

Workers Power

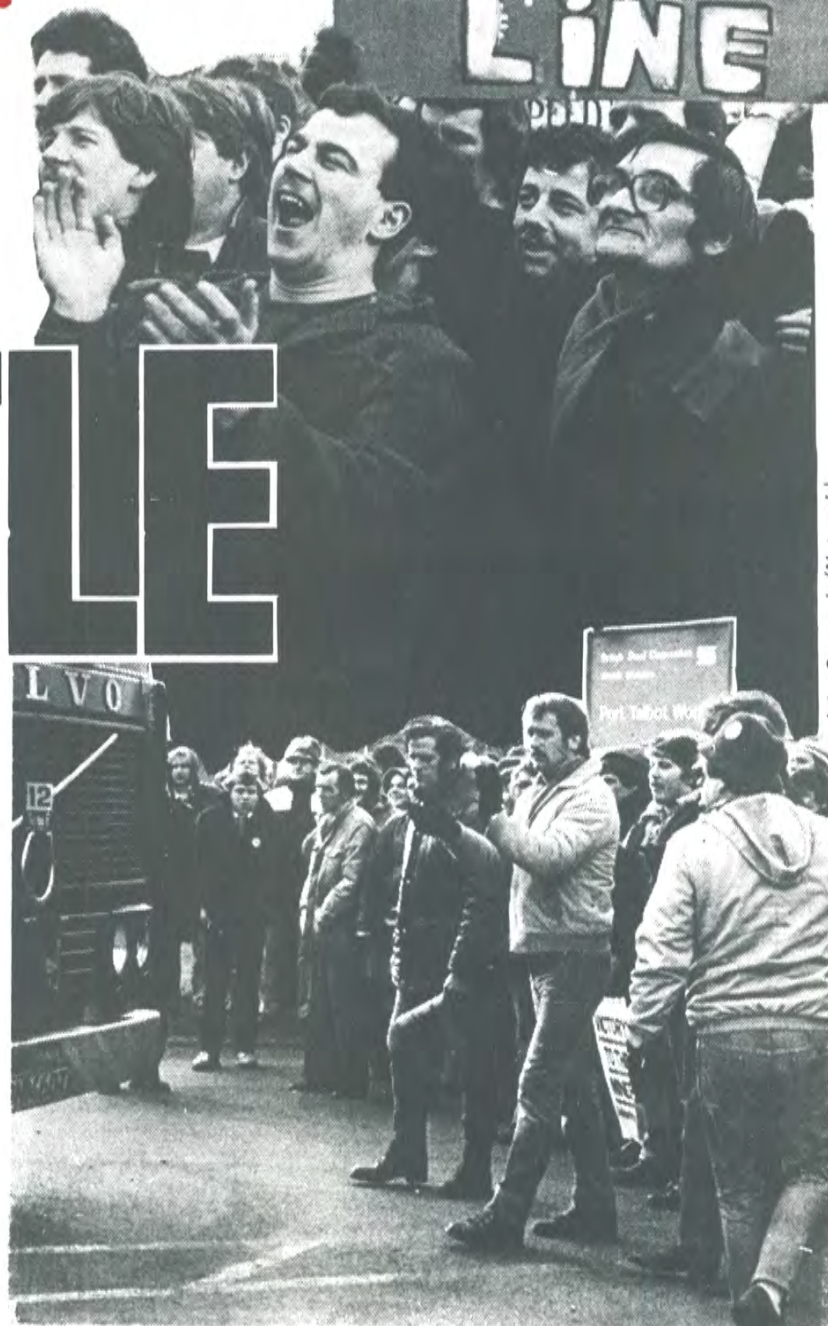
25p/10p strikers

Fortnightly paper of the Workers Power group

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INTO BATTLE WITH THE MINERS!



MANY STRIKING MINERS, and many of the rank and file militants who are taking action in support of them recognise the need for a general strike. They also know that the TUC General Council is an enormous obstacle to realising this need. They sense that this gang of traitors - with or without Len Murray - cannot be trusted to call for, mobilise or lead a victorious general strike.

The TUC chiefs used to pride themselves on having graduated from rallies in Trafalgar Square to the corridors of power in Whitehall. Thatcher and Tebbit have unceremoniously kicked them out the door once again. But the knights of the TUC have no intention of learning what to do now they have been ejected.

Their pathetic and reluctant 'days of protest' and 'days of action' show all too clearly that they left their hearts in the drawing room of Number 10. Right in the middle of a miners strike the wretched Clive Jenkins is leading a move to 'get back round the table' with the Tories. "If we withdraw we might never get back again", they squeal.

No wonder then that militants think these people could not and should not lead a general strike. As GCHQ showed they cannot even defend the elementary right to join a trade union. It would be false, however, to draw from this the conclusion that it would be better to keep quiet about a general strike and ignore the TUC chiefs.

The miners are involved in far more than an ordinary industrial dispute with an employer. They are locked in a head on conflict with the Tory government and the full might of the state. The determination of the bosses contrasts sharply with the complacency and spinelessness of the labour movement's leaders.

Even the NUM leaders are less well prepared than they were back in 1972. Yet the bosses have spent countless sums since 1972 perfecting their police strike-breaking machinery and preparing for a showdown with the miners.

The tactics of 1972 and 1974 alone will not win this strike. The key to victory lies in organised mass picketing, in winning mass strike action alongside the miners and a general strike.

Here the NUM leaders have gone further than any other union leadership, but not far enough. Arthur Scargill has openly called on railwaymen to take action on their own claim alongside the miners. This is a good call and one that must be acted on. It is far bolder than anything the official left leaders of the railwaymen have offered. Jimmy Knapp and Ray Buckton are losing precious time and sapping their own strength by delaying action on their claim until the end of May and then limiting action only to an overtime ban.

SOLIDARITY NOW

Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield have appealed to all transport workers to join with the miners in tightening the grip on industry through stopping the movement of fuels. But it would be fatal to leave the organisation of action to TGWU's Ron Todd, NUR's Jimmy Knapp or ASLEF's Ray Buckton who met the NUM but were prepared to make no binding commitments to act now to win their members for action.

Rank and file miners must be sent into every transport depot to win the case for rank and file transport workers striking now, alongside the miners. We cannot leave it to meetings of union executives to secure this action. In every workplace militants must seek to push forward their own struggles.

For the miners to win we must build action to stop the power stations. Chapple will order his members to cross picket lines and scab. We must reach out to rank and file power workers to secure solidarity action in the power stations. We must stop the movement of all fuels in to the power stations by winning the transport workers to effective action.

Arthur Scargill and the NUM leaders are right to attempt to broaden the noose beyond power supplies. We must tighten the knot on industry if the strike is to bite deeper into the bosses' profits. Steel production is crucial here. But the steelworkers are still reeling from the effects of their defeat in 1980. The treacherous ISTC leaders have refused to give effective backing to the miners.

With the Tory axe hanging over at least one more large steel plant, rank and file miners must win the steelmen to fight the steel bosses with the miners. If the miners go down a further round of steel closures will follow.

The NUM must offer, in return for a complete halt on steel production and the stopping of all steel leaving the mills, that it will declare the stopping of all closures in the steel industry as a non-negotiable part of its strike aims. The miners strike creates the best conditions for fighting closures, redundancies and the privatisation threat. Now is the best time to push forward wage claims, fight cuts and rip up agreements forced out of workers over the past years of defeat.

Labour councils facing the Tory axe should bring their resistance to head NOW. The unemployed must be summoned to revolt against the misery and hopelessness of life on the dole. Bureaucratic rules and procedures should be put on the bonfire. Now is the hour to fight the Tories on all fronts. Any delay will be fatal. We can drive the Tories back if we strike together. The energy of the rank and file miners must be organised to achieve this end and put this case to their fellow rank and file workers.

This struggle for a mass strike wave is not an alternative to, or in contradiction with, the call for a general strike.

Already the police have killed one miner and injured and arrested hundreds. They have laws that enable them to seize the union funds, to

arrest our leaders and move in the troops. The ruling class has a concentrated political force it can use against us on even bigger scale than at the moment. To rely on a rolling wave of sectional strikes is to ignore this central fact of the state.

To counter this the only effective weapon in our arsenal is an immediate and indefinite general strike.

The most generally held objection to this is that to bring the TUC leaders into the struggle would be to invite the kiss of death. That is why Arthur Scargill and countless militant miners are avoiding calling for TUC action like the plague. They see that the gang of 'new realists' are absolutely unfit to be entrusted with a general strike. They remember all too bitterly what the TUC did to the miners in 1926 when the miners entrusted the TUC with the running of a general strike. **But to avoid calling for a general strike for fear of a sell out is wrong.**

It is false radicalism to suggest that we can only combat sell-out and betrayals by keeping the traitors out of the battle. These traitors have their hands on our movement, on the organisations and millions of members that we need to mobilise if we are to win. We cannot just leave them to smother this enormous potential power.

SOWING ILLUSIONS?

Some may argue that to call on the TUC to call a general strike would be to "sow illusions in them" or to "hand over the leadership to them." It certainly does not sow any illusions that are not already there.

