in the ranks of the NUM.

- **Vote Arthur Scargill!**
- **Build a rank and file movement!**

Red Miner is printed and published by **Workers Power** BCM 7750, London WC1 3XX

SCARGILL'S CAMPAIGN

Arthur Scargill launched his election campaign at the Yorkshire NUM headquarters in Barnsley (10/12/87) in a blaze of television lights and to standing ovations from the audience. There can be no doubting the loyalty and support for Scargill from rank and file miners not just in Yorkshire but throughout the coalfields. In South Wales Tyrone O'Sullivan, Lodge Secretary at Tower, recently stated that, "The campaign is going well. The pits are insisting on the right to nominate Arthur Scargill despite what the executive says." Trelewis Drift, Tower and Merthyr Vale have led the way, officially backing Scargill.

However, despite Scargill's genuine desire to beat the Board's plans and do his best for miners. Despite his being right about why the Board wants to introduce the Code, flexible working, and get rid of *him*. Despite him being a popular leader with militants, he will remain a prisoner on the Executive after the election unless he uses the campaign to mobilise and organise the rank and file into a force that can defeat the "new realists" and take on the Coal Board.

But will Scargill use the campaign to do this? It seems not! Why do we say this?

Firstly, at the Barnsley meeting he outlined his programme for the NUM without a mention of the situation on the NEC. Surely Scargill can't really believe his victory alone will shut the likes of Dutfield up.

Secondly, Scargill put forward his policies of no pit closures, no job losses, against the code, and for improved benefits, pensions and pay, without his usual argument on the need for renewed industrial action. In his two Yorkshire meetings he concentrated on the need for controls over imported coal and for the phasing out of nuclear power as the way to boost a flagging industry.

This is a step back from the militant speech, made recently in Wales, claiming that only direct action - including industrial action - could halt the destruction of the coal industry

It is clear that Arthur Scargill is not interested in using the election campaign to organise and consolidate the militant rank and file miners who look to him for a lead. Those who doubt the potential for such organisation should look at the struggles going on in the industry. The recent strikes by miners in South Wales against the back door introduction of six day working. where Taff Merthyr struck against management attempts to introduce a four shift working pattern while repairs were carried out on an underground railway. Workers at Deep Navigation (under threat of closure) have been on strike over newly imposed underground manning arrangements. Six Bells against a sacking under the code for alleged misconduct. None of us need reminding of last summer's brilliant action by Frickley miners, and those supporting them, against the code. In the face of this Arthur Scargill has chosen not to campaign to link up such actions but to campaign for import controls. In his election addresses he said "the union must take a stand against coal imports ... the leadership should take up a campaign for these ideas".

This argument is wrong. To argue for a block against imports from countries, many of whom rely on such exports, is simply saying that foreign workers should lose their jobs so we can keep ours. In our view the only exceptions should be where workers in those countries ask us to stop the imports - as have the South African miners. Socialists can have no truck with plans for solving the capitalists' problems on the backs of our class brothers and sisters.



....cont.

The national executive meeting approved a national delegate conference on the issue of the overtime ban. Scargill must use this opportunity to mobilise support from the areas for increased action up to and including strike action, against the code. The only way forward for the union is to organise to go on the offensive. The only way to force the hand of the executive (no matter how big Scargill's majority) is to get support in the pits.

"If he bends we're broke" commented the Frickley President from the platform on Thursday.

Miners will vote for Scargill because he fights for his members and doesn't compromise. But Scargill isolated on the executive can be made to compromise as we have already seen. An key point was made by a miner from the floor who told Scargill that a general without an army is useless in battle and the necessary task was to organise the rank and file.

Yes the Board desperately want rid of Scargill-the Great Strike put their plans back. However they can defeat us if we rely on his re-election alone

VOTE SCARGILL
BUT ORGANISE THE RANK AND FILE.

NO TO IMPORT CONTROLS !

Arthur Scargill has not only been making speeches to miners recently. Despite Tory opposition to him being allowed to speak at all he recently addressed the European Parliament's energy committee. This should have been an opportunity for him to denounce the international connivance of the coal bosses. He should have slammed the coordinated attack they have launched on Europe's mineworkers. Instead he used the opportunity to call for import controls to stop other countries 'dumping' in Europe. Now as far as South African coal is concerned we should support the South African NUM's call for a boycott of coal from that country. But Scargill went on to attack those big bad dumpers, the scourge of Europe's bosses, the Columbians!