If we do not call on them to take action then the TUC will feel free to use the marvellous alibi that "the miners have not asked for this sort of help." Every right-wing official and many left-wing officials will use this excuse against their own rank and file militants who are agitating for action.

A clear and unequivocal call for a general strike from the NUM would, in fact, immeasurably strengthen the hand of rank and file militants against their treacherous leaders.

The call for a general strike must not prevent militants from warning workers of the dangers of a sell-out and organising the struggle so as to make it ever more difficult for the leaders to sabotage the struggle of their members.

We must fight now to establish ACTION COUNCILS in every locality, formed of representatives of those groups of workers that are in struggle alongside the miners. The miners support committees that exist in many towns must devote themselves to making this call a reality.

Behind its verbally radical criticism of the General Council the refusal to demand a general strike reveals a refusal to take the TUC leaders on and win the mobilised workers to fight the traitors in our ranks as well as the Tories. That left officials think like this comes as little surprise. They daily co-exist with right-wing officials. They do not 'interfere' in each others unions.

The present strike has shown what this means in practice. Mick McGahey has criticised steel workers in general in a foolish and counterproductive way. Yet, he and the NUM leadership in general, have not uttered one word against the arch scab Bill Sirs who has openly attacked the NUM. Within the NUM itself official scabs like Jones of Leicester have got off scot-free while their rank and file have got a well-deserved ear-bashing.

We cannot rely on the left trade union officials to fight for a general strike for us. They might do so as a desperate last chance or in order to avoid mobilising their members for struggle. Left talkers are quite capable

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THE GENERAL STRIKE AND WORKING CLASS POWER

THE MINERS' STRIKE still has the potential to turn the tide against the Tory offensive. For the second time in a decade the National Union of Mineworkers is leading the working class in a struggle against the Government.

In the early 1970s the miners strikes turned into duels with the Government which were objectively political. But only a minority of militants understood this and even they thought that political victory was assured with the return of a Labour Government.

They were right to see the 1974 election as a temporary defeat for the ruling class. They were wrong to believe that a Labour Government was more than an episodic benefit to the working class or that it would fulfill its promise "to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in power, in favour of working people and their families."

By April 1975 an austerity budget had been introduced. The "Social Contract" became a full-scale incomes policy. Unemployment shot up to 1 1/2 million and the second round of incomes policy saw earnings grow by 9% whilst inflation was still over 14%.

The collusion between TUC and Government to cut wages and social services exploded in the "Winter of Discontent" revolt and the scuttling of the Callaghan Government. Thatcher took up where Healey and Callaghan left off.

Now after two crushing electoral victories for Thatcher and victories over the car workers, steel workers, the health workers and the printers, the miners step forward as the only force in the immediate future capable of rallying the whole working class in a general counter-attack. This fight-back can and must reach the scale of a General Strike.

Such a strike could reach mass proportions either as a result of advancing separate sectional struggles in solidarity with the miners. Or it could erupt as a political general strike - the result of state repression against the miners - seizure of funds, death or serious injury to pickets, arrest of prominent leaders.

The NUM and militants throughout the workers movement should simultaneously fight to generalise the anti-Tory struggles, both trade union and political (defence of local authorities etc.)

They should also demand that the TUC maximises official solidarity action on behalf of the miners and calls an immediate indefinite General Strike against the Anti-Union Laws and in support of the miners' demands for no pit closures.

No nine-day wonders

If such a strike is not to be a nine day wonder sold out by the TUC leaders, a General Strike cannot be left in their hands whether in the towns and cities or at a national scale.

At the base level - in every town and city, indeed in every pit village a council of action made up of delegates of every workplace and union must be elected. This can be launched from existing miners' support committees, from the more active trades councils and union branches, but above all from the NUM lodges and the shop-stewards committees of the larger work places.

On such councils special representatives of the miners wives support committees should sit. The unemployed, the black community and students should also send representatives or observers proportional to their organised strength or ability to take action. Thus the Action Councils can group around themselves a massive social force which can paralyse the police force.

The Action Councils must take control of the transport and supply of food, to ensure that working class areas receive essential supplies. Disciplined defence squads can defend the Action Councils, union premises and funds, the pickets and the workers' leaders against police harassment and arrest.

Only this mighty mobilisation of working class force can paralyse Thatcher's apparatus of coercion - her courts, police force and by winning the ordinary soldiers to our side.

The bosses lie machine - the media - must be shut down. A workers' press and radio service must be organised.

Thatcher and the whole spectrum of the ruling class will shriek and yell about a "challenge to democracy" and a breach of the constitution. Alas these cries will fall on the all too ready ears of the official leadership of the Labour Movement. Murray and Kinnock will be floored by it from the outset. Worse they will try to floor the whole Labour Movement with it.

We should expose the fraud of the Tories' parliamentary mandate now. Did anyone but a handful of company directors consciously vote to put 4 million on the dole? Did millions vote to close down the Steel or Mining industry, to slash the NHS to shreds?

This holds true also for the fraud of the five



John Starrock (Network)

yearly ballot box trick itself. On all issues which vitally affect the vast majority of the population - jobs, wages, war and peace, social welfare - parliamentarism is a fraud. The bosses parties (and the Labour Party too) don't admit what they are really going to do. Nor can they be instantly removed when they fail to fulfill their promises.

The millionaire press makes a further mockery of this democracy. In addition, the law, made by unelected judges, and imposed by unelected and unaccountable Police Chiefs, undermines what "democracy" remains.

Indeed it is the latter who are the State. It is a class state. A dictatorship of the capitalist class. Of course "democratic rights" exist but these are the product of the struggles of the working class and exist for only as long as the bosses fear to abolish them altogether.

Against this weapon we have the power of our numbers. But this is an enormous power only if it is organised in Councils of Action. It has the power first to paralyse and then to disintegrate this permanent bosses' dictatorship. A General Strike raises the question, which class rules in society, who is to be the master or mistress in the house.

The working class needs the General Strike to defend its vital interests - its jobs, its welfare services, its democratic rights; all its gains within capitalism. But in "defending" itself effectively - in the only successful way - it inevitably poses the need to break out of the capitalist system and to smash the forces and institutions of the bosses' state.

It must also, in the very process of this struggle create the basis of a new, genuinely democratic order. This "rule of the people" will be genuine because it is the rule of the working class - blue and white collar ie. that of the overwhelming majority. It is also a necessary instrument of repression but this time against a tiny minority by and in the interests of the vast majority.

Yet we would be wrong to believe that the mere declaration or even the full development of a general strike will throw power into the hands of the working class. To gain power the working class must consciously seize it.

In a general strike, millions of workers will call for the bosses' government, the Tories, to be overthrown, kicked out. They will be right. They will want to see a government which rules for the workers. Here too they will be right.

What is a workers' government?

But what is a workers' government? Millions will answer - a Labour government. So will the union leaders. So obviously will all the Labour leaders from Healey to Benn. But we revolutionaries argue that a Labour government acting within the straight-jacket of the bosses' state, with the police force and the judges that bludgeoned the miners, with the City of London and the millionaires who throw millions onto the streets, that such a government cannot act for long or consistently in the interests of the workers.

After less than one year of very modest reforms in 1974-5, the last Labour government took up the cudgels against the working class. This time, with a worse economic crisis, if the working class demobilises or lowers its guard for a minute, the same thing will happen - only this time worse.

If a successful general strike provoked the resignation of the government, and a Labour govern-

ment was returned in an election, the working class would have to stay mobilised in its Action Councils in order to prevent a replay of 1974-5. It would have to exert mass direct action pressure on the government and the bosses, even to get any serious reforms.

What should we demand of such a Labour government elected in the aftermath of a victorious general strike?

- The repeal of the anti-union laws, and the dissolution of the picket-busting police squads, the Association of Chief Constables, etc.
- The cancellation of the closure plans and privatisation schemes in all the state industries.
- The full and immediate restoration of all the cuts - Labour and Tory - made over the last nine years.
- The repeal of the racist immigration laws.
- The immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, the Falklands and all overseas bases.
- The nationalisation of all firms declaring redundancies without compensation, under workers' control.
- Get Britain out of NATO, and clear all US bases with their nuclear weaponry - out of Britain.
- A massive programme of public works paid for by a massive wealth tax - to build houses, nurseries, hospitals, schools, homes for the elderly, recreation facilities for the young.
- Reduce the working week, under trade union control and with no loss of pay, to absorb the 4 million unemployed.

Government of Crisis

Only such demands go any way towards meeting the immediate needs of millions suffering under the lash of the capitalist crisis. Yet in today's conditions, a government that introduced some, all, or indeed any of them, would be a government of crisis. The ruling class would sabotage it from its inception, and seek by every means to undermine and eventually overthrow it.

A Neil Kinnock-style "normal" Labour government would simply directly attack the working class. It would carry on the Tories' measures, only with much hypocritical handwringing and calls to make sacrifices "for Britain".

In fact, given the depth of the crisis of British capitalism and the desperate determination of the bosses to solve it at the expense of the working class, a Labour government - even one stuffed full of Tony Benns - would be an almighty betrayal of a general strike.

A general strike poses by its very nature great revolutionary tasks before the working class, through the paralysis of the bosses' state forces and apparatus of repression.

To meet the needs of the working class and counter the chaos of capitalism necessitates the creation of an economy planned for human need. This must mean the wholesale expropriation of large scale industry, finance, commerce and agriculture, with no compensation to the parasites who have exploited us for so long.

To do this means disarming and removing the reactionary high command and officer caste of the armed forces. It means winning the rank and file soldiers to our side, helping them to achieve the democratic election of officers and receiving from them arms for a workers' militia. It means dissolving the police force and replacing it with

a popular militia.

These tasks alone lead to the power of the working class. No Labour, socialist or "peoples" government that leaves military and economic power in the hands of the bosses and their agents is in reality a workers' government.

Yet there is already a minority in the labour movement who argue for a combination of "direct action outside parliament" with a parliamentary government. As a project this is highly dangerous. The only safe capitalist is a disarmed and dispossessed one. A parliament would not long be reconciled to the competing power base of workers' councils. To prevent the bosses using "their" House of Commons against the mobilised workers, full political power would have to be forcibly transferred to a national congress of workers councils.

A government which was a workers' government not only in name but also in deed, would inscribe on its banner the slogan "Arm the workers, Disarm the bosses!". The rats' nests of counter-revolution - the high command of the armed forces, the judiciary, the civil service mandarins, "Scotland Yard" and their hangers-on must be crushed.

The enormous power of the banks and finance houses centered on the City of London must be nationalised and placed under workers' control. The business secrecy of the bosses must be abolished at once, and the secret workings of the profit machine thrown open to the light of day. Only then can real planning for human need be contemplated.

On the basis of the immediate nationalisation of the major industries, including the building industry, a massive programme of public works should absorb in months the unemployed millions.

The working day should be slashed and the full benefits of science and technology used to provide the free time necessary for working people to plan, control and direct society themselves.

Enemies and allies

A Britain in revolution would be surrounded by capitalist and imperialist enemies, particularly the NATO powers of North America and Europe. Yet we would also be surrounded by countless millions of allies - the workers' of Europe and America, the workers and peasants of the so-called "Third World" and the working class of the workers' states, where a caste of bureaucrats has usurped political power.

How to break through to them? First, the sheer fact that British workers are settling accounts with the oldest, wildest ruling class in the world will be an enormous trumpet call to revolution in other countries. Secondly, a British workers' government would say to the workers and peasants of the world: "take into your own hands the 'British' investments and companies that have for so long exploited you!" British bases and military installations would be withdrawn, to complete the destruction of the bosses' worldwide system of exploitation.

In a reversal of the bosses' policies, a workers' Britain would and should send economic and armed help to embattled revolutions and to all countries resisting imperialist aggression - to Nicaragua, to the ANC and Namibian Freedom fighters against apartheid, to the PLO. It would offer defensive support to the workers' states against imperialism's war drive, but will also offer help to the anti-bureaucratic workers' opposition in these countries, helping them to overthrow their bureaucratic oppressors and institute a workers' democracy like its own - based on workers' councils.

Across this bridge of measures, the British working class can cross to the full establishment of workers' power. Concentrated fully in the hands of workers' councils, this power can be used to plan the economy.

Inequality can be tackled by raising all to the level of today's skilled workers, by helping the oppressed and poor of the world to build a decent life. There is no need for steelworkers, miners, car-workers, textile workers to be "redundant" when 80% or more of humanity has hardly the fuel, clothing, housing, transport and medicine necessary to keep life and limb together.

To overcome the horrors of capitalism will be an immense task - a task for decades of a planned economy. It is a task which, like the conquest of power itself, above all needs a leading and directing revolutionary party: a many-thousand strong vanguard of the working class, rooted in every mine, factory, mill, office, college and school.

Workers' power alone can open up the road of liberation for the working class and poor peasantry, for blacks and for women. It is the road to socialism and human freedom! A general strike in Britain in the coming weeks or months could be the first step on this road. ■

Unionists veto Irish Forum

"ULSTER IS BRITISH" was Ian Paisley's three word reply to the New Ireland Forum's 14,000 word report. Some 20,000 posters screamed out the message. Not even Dublin Post Office, symbol of republicanism, was missed by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) flyposting.

Nor was this just the protest of the extreme Protestant Unionism of Paisley's DUP. The official Unionist (OUP) deputy leader, Harold McCusker barked, "As a Unionist, I have no alternative but to say, 'No surrender!'"

The gulf that divides the million or so loyalists in the North from the Green Tories in the South could not have been more brutally put given that one of the main aims of the Forum was to woo the loyalists with political concessions. Thus for the first time in an official policy statement on unification by Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, the rhetoric of unification is dropped. The report states, "Political arrangements for a new and sovereign Ireland would have to be freely negotiated by the people of the north."

FORUM CONCESSIONS

The report recognises as legitimate three elements in the Unionist tradition, namely its 'Britishness', its Protestantism and the desire to maintain the economic link with Great Britain. In positively imploring tones the Forum argues that, "the best people to identify the interests of the Unionist tradition are the Unionist people themselves." As a further concession the Forum explicitly refused to make any demands for an end to the Unionist veto or even hint at the need for British troops to be withdrawn.

Most concretely, the Southern bourgeoisie's desire to placate Unionism can be seen in the three proposals for what a new Irish state might look like. The Forum argues that a single unitary state, ruled from Dublin, with guarantees for the

Protestant minority and achieved by consent is their desired preference.

Yet this is immediately relegated to the status of an unattainable ideal. Instead what they hoped would be tempting to the Unionists and Britain was the proposal of either joint-sovereignty between Westminster and Dublin or a federal/co-federal solution involving Stormont and Dublin.

UNIONIST REBUFF

Yet despite all this, the Unionists bit the outstretched hand of friendship. "There is nothing to consider" snarled Paisley. The only concession they want from the Green Tories in the South is total surrender: an unequivocal statement that Partition is legitimate and that the Southern Government and parties renounce any territorial claim on the 6 Counties in whatever form. Obviously the Southern bourgeoisie dare not sell its rhetorical nationalist birthright. To do so would leave them totally exposed as the handmaidens of imperialism.

The Unionist reception of the report is a blow to Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and the SDLP. The eleven months of deliberations and evidence which expressly excluded Sinn Fein was designed by all the parties to prevent the SDLP sinking even lower in the eyes of the Catholic nationalist minority in the North.

Indeed, the report was published one week before the third anniversary of the murder of hunger striker Bobby Sands by Thatcher's government. It was the campaign of hunger strikes and the resulting ten deaths which sparked a massive upheaval in the 6 County working-class and gained active support for Sinn Fein in the South as well.

Since then Sinn Fein has consolidated its political support at the expense of the SDLP. It



Paisley's DUP demonstrates Loyalist hostility to Forum.

now commands over 40% of the votes among all Catholics in the Six Counties and more than 60% in the most oppressed Ghettos.

The decision by Sinn Fein to contest the June EEC elections in the South is also a challenge to the constitutional nationalist parties. It is even possible that Sinn Fein will draw more first preference votes than Fine Gael's coalition partner in government - the Irish Labour Party (ILP).

The Forum initiative launched on May 30th 1983 was an attempt to prove to the nationalist population that bourgeois constitutional nationalism could in practice deliver meaningful political concessions from the loyalists and Thatcher. It was to prove that it was in fact possible to advance, albeit slowly, towards the goal of a united Ireland without incurring the suffering and sacrifice involved in a revolutionary nationalist struggle as advocated by Sinn Fein.

The reply of the Protestants was doubtless expected. Perhaps the Irish government hoped to isolate them as unreasonable bigots whilst the British would be obliged to enter into discussions. Yet here too Garrett Fitzgerald, drew a blank card. Prior, Northern Ireland Secretary of State, welcomed the Southern bourgeoisie's partial concessions to Unionism and then with an almost insulting brutality rejected everything else. He particularly dismissed the report's timid suggestion that, just possibly, Britain's economic, political and military policies in the Six Counties might have contributed to the Province's dire state.

BRITISH CONDITIONS

Certainly, there are differences within the British ruling-class over how to handle the Irish problem. The hapless Fitzgerald no doubt hoped to profit by them. On the one side are the open Unionist elements of the Tory Party led by creatures like Biggs-Davidson who regard the SDLP as disloyal semi-Republicans and back the Loyalists to the hilt. On the other side stands Prior who, despite his position as Thatcher's proconsul in the North - or perhaps because of it, is in much the weaker position. Initiatives, such as the creation of the Assembly, are designed to try and bridge the gap between the SDLP and the OUP elements of loyalism who might be induced to accept limited concessions to the Catholics. Thatcher herself leans more to the Unionists than Prior and thus determines the general approach of British imperialism.

Thatcher would only be prepared to consider political initiatives to help the Southern bourgeoisie and the SDLP, thereby running the risk of incurring Unionist wrath, if two conditions were fulfilled. First, that the 26 Counties should step up its collusion in the repression of Sinn Fein and the IRA/INLA. That they are willing to do this is shown in the recent extradition of INLA man Dominic McGlinchy to the North.