For Scargill to suggest that import controls are the answer to the coal crisis is bad enough. For him to propose lining up with Europe's coal capitalists to tighten the screws on Columbia, a country that has been systematically ravaged by those self same capitalists, is a disgrace.

The world economic crisis has hit Columbia's mining industry hard. The number of job losses is enormous. And in Columbia, a country a thousand times poorer than even the poorest EEC nation, job loss means potential starvation.

Scargill's suggestion to the EEC that Columbia is somehow the cause of the problems facing the coal industry smacks of the class collaboration he is usually prepared to denounce. He should be challenged on the issue during the election campaign. The point to make is straightforward enough: the capitalist system has caused the world coal crisis The answer to this crisis is not to advise the EEC fat cats to gang up on Columbia, but for miners all over the world to unite against their bosses.

And if anyone thinks we are being a bit extreme, they should consider this the tory who tried to stop Scargill from speaking at the EEC ended up praising his speech for "its constructive comments about the dumping of coal from ouside the EEC" Tory praise is a sure sign that these proposals stink!

On the following three pages we have interviews with Militants from Wales and Durham. We thank Gethin and Tommy for sparing the time to speak with us. While it will be obvious from a reading of the rest of this issue of RED MINER that we do not agree with all the comments of Gethin and Tommy we are more than pleased to discuss with them the problems facing militants in the NUM.

MINERS SPEAK OUT !

RED MINER spoke to Tommy Betts, Lodge Secretary at Westoe Pit, on Arthur Scargills resignation and the situation in the NUM.

What was the reaction of yourself and the men at Westoe to Scargill's decision to resign and prompt an election.

He's made it more than plain over the years that he's always been an advocate of 5 yearly elections of full time officials. He was obviously elected prior to that coming into the NUM rule book so I think its a very noble gesture.

The Durham area has recommended a resolution commending the National President on his course of action that has unanimously been endorsed by the delegates of the Durham area.

The men at the pit - obviously you get a very wide and varied view - lets face it there are no in betweens with Arthur, you either love him or you loathe him. I think myself the majority of people who look at what he's done appreciate it for what it is, a good gesture. It's just a pity that the other 15-20% who are in a full-time capacity and who are protected by the rules, don't take advantage of the advice given by the legal advisers of the NUM and on a moral basis opt for election.

Do the men at the pit know about all the wrangles on the NEC?

The majority of the men at the pit don't know about the complications that's going on - for all they are reported at general meetings - I still don't think they are generally known of. It's always been the case that the power base Scargill has is the men who go to the meetings. It may well be the case that within the r&f there are people who are very much for Scargill's opponents.

What about the soft left, Dutfield, Bolton etc, will they stand with Walsh?

That remains to be seen. Certainly the Welsh Miners and the Scottish Miners have openly contested certain things that have taken place at national level. But having said that I don't think it's fair to say that they will be openly contesting Arthur Scargill as an individual because as you well know, decisions that are taken are not one man decisions. If anybody wants to contest a policy decision then obviously you have a policy structure within your union to voice your criticism We'll have to wait and see on them.

RED MINER argues for **democratising the union, and putting the rank and file in control. Aspects of this are for an Executive elected by and accountable to a delegate conferenc and for yearly election at pit head meetings of the national officials. What do you think to this?**

I have no objections for example to pit head ballots by a show of hands. any member who chooses to attend a meeting has a vote by show of hand I am an advocate of elections and accountability of officials I am a local branch official and I am elected annually, I put myself to the membership annually. I put my nomination up and that is an individual pit head ballot With that system you can't manipulate it if people want you to get elected I think you have got other problems really, take meetings. This lodge represents 1200 men and the quorum for meetings is 25. I could have a unanimous decision of my lodge with 25 men and that's open to manipulation

RED MINER argues **that Scargill's election is a bureaucratic move and that he should have stood on a campaigning platform to lead the rank and file in a fight against BC's attacks**

You can speculate on why Scargill has stood. I think he's taken advantage of the situation as he's seen it As things are at the moment the reports that are filtering back to the branches show that the present dispute hasn't gone the way it was intended when the men took the vote I think the opposition they've shown from the top possibly leaves a bit to be desired. Obviosly we are going through a difficult time, they can only go as NEC members and express the fears and try to justify the fears that they heve been given the mandate to go and execute.