Secondly, Thatcher wants the South to become part of the NATO military bloc. These conditions formed the substance of the 1980 Anglo-Irish summit between Haughey and Thatcher which was scuttled by the hunger-strike. Thatcher wants more than the occasional Republican head on a platter. She wants the total integration of the Gardai in her repression apparatus. These concessions the Green Tories dare not make with nothing substantial to show for it.

IMPERIALISM'S DESIGN

The truth is, however, that the British bourgeoisie cannot afford to make political concessions to nationalist aspirations whilst the Sinn Fein's political star is in the ascendancy and whilst the IRA is unbeaten because it will be interpreted, quite correctly as a victory for them. Nor can Thatcher promise to deliver the goods where Unionists are concerned. As OUP Assembly man Bob McCartney said: "It does not lie in the power of the British government to screw the Prods."

This bravado by the Protestants is ninety percent bluff. British imperialism certainly has the power to leave them in the lurch economically and militarily. If it did then a remarkable mood of sweet reasonableness and even Irish consciousness would come over the bowler hatted black

hundreds of 'Ulster'. But they have had the confidence to repeatedly call the bluff of British Labour and Tory governments for one reason alone. They are well aware that British imperialism has no reliable alternative state structure with which to subordinate Ireland. The division of the island keeps the South a weak compliant semi-colony of European and American imperialism. The Orange state divides the Irish proletariat and represses the radical Republican movement. A united Orange-Green bourgeoisie in an independent state would be a weak guardian of imperialism's interests even if such a state could be achieved without allowing Republicanism or a united revolutionary proletariat to get "out of control". Faced with these uncertainties British imperialism sensibly prefers the devil it knows, and the devil knows it and extracts his price.

Namely, the continued financial and military backing to sustain loyalist privileges and Catholic oppression.

In the discussions around the Forum Fianna Fail was that section of Green Tories who were most insistent upon making a declaration for a united Ireland. This is not because the Irish bourgeoisie has any real interest in ending partition. Far from it. They long ago (1921 and 1932) reconciled themselves to it and imperialism. What the Forum report indicates is that they have to give a rhetorical expression to the felt desire of the Nationalist and anti-Unionist working-class for a 32 County Republic. Fianna Fail expresses it more stridently only because it relies more heavily upon urban workers for support.

Nor is the desire for a united Ireland among Southern workers misplaced. What they sense is that part of the reason for their high unemployment (second highest in the EEC) and low wages is the domination and partition of their country by imperialism. In this they are right. What is more they see the visible scars left by imperialism in the North. Through all this they sense that a united Ireland may help to raise them out of their present condition.

In this too they are right but only if the fight against imperialism North and South embraces the perspective of overthrowing the treacherous Irish Green Tories and their dependent capitalism as well. This is the programme of Permanent Revolution.

The Forum has demonstrated the bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism. But the perspective of Permanent Revolution can break the log-jam because if in the mobilisation against imperialism the oppressed minority of the Northern workers can advance proletarian demands this will go to the heart of their Protestant class brothers' fears. Demands such as severing the influence of the Church over the state, demands on jobs and wages that will unite all workers against all bosses whether Orange or Green.

BREAKING ORANGEISM

This perspective will not only drive a wedge between the Unionist workers and bosses but, in the first instance within the ranks of Unionist workers. This fact has to be faced. No concessions can be made to Loyalist desires to retain the links with British imperialism. Democratic slogans and safeguards alone have no power to heal the class rift since there can be no fundamental progress until British imperialism is defeated, until its troops are driven out and an end is made to the Unionist veto. Once British imperialism is seen to be defeated the outlook of sections of the Protestant working class will begin to be transformed. Once they realise that that prop is gone an enormous obstacle to a change of their reactionary consciousness will be removed.

But to achieve the dislocation of the Protestant workers from the Orange block a revolutionary party based on an internationalist class perspective is necessary. Whilst petit-bourgeois revolutionary nationalism has to be defended unconditionally against British imperialism and reactionary Orangeism it cannot unify the Irish proletariat, it cannot consistently fight the Green Tories and thus despite its enormous heroism it cannot drive imperialism out of Ireland. ■

by Keith Hassell

Stop All Deportations!

IN AN OPERATION paid for and masterminded by the Daily Mail, South African runner, Zola Budd has neatly sidestepped the world athletics' boycott of the apartheid regime. She has become British in a startling performance. Armed only with fifty thousand pounds from Fleet Street, she broke all records, clearing the procedure for becoming a British citizen in two weeks! This was despite the fact that she retained South African nationality and publicly stated that she would live in South Africa in between competitions.

Compare this with the treatment meted out to every would be black immigrant. Long, complicated and humiliating procedures designed to delay and demoralise them are the norm. Compare it with the treatment given to black people already settled here for years.

Afia Begum was deported from Britain on May 5th along with her three year old daughter to Bangla Desh. Her 'crime' was that her husband died in a fire in Brick Lane after she had been granted permission to join him but before she had arrived. Once in Britain the Home Office decided to serve her with a deportation order which was issued 18 months ago. Since then the police have spared no efforts in hunting her and her child down. On May 2nd they raided a flat where the two were hiding. They were quickly shoved on a plane to Bangla Desh where she has few relations and no means of supporting herself.

Muhammad Idrish expects the same treatment. He came to Birmingham in 1976. Since his marriage to a Scots woman broke down he has lived with the prospect of being abruptly deported under the terms of the 1981 Nationality Act. On Wednesday 9th May a thousand members of NALGO, of which Idrish is a member and activist, along with other supporters including Kent miners, marched through the City of London to protest his deportation. The next day his final appeal against expulsion from the country was delayed: no new date has yet been fixed.

An estimated 250 people a month have been deported since the introduction of the Nationality Act, the vast majority to India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh. Passport checks, checks at social security offices and police harassment all serve as a means of intimidating black workers and keeping many in low paid jobs. The blatant racist preference given to the likes of Zola Budd the callous removal of Afia Begum and the immediate threat to Muhammad Idrish all highlight the urgent need for a united working class fight-back. There must be an organised campaign by the trade union movement against the deportations



Afia's expulsion.

and all the immigration laws. We must fight to commit the Labour Party to this as well. NALGO is committed to strike action in support of Idrish - on paper. If Idrish and thousands more are not to tread the same path as Afia Begum, NALGO and every other union must turn their resolutions into action. ■

by Paul Mason

HOW DO WE WIN THE STRIKE?

WP: At the weekend, Scargill called for ASLEF and the NUR to strike alongside the miners. Do you agree with this? Should the rank and file of those unions be appealed to in order to get that action?

Dave: We had close co-operation with ASLEF and the NUR. As you know we have had more co-operation from your average ASLEF member than we have had off the average miner in Nottingham. I suppose it is a very big problem because the burden of the struggle has fallen on railwaymen in Nottingham who have been sent home and have lost wages etc. It is hard for a railwayman to understand why he should lose his money when there are still miners working, unless it is explained to the railwaymen that the two industries just on their own are inextricably linked.

For example, something like 80% of all work done by the railways is freight, and most of that freight is carrying coal. So if there was decimation in the coalfield, there would also be decimation on the railway. But there is also a wider class struggle. The miners are seen as the vanguard of the class. The reason why the government is going out of its way to smash this strike is in order to take out a key section of the trade union movement, with a view to smashing the miners' union and all other unions. So for that reason, not only the railwaymen but all other unions should be taking solidarity action. It is correct to appeal to the railwaymen at this time because they have specific wage payments problems and they have also been told about other yards being closed. There is not point in them waiting for us to settle ours and then going on strike.

WP: What should we do about the leaders of those unions who are putting off the action, at least until the end of the month, and then only talking about an overtime ban?

Dave: I personally think that there has been too much unnecessary criticism of progressive leaders during the strike. The ASLEF leadership - if we'd had that kind of leadership in the Nottingham coalfield at the beginning, we wouldn't be in the situation where we've had over 1,500 men arrested and a lot hospitalised, we could have been directing our energies to other places. So if I had any criticisms to lay, I'd lay them at the feet of the people crossing picket lines in Nottingham rather than at the ASLEF leadership.

WP: You talked about the Nottingham miners. What do you think should be done now? What strategy would get them out after all that has happened over the last eight or nine weeks?

Dave: If anybody's got any strategy we haven't thought of we will wait anytime for anyone to tell us, because if we knew a strategy we would have used it. As a person that has been personally involved in the direction of the pickets in Nottingham, this is a problem I have had to live with for 8 weeks. I have tried everything bar hiring the Royal Flight and dropping bloody parachutists into the Nottinghamshire coalfield!

One of the problems is the Press are trying to provoke a split. They're trying to precipitate the Nottingham miners into forming a scab union which they have done before. In some papers they've been glorifying the role of Spencer in the '30s. We don't want to do anything to precipitate that, but there is no way we could run away from the problem either, it has to be confronted. So we're very aware of that, because we are aware of the fact that a scab Nottingham union wouldn't remain a scab Nottingham union. It would recruit in Yorkshire, it would recruit in Scotland, it would pick up any dissident support. Suppose you only got 100 people in the whole of Yorkshire - you could establish a Yorkshire branch.

We know that there are people with enough money and influence to push people in the direction of doing that, and we don't want to precipitate that.

There's no way we're going to stop going into Nottingham, and we'll try every way to get in. No union branch in Nottinghamshire can now be accepting dues for anybody at work, and you know it's on a mark-off. That coalfield is officially on strike, and they should be paying no union subscription, none should be being collected. Now if that is the case, if that money is not being collected, then those people are not due any representation if they get injured underground or anything like that. There won't be any claims put in from them, and there won't be any representation. Once they realise they are on their own as far as representation in courts, tribunals and anything like that, maybe it'll prick their conscience. Of course that has to be taken to the National Executive, but we sent it there from the Yorkshire area, and that was a suggestion that came from the rank and file - where all the suggestions come from.

WP: There seems to have been a change in immediate tactics to mass pickets of individual pits like Pie Hill today and Harworth last week, as opposed to spreading them out thinly throughout the coalfield. Is that a conscious change since Scargill took over?

Dave: Wait a minute. I take total issue with this. I am the person who directed the pickets for the

Workers Power talked to DAVE DOUGLASS of Hatfield Main NUM and the Yorkshire Area NUM Executive. Dave spoke to us in a personal capacity.

first three weeks, and on my own from Doncaster I sent 2000 pickets out. We also deployed a picket from South Yorkshire and from North Yorkshire, and at no time did we have a strategy to spread them all out to every pit.

From time to time that was used as a ploy to draw the police off. At other times we consciously picketed one pit for over three shifts, so we directed all the pickets to one pit, we sometimes took all the shifts off and sent them on one shift so you'd have a total mass concentration.

It's a matter of trying to box clever and getting a way round them. Arthur hasn't directed one picket yet in the whole of this strike. None of the strategies have been Arthur's and that's fair enough. What has happened is that the Yorkshire area has been running the strike. We have now passed control over to the National Office in terms of coordinating the strike, but it's a physical impossibility for somebody behind a desk in Sheffield to direct the entire coalfield strike.

The bulk of the direction is coming from here, from Yorkshire, with the coordination of Wales and Derbyshire done by the national office.

We haven't had the kind of big national push that we've been looking for up to now. There has been a proposal for this big march and that'll be the first nationally coordinated action. If anything goes wrong with any picketing that is not the blame of Arthur nor the blame of the national leadership (I want you to print this, by the way); that blame lies only with the leadership and with myself because I am one of the four non-full-time officials on the Barnsley Strike Coordinating Committee. I have got at least a quarter of the blame for anything that goes wrong. My interests in this strike are identical to the interests of other people that I live with. I don't drive a Rover, I don't live in a private house. I live in a Council house with an outside toilet, I come up for election every two years. I'm subject to immediate dismissal, and I resent being called a bureaucrat in Left papers. The reason why we will win this strike is because the leadership in the miners' union is linked hook, line and sinker through to the rank and file.

WP: You mentioned the demonstration - do we have any details on that at the moment?

Dave: Not really. And I'm a little bit annoyed that the date for the demonstration reached the Press before it was given to any of the union, including me as an Executive member. It should have been sent to me first, and the first I read of it was in the paper.

Whether or not it is a good plan is another matter, but you know Trotsky used to make the point that it is better to consolidate unitedly behind a bad tactic than to start splitting off behind hundreds of ones that you think might be good tactics.

WP: Since the delegate conference endorsed the call for a national strike, Workers Power has argued that what should happen is that there should be a series of mass meetings at pits throughout the country, to endorse that action and to discuss ways to spread the strike to other industries, and that that kind of mass meeting democracy is far better and is based on workers' democracy - unlike the right wing's conception of the ballot. What do you think of that idea?

Dave: It's one of the things that has infuriated me about your newspaper and several others, that you are usually about a month behind what we are actually doing. The national delegate conference was formed following mass branch meetings and the delegates that went to that conference were delegated by those mass meetings to go there. In every colliery at least once a week, mass meetings are held. Every single day mass meetings of pickets are held to direct the operations, to see what went wrong. I am a leader of the strike committee in Doncaster, as well as the advisory committee, and I have a meeting every single day with a delegate and representatives of every single branch who meet their own men every single day.

Apart from that, every branch has a mass meeting at least once a week - that's a meeting of all the branches in Doncaster where all of these things are put forward. We have been doing this continually and anything that the mass of the miners want to say in the period of this struggle is going to be said, and nobody is going to stop them saying it.

If anybody thinks that I have any interest in ignoring what those pickets say they must think I'm crazy. For a start, they'd hang you if you didn't, and secondly, I want to win the strike.

It has to be said that you get the impression reading some of the left papers that there is an inseparable gulf between the leadership of this strike and the rank and file. There is no such gulf. There is no such gulf. There are differences, but the point I am making is that the differences in this union are not differences of hierarchy and

they are not differences through lack of democracy, and they are not differences through not listening to the rank and file. Whatever problems there are, are not those problems.

Workers Power has also argued and is arguing now for a general strike in solidarity with the miners and to smash the anti-union laws. What role do you think the TUC should be playing in that?

Dave: None. I don't believe in approaching the TUC. There is too much bitter experience in approaching the TUC, if by that you mean the General Council. We learned that lesson once very bitterly. If you look at the experience of the NGA, if you look at the experience of any other union that has been in battle lately, it is the kiss of death.

And we have enough Judases in this movement without us going up to them and asking for a kiss of death!

Anything to be organised has to be organised directly through the rank and file directly to the people who are sympathetic to it. The concept of a general strike I am not too sure of at this moment. A one-day general strike has been called in Yorkshire and in Scotland. I am not a big believer in one-day general strikes, but it is feasible that it could be a good demonstration of support if you can trust some of the leaders of those other unions.

Now I already know of members of NUPE that some sort of middle leaders and area leaders have been saying to their members: "Well, it's up to you if you want to go on strike, you can go on strike". Nobody ever wants to go on strike. They have to say "we are on strike" on that day if they want to be serious. Now the Yorkshire and Humber TUC have issued a very good leaflet saying that we are on strike, but unfortunately I do not know whether those leaflets are getting through, and whether the ordinary members are getting to know that they are all supposed to be out on that day.

Do you not think the TUC and even the leadership of the Labour Party will apply the kiss of death and add betrayal anyway and that we need to get them under our control now?

Dave: What we have control of is this strike. The rank and file of the miners union has control of this strike. At this stage we are getting good solidarity from other unions - from the TGWU, from the seamen, from the railwaymen, and other unions are giving us support.

To spread the strike further requires the same kind of action that we are getting from these people. I would do it on the basis of approaching individual unions and linking them up until the TUC is presented with a fait accompli, rather than asking for some official stamp of approval from people you know damn well don't know where that stamp is. If its in a drawer somewhere, that drawer has been locked for a long time.

On the question of the leaders of the Labour Party. Every platform I've spoken on, and Arthur

has spoken on, we have condemned that statement by Kinnock about national ballots. We disagree with a national ballot, we disagree with Kinnock. And when he talks about violence on the picket lines, he doesn't refer to the lads we've hurt and killed. We are talking about our right to defend ourselves against the SPG and Thatcher's armed forces because they are using weapons against unarmed pickets. For Kinnock to start talking like that is a betrayal of this struggle.

What's your opinion of the wives support groups that have been established and how can you see their role being extended in this strike?

Dave: There are women's support committees and they involve other women from the community.

I fully support the women and so does Arthur. He's congratulated all the work that they've done. All I would call on the women's support groups to do is to set up formal branch structures in the sense that in every area there should be a separate co-ordinating body of the women and they should have branches in each village. Unfortunately you've got two or three support groups in each village. We need to centralise that.

Sometimes the women see the value of sending pickets to places that the strike committee has not. They are able to act not as an auxiliary but as another arm in the movement. They are acting independently, marching separately but striking together in the same cause.

Hatfield strike committee has co-opted "picketers" onto the committee. Has there been any move to get the women officially represented on these committees?

Dave: No that hasn't been proposed. You could argue that the whole running of the strike should be open to everybody. I'm not sure of whether we can do that and keep it disciplined. Because the women's committees represent women from the whole community, I can see problems. Would we just have miners' wives or daughters? I personally believe that it's better for the women to organise their own actions or co-ordinate their own actions with us. I would rather we did it like that. I give report backs to the women's support group - as well as to the men.

The strike is in its third month. What would you see as being the steps towards victory?

Dave: For a start Nottingham has to come out.

Can you win without Nottingham?

Dave: Its difficult. One way or another we have to force them out if we have to put a ring of steel round Nottingham and no coal goes out and no empties go in. At Peterborough I appealed for POEU engineers not to mend telephones and for miners equipment repair places not to mend machinery. Without electrical equipment and appliances and without supplies to canteens they can't function. Black everything and out of Nottingham. Then we can win it that way.

workers power

we reply

THE DISCUSSION WITH Dave raises several vital questions concerning perspectives for winning the miners strike. We have argued throughout that the key to victory lay in maximising the memberships' involvement in the running of the strike and the mobilisation of the bulk of rank and file miners in action to win the strike. That is why we have placed great stress on the holding of frequent and absolutely regular mass meetings in the strike, and argued that those mass meetings must be the sovereign bodies for conducting and controlling the strike and all officials.