We argue that such a campaign would involve taking up the disciplinary code etc. But we argue also for strike action. Would you agree?

The ballot paper said "Action short of strike ation"! Personally, I don't like the idea of overtime bans and I don't like the idea of any restrictive measures. If you are going to take action it should be very positive. A lot of people are obviously very wary of strike action after the last strike., but having said that, I think we've learnt a lot of mistakes from that.

I think that the situation is such that since the strike the board haven't missed one opportunity to take advantage, I think we are seeing very bitter decisions without rhyme or reason and we've been very ineffective in challenging these decisions.

Frankly I dont think we'll get very far under the current circumstances unless there is some kind of direct challenge. The gauntlet is often thrown down. The last time it was picked up it was possibly the wrong circumstances [Frickley]. The mood of the men as expressed at the moment is that they are not quite ready for strike action and until the men you represent are ready, it's pointless pursuing that particular avenue. But, having said that, that's not to say that we can't effectively go through a whole new education process because I think in half the circumstances people don't realise the decisions that are being made.

Given the circumstances at the moment and what we've got against us at the moment I don't think we've got the recipie to sustain a co-ordinated strike action.



Election Special

RED MINER also talked to Gethin Jones from Taff Merthyr. At the time of the interview his pit had been on strike for over a week.

Firstly, why did your pit come out on strike

We are on strike against the new split four shift system for 24 hour working. Around 60 men were told by management to work the new system, which was to be imposed at Taff Merthyr (TM.), but there were no disscussions. The men reacted against this and that's when the trouble started. At a canteen meeting the manager told the 60 men to either work the new system or he would transfer 100-150 men to another colliery. The men rejected this ultimatum and decided to work the following day under the normal 3 shift system. 33 men who turned up at the normal time were sent home and the others had to follow in support, in other words it was a lockout situation

A meeting then voted overwhelmingly to stay out In response management have said we must work the new shift system before they will negotiate about it.

What support have the Area leadership given to the strike?

Well, Ponty know what's going on at TM but the system seems all wrong. 600 men are losing over a weeks money for the sake of going through the right procedure. They should have been here straight away assuring the men that we are taking the right action on this issue. They're not prepared to do it. They're sitting on the fence again, and they're going to have a pretty nasty accident sitting on that fence one of these days.

The second canteen meeting a week later seemed to be fully behind continuing the action, but what was put forward as a way of winning the dispute?

Yes, only 13 men out of well over 300 voted to return to work but it seemed to be a very quiet meeting. On the question of where do we go from here everyone seemed to be looking at everyone else.

They were asking for guidance from Ponty. It's a matter of management breaking a national agreement, we should have gone not just to Ponty, but to national level as well. It's an easy way for them to impose changes in working conditions, one colliery after another. Before you know it the new system is through.

What attempts have been made to link the strike at TM with others, particularly nearby Deep Navigation?

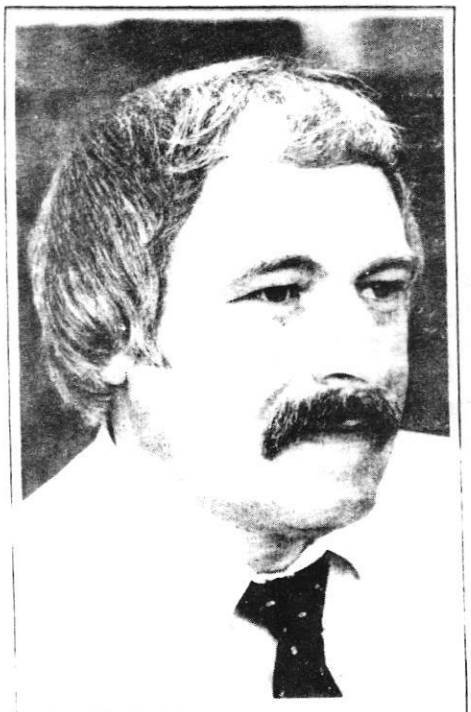
At the moment the communication is not there, not even between TM and Deep Navigation which are next door to one another and both of which are in dispute at the moment. There is a very parochial attitude in the different collieries unfortunately. It's dog eat dog at the moment, many men don't see the need for collective action against British Coal.