In fact compared, for example with 1972, this strike is based on the active mobilisation of a relatively small number of militant miners. It is good if Dave's report is accurate about the number of mass meetings being held in the Doncaster area. It is, however, far from the case in every pit or in every coalfield. This will prove extremely dangerous if it becomes the case that only the more seasoned union activists and young militants are actively involved while the majority of miners remain passive and relatively uninvolved tending their gardens at home.

At present the striking areas are solid. But in a long drawn out struggle individual, uninvolved miners subject to the privations of the strike and seeing the suffering of their families, will be more prone to accept the propaganda of the Tory media than their militant and active brothers and sisters. Only the regular mass meeting can counter these pressures. Backward moods can be combatted, the majority can be regularly involved maximum strength pickets can be formed and high morale maintained.

But there is more to our insistence on mass meetings than that. As strikes are the 'military school' of the worker so the mass meeting itself is an embryonic form of the workers democracy that Marxists counterpose to the hollow charade of bourgeois democracy. That is why we saw voting at mass meetings as a key to making this

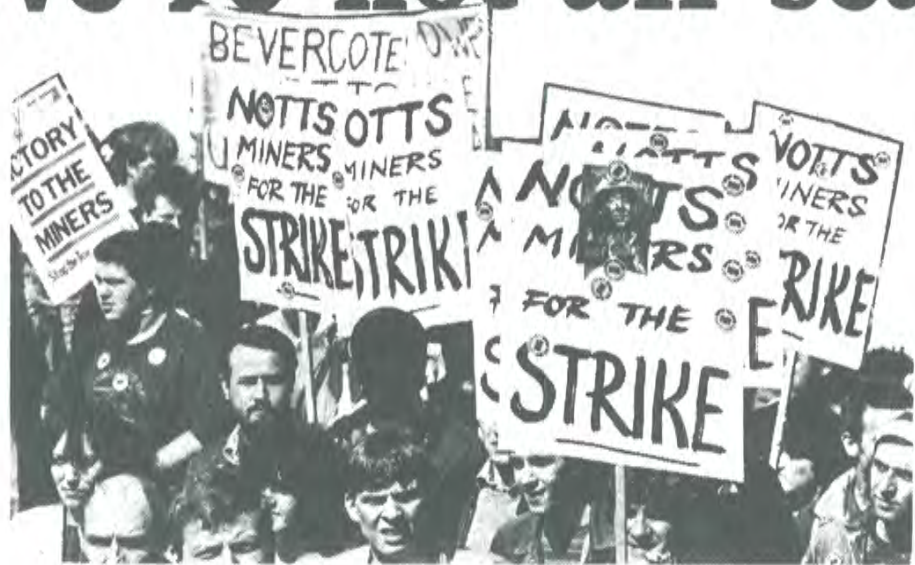
strike a national strike and challenging the clamour for a secret ballot. Dave did not reply to this point from our questioner. We argued for a nationally organised round of mass meetings to hear the case for a national strike call from the national executive and national conference. A vote should be taken by a show of hands, counted and nationally aggregated. That was and is our alternative to the old style ballot that the best militants have quite rightly rejected.

Such a vote would register a clear, irrefutable democratic national majority for action. It would strengthen the hand of the Nottingham militants that we interview on this page. It would cut the ground from under the feet of the waverers that continue to exist. This may not provide a magic formula for stopping every scab who is so low as to crawl to work with a police escort. But Dave has no alternative answer to the problem of getting the strike national. We agree with him that we must get Nottingham out. He is dead right to warn that a scab union would not stop at the boundaries of Nottinghamshire. We think workers democracy holds the key to mobilising sufficient strength to make the strike national and mobilise rank and file.

Other articles in this issue highlight other differences with Dave. We are prepared to criticise the NUR and ASLEF leaders even though Nottingham miners continue. To do otherwise is to lull miners into a false sense of security that meetings between Arthur Scargill and the railwaymen's leaders will tighten the knot around the Tories neck. Our disagreements with Dave on the general strike and on whether women's support committees should have seats on the strike committees are also taken up in this issue of our paper.

Dave pulled no punches whenever he disagreed with our positions. That was right. The points of difference between Dave and ourselves concern vital and important questions. We urge any readers who want to reply to any of the questions raised and claims made in these interviews to write in to us and deepen and extend this debate.

'We're not all scabs in the Midlands'



John Sturrock (Network)

SOUTH NOTTS

Workers Power talked to

Jim Robinson, of Nottinghamshire Strike Committee and Cotgrave Pit,

WP: How has the situation developed and how did you come to be on strike?

Jim: We have been out 7 weeks. Some strikers have been out less but we have all been out at least 5 weeks.

We did not get any leadership from local officials or the Area Executive. The strike was started by various individuals deciding they wanted to strike. At Cotgrave, 50 or 60 men on one shift walked out and formed a strike committee and decided to picket. At this time not one of the committee had any experience of strike action or organisation. I had only been in the background in the 72/74 disputes. We have now been pushed into the leadership.

WP: What happened next?

Jim: Initially the strike committee collapsed because it decided to return to work and lobby from the inside, which proved disastrous. For the following week I picketed alone as a protest against police intimidation. As a result of this picketing, members who were disappointed with the committee's earlier decision and consequent collapse, re-grouped and formed a better organised and more determined committee.

WP: What did the committee decide to do next?

Jim: The committee decided we had to fend for ourselves and our children and that we therefore needed to meet other trade unionists, Labour Party members and other contacts in order to raise money and food for our wives and children.

We were also attending meetings as the NUM, and had thereby replaced the Branch officials who were crossing picket lines and encouraging others to do so.

WP: Do you see your organisation as permanent?

Jim: We intend to stand for every position in our union and we are going to be active at meetings, which are at present very poorly attended. We as a group are going to change Nottingham NUM from within.

WP: What have Chadburn and Co been up to during the strike?

Jim: If they had supported the strike from day one, we would not be in this mess now. Union officials should stop thinking of their careers and should stand up and be counted

with the miners. Our wives and children have lost their income, so is it too much to ask? We have had no contact with Chadburn etc for the duration of the strike.

WP: What problems have you experienced in getting support?

Jim: We have had problems because those now active in the strike were inexperienced and were not known to local union officials. We therefore lack the necessary influence to activate such officials and they have tended to ignore our appeals for help and support.

As a result of the slow response to calls for support, many Notts miners fear that if they do strike they will starve because of this (and the situation with the DHSS).

WP: What links have you made with key unions like NUR and ASLEF?

Jim: We have nothing but praise for the support they have given. We must keep up the pressure on their leaders to mobilise the members behind us.

WP: Why are Notts miners continuing to cross picket lines?

Jim: The first point is that they are hiding behind the ballot demand. The ballot must be opposed because no one has the right to sell his son's, or any other working man's future, away.

A major factor influencing Notts miners is the bribes being offered by the NCB to continue working.

During the overtime ban, maintenance would be carried out on pit shafts, and as a result maintenance was done on a Monday morning. We were therefore sent home on a Monday morning because of this. We were losing a day's pay because of this Monday maintenance work.

Bribe No.1 to Notts miners is that now the NCB has said "please turn up for work and cross picket lines on a Monday morning drink tea in the canteen and we'll pay you as well as give you a bonus."

Bribe No.2 is that prior to this situation, if you rode the shaft 15 minutes early you got a warning. Now the NCB is letting men leave half an hour early.

Bribe No.3. Production at Cotgrave is down by about 20,000 tons a week, but the bonus remains the same as prior to the overtime ban or the strike.

Send money and Messages of support to :
South Notts Strike Committee, AUEW Office,
218 Mansfield Rd, Nottingham.

NORTH NOTTS

Workers Power talked to Paul Whetton, Secretary of Notts Strike Committee.

WP: How was the Nottingham strike committee formed?

Paul: On day one of the strike many miners came out immediately in Notts, in answer to calls for solidarity with the official strike of Yorkshire and Scotland. After about a week or a fortnight the men found themselves isolated in small groups and began to lose morale. We got some men together at Ollerton Miners' Welfare where we called a second meeting at which 19 branches attended and 600/700 men. Being able to identify one another they found out they weren't on their own. Since then we've formed a strike committee at which officials were elected and fundraising organised.

WP: What success have you had so far in getting the Notts miners out?

Paul: Well, we've had some successes and some failures. The successes were those where we were able to go to pits that had very few men out, move on and leave them to organise. We've had success in raising funds, we can pay out sums of money for hardship, but we've now reached the point of getting to the hard-core of anti-strikers in Nottingham coalfields. The question now is "Where do we go from here?"

WP: You've mentioned the hard-core of Notts miners who are still going in. Are any of them waverers who could be won over?

Paul: Yes, a lot of them are waverers, it's a matter of being able to afford to send pickets out to them, we need as much cash in as we can possibly get.

WP: How many do you estimate are actually on strike now? What do you think of the TV reporting that 80% of Notts miners are still going to work?

Paul: Our figures would suggest that this is not true. Up to a month ago we were estimating 10,000 Notts miners were on strike. That figure now needs raising up to 15,000. We're trying to get estimates every day from the pickets of who's going in. We're presenting the figures on a conservative side rather than an optimistic side.

The Coal Board is frightened of the strike really taking hold in the Notts coalfield. They need to preserve the image of a split in the union and they're prepared to tell lies, juggle figures, scrape coal from all corners of the pit yard and dump it in trains to show production.

WP: How do you see the possibilities now of getting those who are still going to work to come out on strike?

Paul: They're still coming out in odd ones or twos, the problem is that odd ones and twos are also drifting back. We've got to left the men and really bring the message home to them. The national demonstration may help us with that and point the media towards the fact that there are substantial numbers of Notts miners out on strike. Maybe that will persuade the waverers that they should come out and join us.

WP: What support have you been getting from other sections in Notts, e.g.

the railways and what plans do you have to get support?

Paul: The sacrifices other trade unionists have made on our behalf should not be under-estimated. We've also had the problem that whereas some have been prepared to co-operate, some unions have not, and there is still a small minority that are still taking trains to power stations, still driving buses through picket lines.

They give the excuse that why the hell should we lay our jobs on the line when there are Notts miners still working. Our answer to that is that the scabs and blacklegs are causing our problems and there's no need for trade unionists to lower themselves to their level and line up with them in order to justify breaking picket lines.

WP: In the immediate period, your main priority remains getting out the Notts miners who are still going to work?

Paul: I feel that once we've achieved that then the broader trade union movement can really throw its weight behind us. There's that excuse and that understandable hesitation about doing that, whilst there are still miners working. Our problem is the scabs and the blacklegs in Notts.

They've been told all sorts of lies and we haven't got the facilities to countermand that. All we can do is stand on the picket lines - we're not even allowed to talk to us own members, the police won't allow us.

It's not just a matter of travelling from Yorkshire into Nottinghamshire now. It's a matter of travelling from village to village within Notts. Even the Notts miners that are on strike aren't allowed to do that. We get turned back, we get threatened with arrest, cars impounded, the lot.

Send money and messages of support to :
Paul Whetton, 10 Nicholas Place, Tuxford
Newark, Notts NG22 0HU.

LEICESTER

The Leicestershire coalfield is widely regarded as a solidly scab area. The NUM Area Secretary, Jack Jones, has been the lynchpin of the right-wing on the NEC. But even in Leicestershire there is a small, determined minority of strikers. We talked to Malcolm Pinnegar, Chairman of the Leicestershire Striking Miners:

Malcolm: There are 35-40 of us on strike, although a few are stopping at home and are not part of the Striking Miners Organisation.

WP: How long have you been out?

Malcolm: It varies, but most of them now are going into their sixth week. Most of the men on strike are from Bagworth Colliery, but there are men who've been on strike the whole of the strike; one chap at Whitwick and one at South Leicester.

WP: What part has been played by the union leadership in Leicester?

Malcolm: No part - only to frustrate our efforts. They're not acting like union leaders. They're like

separatists. They'd like Leicestershire to be a separate part of the NUM. Those of us who are on strike are trades unionists; we believe the national interest of our union takes precedence over any area.

WP: What sort of support have you been getting?

Malcolm: From the NUR representatives and other trades unionists we've approached, even white collar unions, we are having superb support. The thing that strikes me as most peculiar in all this is that the whole of the trade union movement is behind us, and the Support Committee set up by the Trades Council is fantastic. The only thing stopping us winning this fight at the present time in my own opinion is miners. Miners that are going to work, behaving in a purely selfish manner, not supporting the national interest of their own union.

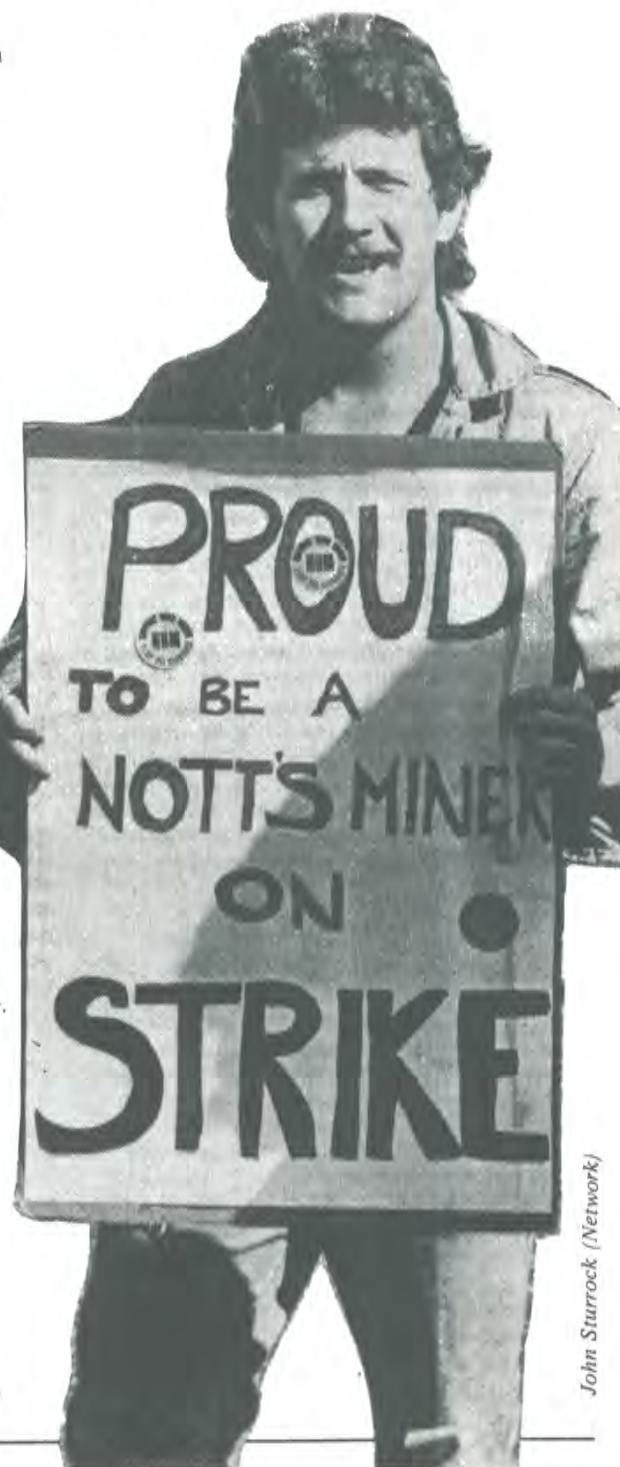
WP: Why do you think the majority of Leicestershire miners aren't supporting you at present?

Malcolm: Our Area Secretary has told them to go

to work. On three occasions at NEC meetings he has voted to support a strike on an area basis. At the delegates' conference when they voted to bring the vote down from 55 to 50%, he did vote against, and wanted a national ballot. In our opinion he's not behaved like a trade union leader. He's done nothing to help us. Against the NEC's advice he has told the men to cross picket lines and go to work.

We've also approached him in regard to getting funds for picketing from the local Area. Just general funds like men from other areas get. But he will give us nothing. When asked if he wanted us to go to work he says "No". I said, do you want us *not* to go to work? He says "No, do as you like". That's his general attitude. He's not prepared to stick his neck out and behave like a leader.

All donations and messages of support should be sent to: Leicestershire Striking Miners Fund, c/o 18 Cleeve Mount, Thorp Acre, Loughborough.



John Sturrock (Network)

S.W.P. - FLOORED BY THE UPTURN

THE CURRENT MINERS strike is a historic struggle. A major chapter in British working class history is being written. For those who count themselves revolutionaries the strike provides a stern test. It throws the politics of every organisation into sharp relief.

The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) is no exception. Being one of the largest groups on the left many miners will be aware of the SWP's heavy involvement and support of the strike. Many miners will have been grateful for their practical solidarity: the collections, the workplace levies, picket-line support, even food and accommodation. Solidarity work is vital. Yet the SWP cannot be judged by this work alone.

The Socialist Workers Party declares itself to be a revolutionary party dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism. According to its "Where we Stand", it seeks to lead the working class to "a workers' state based on councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia." The SWP's activity during the strike must be judged on whether or not it contributes to this goal or leads away from it. Today the coalfields are in the grip of mass action. For revolutionaries the challenge is to connect with it and give it political direction, to give it revolutionary leadership so that out of today's struggle the whole working class can be led to power.

Of course the SWP is small. With a couple of dozen miners and few leading militants in the labour movement they cannot exercise leadership. But they have a responsibility to combine their solidarity with propaganda and agitation for the political steps that are vital if the miners are to win, or, more, if the full potential of this fight-working class power - is to become reality. To abdicate this responsibility means remaining at the level of a propagandist sect, however many collections and solidarity actions are organised.

ECONOMISM

The political method of the SWP - a fundamentally economic one - makes it incapable of relating to the miners' struggle in a way which can both take the miners forward to victory and point to the necessity of workers' power. On every question where it was necessary to provide this leadership during the strike - the fight for a national strike, tactics for bringing out Nottingham, generalising the strike to other sections, defence of the picket lines - the SWP has contented itself with tailing the militants, while making "propaganda for socialism".