How do you see collective action coming about?

TM is unique at the moment, but it's part of a bigger issue that could spark off a big row. If they can impose a new aggreement at TM, a profitable pit, the "Jewel in the Crown", then god help the rest of the Merthyr pits which aren't doing as well. It's an issue that warrants a special conference.

Because Scargill is an isolated figure on the executive, we believe that he should appeal directly to the rank and file for support, using the election to help develop a rank and file movement. What are your views?

Yes we all agree with that. It's definitely up to the rank and file to control not only Scargill, but everyone down to the lodge level. The problem at present is that the union hasn't got credibility, even at pit level. Decisions are being made without the membership knowing what is going on. Meanwhile the management have got away with so much that they feel confident enough to try and impose new shifts at TM, but they've now had the shock of their lives. They never expected this to happen, I think they've bitten off more than they can chew.



Des Dutfield
South Wales Miners President

LEADING THE CHARGE TO THE RIGHT

THE FACE OF NEW REALISM

Finally, last time you spoke to RED MINER you were very critical of the Area Executive, what are your views at the moment?

Well, after Scargill announced the election the media were very quick to pick up Kim Howells and Hywell Francis. Neither of these so-called spokespeople work at a pit. It seems that Kim Howells decides the policy of the S. Wales NUM and at the executive meetings he gives the line for the coming month, they all seem hypnotized by him. And I've since been told that the decision to take Scargill to court over the timing of the election was taken without even many executive members knowing about it! I thought the speech Scargill made on these matters at Mertyhr was excellent, he seemed to hit the nail on the head.

6 DAYS

NO THANKS!

N.U.M.
North Yorks
Panel

NUM SOUTH WALES AREA

IRELAND

GET THE TROOPS OUT !

Since the Enniskillen bombing there has been a sickening wave of hypocrisy in the Tory press. The same tabloids that screamed about "violent thugs" and "the enemy within" during the great strike have now turned their venom on Irish Republicans. They seem to have forgotten that it was they who cheered when Thatcher murdered 368 Argentinian soldiers on the Belgrano, or when Thatcher left 10 men to die in the H-Blocks by refusing to give them political prisoner status.

This hypocrisy in the tabloids has a clear aim in mind - to divert workers attention away from fighting the real enemy, the British ruling class, and instead make us take their side in their bloody war against the Irish.

In order to prevent this happening the Establishment's lies must be answered. For as long as Britain clings on to it's oldest colony and discriminates against the Catholic population, young men and women will continue to sacrifice their all in the struggle against their oppresion.

The IRA are at war with Britain and the artificial state in the North that Britain created. The army is fighting to maintain Britain's hold over the Irish people against their democratic right to determine their own future. In that war we side with the IRA against the British army.

BUILD A SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

Vying with the tabloid press in their condemnation of the nationalists has been the leadership of the Labour Party. Specifically, Kinnock and Co. have condemned Ken Livingstone for daring to call for the withdrawl of British troops. Livingstone has a good record compared to the rest of the official leaders of the labour movement. This is particularly true when looking at the Trade Union leaders.



LIVINGSTONE HOUNDED BY KINNOCK !

Solidarity can be extended when there is a "popular" international question like South Africa, but on Ireland there has been a wall of silence. This is as true for the NUM as for other trade unios in Britain.

Despite fine efforts from NUM branches and individual activists in the past, much more is needed today to build a serious anti-imperialist movement that can force Britain to get out of Ireland. For a start Scargill should make it clear where he stands and campaign for the Irish peoples right to self-determination.

However, as on other issues, militants in the NUM shouldn't wait for Scargill. Steps in the right direction could be taken by arguing to make this years demonstration to commemorate Bloody Sunday the largest event for many years. Bloody Sunday in January 1972 was when the British Army shot down thirteen unarmed civilians on the street.

Militants should aim to get resolutions passed in the coming weeks to commit the NUM to build for the Bloody Sunday demo and make sure there is a sizeable contingent of miners on the march.

BLOODY SUNDAY DEMONSTRATION
SUNDAY 30th JANUARY
RALLY AT ISLINGTON TOWN HALL
SEE RED MINER SELLERS FOR DETAILS

BOOK REVIEW

Mark Hoskisson reviews
A J Cook by Paul Davies
(Manchester University Press)



The limits of syndicalism

With Arthur Scargill standing for re-election as NUM President, pundits of the left and right are reviving comparisons between him and the miners' leader of the 1920s, Arthur James Cook.

Scargill himself has often referred to Cook as his model. He doubtlessly has in mind Cook's personal sincerity and his fierce loyalty to the cause of the miners. Like Cook he rejects the polite negotiations that are the stock-in-trade of servile trade union officials.

The right-wing, the CPGB and characters like Des Dutfield, will make the same comparison between the two Arthurs. They will heap upon Scargill the same old insults that Cook had to face from every quarter. They will say that he doesn't know how to negotiate. They will argue that he doesn't understand the need for compromise and that he is an unthinking extremist. Indeed Scargill's re-election will likely get the same response from Willis and Dutfield as that of Fred Bramley, Secretary of the TUC in 1924 to Cook's election. When he heard Cook had been elected Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) he blurted:

'Have you seen who has been elected Secretary of the Miners Fedration? Cook, a raving, tearing communist. Now the miners are in for a bad time.'

The right, and those who are clutching at their coattails, will remind us that Cook's period of leadership witnessed a split between the MFGB and a company union in Nottinghamshire (the Spencer Union). They will remind us of the loss of thousands of jobs in the aftermath of the defeat of a protracted struggle. Scargill's policies, they will insist, have caused an almost exact repetition of history.

The right-wing are not merely treating history dishonestly by posing the comparison this way. They are also obstinately refusing to learn its lessons. The light that Paul Davies' book sheds on the life of A J Cook demonstrates this quite clearly.

A J Cook was a syndicalist. Moving from non-conformism through the ILP he eventually got involved in the Unofficial Reform Committee (URC) in South Wales along with leading syndicalists like Noah Ablett, when it was set up in 1911. The main document of the URC was The Miners' Next Step. Although Cook did not write it, it encapsulated many of the ideas he was to hold until his untimely death in 1931. The key phrase in that pamphlet that Davies shows Cook used again and again was:

'The suggested organisation [i.e. the class struggle union—WP] is constructed to fight rather than to negotiate. It is based on the principle that we can only get what we are strong enough to win and retain.'

The essence of Cook's syndicalism is expressed here: for the struggle being talked about is the bargaining strength of a trade union. In the period up to 1921 the demand for coal was so great that the miners' bargaining strength was considerable. Cook, and the sydicalists in the URC were able to win important positions of leadership in the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF, which Cook became a full-time agent for in 1920). They confidently believed that the struggles of their union could secure not merely decent wages and conditions, but also workers' control of the industry. The union—not a political party—was to be the instrument for socialist transformation.

It was thus before, during and immediately after the war that the positive aspects of Cook's syndicalism were most evident. His loyalty to the union overcame his initial confusion on the war and drew him into opposition to it. In 1916 he wrote:

'Daily I see signs amongst the working class with whom I move and work of a mighty awakening. The chloroforming pill of patriotism is failing in its power to drug the mind and consciousness of the worker. Comrades I appeal to you to rouse your union to protect the liberties of its members. An industrial truce was entered into by our leaders behind our backs. Away with the industrial truce!'

In the same period he led a host of disputes against government

attempts to recruit miners into the army and force up the rate of exploitation in the pits.

However, there were fatal limitations in Cook's sydicalism. In a situation where trade union bargaining strength declined Cook had no strategy or tactics to offer, other than compromise in the name of preserving the union. Trade union militancy alone simply could not deal with the problems posed to the working class in a period of acute economic and political crisis. This was shown by Black Friday in 1921 (when the demand for coal plummetted) when the transport and rail unions (members of the Triple Alliance) refused to support the miners' resistance to the coalowners' attack on the national wages agreement. Cook was compelled to urge retreat after ten weeks of the lock-out. Then in an amazing about face he argued for conciliation with the bosses, following the eventual defeat of the miners' struggle. At the beginning of the dispute he urged:

'Trust simply and solely in your economic power, in the wholehearted support of your comrades of the Triple Alliance and of other trade unions.'

Faith in Thomas—the arch-reactionary at the head of the railwaymen—was not only misplaced, it was stupid. It reflected Cook's syndicalist view that the Triple Alliance in and of itself was a triumph of militant trade unionism. Cook downplayed the role and power of the bureaucracy. When this faith resulted in defeat, Cook, believing the economic power of the workers was vanquished, ended up conducting conciliatory meetings with pit-managers and, according to Davies, 'was prepared to promise them improved productivity if they kept operating'. This was the grim logic of relying exclusively on trade union bargaining strength as against a political, revolutionary communist outlook.

Indeed Cook's retreat in 1921 led to his break with the CPGB, of which he had briefly been a member. He accused them of 'interference' in the lock-out in a classic syndicalist (and indeed, bureaucratic) manner. This 'interference' was from men like Cook's close friend, Arthur Horner, a CP miner. Once the CPGB raised political questions that clashed with Cook's trade union—and essentially sectionalist—strategy, a parting of the ways was inevitable.

However, Cook did return to the offensive when economic conditions improved in 1923. He joined the Miners' Minority Movement—seeing it as a useful industrial organisation—and became its candidate for National Secretary in 1924. In an energetic campaign Cook emerged a clear victor and was thrust onto the national stage at a time when, once again, the price of coal was falling and the coalowners were out to implement pay cuts and increases in the working day. The same weaknesses as had appeared in 1921 were revealed in the 1926 lock-out. Buoyed by the recovery in coal prices in the world market in 1922-23 and then by the victory of Red Friday in 1925, when the government retreated under the threat of a general strike, Cook entered the struggle with confidence.

There were fatal limitations in Cook's syndicalism . . . Trade union militancy alone simply could not deal with the problems posed to the working class in a period of acute economic and political crisis.

On the eve of the strike he was less dewy-eyed about the nature of Thomas. He wrote in the *Sunday Worker* in reply to attacks on him by Thomas and Ben Tillet (TGWU)

'It is true I do not possess a dress suit, and I do not attend dinners and banquets given by enemies of the working classes and make alleged witty, after-dinner speeches there.'

However, rightly insistent that the miners could not win alone, he wrongly allowed the TUC to take control of the negotiations during the strike as the price for their solidarity action. Even after their betrayal he consented to the suppression of his attacks on the TUC leaders, *Nine Days*, and concluded the 'June Pact' with the men who had stabbed the miners in the back in the fruitless hope that they would implement a levy and coal embargo.

As the lock-out wore on he repeatedly sought compromises, occasionally, as Davies reveals, engaging in highly dubious personal negotiations with the capitalists. His actions, the inevitable product of his lack of accountability to the rank and file, inevitably led to further clashes with the CP and the Minority Movement. He ended the dispute desperate for any settlement he could get. (For a full account of Cook's role in the 1926 dispute see *Workers Power* No 55).

The rest of Cook's career was a tragic anti-climax. It was tragic because it was marred by pain and illness brought about by his indefatigable campaigning on behalf of the miners during 1926. Despite his vacillations he was throughout a tireless, eloquent and emotional advocate of the miners' cause

It was anti-climactic because the struggles he took up were all of a resolutionary nature. He fought the class-collaborationist turn by the TUC in the Mond-Turner talks. He opposed MacDonald's reneging on the Coal Mines Act that Cook had pinned all his hopes on. He supported the then Labour MP Oswald Mosley's radical programme against unemployment. Direct action—the heart of Cook's early syndicalism—was a thing of the past, a thing he feared might destroy the MFGB if it were again undertaken.

There is a real lesson of history that needs to be learnt from Cook. and indeed from Scargill's own period as NUM president. It is that militant trade unionism is not enough to defend the economic conditions of workers, let alone act as a means of overthrowing capitalism. But the defeats both men suffered were products not simply of the limitations of their own politics, but also of the gross betrayals by the lieutenants of capital inside the labour movement.

Davies himself does not draw these lessons. He bemoans Cook's attacks on Thomas. He puzzles over Cook's agitational fervour He argues that Cook's vacillations should be regarded as positive aspects of his career This is all way off the mark. But the detail concerning Cook's life that Davies has marshalled makes for a riveting read. One gripe. The typographical errors in this book are legion. They make our own pretty poor track-record of proof-reading look almost professional.■

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 Bri tish 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!