From day one of the strike *Socialist Worker* has urged bigger and better picketing as the way to win. Week after week the SWP editorial has pushed the theme: "The miners can win if the rank and file of the union mounts picketing on a scale even larger than 1972." (SW 24.4.84).

In SW picketing is a magic key to overcome all the problems in the strike. The SWP made no attempt to put forward a strategy to tackle the problem of the Notts coalfield; developed no arguments against the form of ballot that the NUM leaders have traditionally run and which the militants quite rightly detest. Instead they fell in behind Scargill and the militants, just calling for more and bigger pickets. And even here they fail to raise crucial political questions in relation to mass pickets.

Firstly the SWP stubbornly refuse to recognise the fact that numbers themselves are not decisive. The police are well organised. They aim to prevent mass pickets gathering and are more efficient at breaking them up. This they learned from Saltley Gate and have been organising for ever since. In theory the SWP recognise this fact, but again they fail to raise any of the politically necessary steps. Revolutionaries argue with the militants for the need for well-organised self-defence squads, both because it is the only way to stop the police kicking hell out of the pickets and enabling effective picketing to take place and because we are in favour of workers organising self-defence contingents - the embryos of the workers' militia that the SWP claims to want. The SWP can only offer uselessly optimistic

scenarios like "The way to stop arrests like this is to spread mass pickets as far as is possible and stretch the police operation." (SW 14.4.84)

Any trade union militant, from their own experience, will tell you that mass pickets on their own, however big, are not sufficient. The experience of the Grunwick mass pickets, the 4,000 at Warrington, even the thousand and more mass pickets at Ravenscraig and Harworth prove this. Yet the SWP's only answer is to up the magic figure which is presumed to give victory.

The SWP sees the answer in a return to the scale of Saltley Gate (1972). But the success of Saltley Gate was not due predominantly to the numbers on the gate. The reason why the power station did not re-open the next day when the mass picket disappeared was because the Tories' resolve had been shaken by the sight of 100,000 Birmingham workers downing tools in a local general strike.

MASS PICKETING

Again this reveals the refusal of the SWP to develop and argue for demands which can develop the struggle. Despite declaring early on in the struggle "The miners' fight is decisive in determining what happens elsewhere," (SW 17.3.84), the SWP has consistently refused to call for other workers to bring forward their claims or even for workers already in struggle to strike alongside the miners. In this they are even less militant than Arthur Scargill on a good day!

Yet this is the only way to generalise the struggle and concretely offer a way forward to smash the Tory offensive. Instead the SWP editorial proclaims only "Widespread mass secondary picketing is the key to winning the strike." (12.5.84) As a result the SWP have no answer to the problem of the steel-workers other than that given by the union bureaucracy - starve them of coal, halt steel and hit industry. Neither Scargill or the SWP have a political answer to the rank and file Ravenscraig steelworkers' fears about plant closure. The SWP refuse to raise any potential demand ahead of the existing struggle. So they will not demand and fight for all steel workers to strike against threatened job losses. They refuse to raise the essential demand that the NUM give a guarantee that there will be no return to work by miners unless every steelworker's job is guaranteed safe. These demands are politically unifying ones and address a problem that mass secondary picketing alone cannot.

For the SWP none of this is possible. Their blinkered and one-sided "downturn" theory means they content themselves with "what can be done". By this they mean collections in the workplaces, resolutions for levies, support for pickets, while "making propaganda" to the minority of socialists. For the myopic Tony Cliff - "The miners' strike is an extreme example of what we in the Socialist Workers Party have called the "downturn" in the movement"! Why? Because the employers are on the offensive and the workers on the defensive. For these gentlemen, extending their analysis in history, the General Strike would no doubt also be an extreme example of a "downturn" for the same reasons! (Indeed some of their old International Socialist fore-runner of the SWP - historians actually argue this). The uselessness of this "perspective" has been shown in the miners' strike where it only leads to complete paralysis - the belief that it is impossible to argue a set of tactics and demands that can turn a defensive struggle into an offensive one.

DOWNTURN NONSENSE

But of course it is not just the "downturn theory" which explains the SWP's inability to politically lead struggles. Even in what they would regard as the height of the "upturn", the mass struggle around the imprisonment of the Pentonville dockers, the SWP refused to argue for a General Strike as being too "advanced", only to be outflanked by - the TUC!

The SWP's economism condemns them to reduce the programme of action to the immediate, existing struggle even if they

Editorial
socialist
REVIEW



John Sturrock (Network)

Building in the downturn

give it a more militant urgency. This leaves them with no way of linking the immediate stage of the struggle - even in propaganda - to the struggle for power. This inevitably means that the SWP can only explain "workers' power" not as a series of concrete demands and methods of organisation each in logical step, but as a vision of a far-off future society.

Even at the level where the SWP prides itself as being strongest and most "left" - the struggle with the trade union bureaucracy - the SWP's economism in fact lets the bureaucrats off the hook.

In their publications the SWP certainly criticise the bureaucrats - including lefts like Scargill - and pose as the defenders of the interests of the rank and file miners. They have argued that picketing should be in their hands. But they have no perspective or programme for transforming the unions and breaking the grip of the bureaucracy. They warn militants not to trust the officials but advance no programme by which the NUM rank and file can organise to transform the NUM during the dispute.

This is not surprising given the SWP's "downturn" theory. In practical terms the crux of the theory (so-called) was that in periods of "downturn" it is impossible to build a rank and file movement. The SWP wound up the bogus bodies that it called rank and file groupings. Quite consistently they raise no call for the building of a rank and file miners movement.

The miners' strike has unleashed the energy of thousands of new militants. In the Midlands it has led to the formation of a determined, militant, organised minority. This is the stuff of which a rank and file movement can be built. Tony Cliff once stumbled into the potential of the militant minority when he said: "The key problem in Nottinghamshire is how to mobilise the minority of miners, the 7,000 who voted for a strike.

If they had been organised from the beginning and had picketed their own pits then the police operation would have been paralysed." (SW 14.4.84)

But Cliff has no answer to his own problem. The effect of raising no call for a rank and file movement is to offer no alternative to Scargill that militants can actually fight for. All the SWP can say is "There is only one way rank and file activists can protect themselves from this danger (ie. Scargill's weakness). It is by making sure that as much of the strike as possible is organised from below, by strike committees in each pit, and with co-ordinating committees between pits to organise the picketing." (SW 7.4.84).

The SWP's only answer is for the rank and file to somehow by-pass the weakness or treachery of the union officials. They offer no way of putting the leaders to the test and, behind their hot anti-bureaucratic talk, let the left leaders off the hook.

On the laughable pretence that they are the revolutionary party and can do the necessary work themselves, the SWP has generally taken a sectarian position against united front miners support committee actions. They travel the road the WRP and Militant took before them. They puff themselves up with delusions that they are offering a political alternative to working class militants.

This is not the case. The working class does not need a "party" to tell it to do what it is doing already. Obviously it does not need one when its trade union actions are effective. It needs this "party" even less when those actions are inadequate and not the way to victory. The miners' strike itself has exploded the myths that the SWP has built itself on in the past period. Hasten the day when that fact becomes clear to the best SWP militants. ■

by Keith Hassell

FROM WOMEN'S SUPPORT COMMITTEES TO A WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

WIVES OF NOTTINGHAM striking miners have joined women throughout the coalfields in organising support for the strike. Right at the start of the strike Kent wives formed a group. Hatfield women re-launched their group which had been active in support of Merthyr in 1983. Now groups exist in Yorkshire, Nottingham, Coventry, South Wales and Kent.

Providing food for pickets, children and single miners is just one of the essential activities these women are engaged in. Facing severe hardship themselves as the strike continues into its third month, they have negotiated credit with local shops, distribution of food parcels, organised demonstrations outside social security offices and electricity boards who are adding to financial problems of strikers and their families. One group in Yorkshire threw picket lines around houses where electricity was about to be cut off, and persuaded the Y.E.B. worker not to cross.

Women have become involved in a wider range of activities and on a much bigger scale than in 1972 and 1974.

"In the last strike, women tended to sit back, organise a bit of catering, or go on marches with their husbands. We didn't know anything else. We weren't involved with the union." Kay Sutcliffe.

This struggle is one for the whole mining community, faced with mass local unemployment if they lose, the women have thrown themselves into building the strike. Sending speakers around to unions and workplaces seeking support and money, addressing large public meetings and marching in contingents have become the everyday activity for some of the leading women.

Kent women organised the women's march through Coalville early in the strike making links with Yorkshire and South Wales groups. Nottingham wives have been showing that women need not and should not be restricted to "women's tasks", important as these are. 150 of them picketed Thoresby Colliery and managed to break through police lines and get to the entrance, surprising both police and miners.

Dumb-struck

The press have been quite literally dumb-struck by these events. In the first week of the strike it only took a handful of anti-strike wives and a toy gun aimed at Arthur Scargill to make front page copy in the gutter press. Huge photos were carried with headlines like "petticoat Pickets" which screamed out from the tabloids. But reports of women supporting the strike are just "not news". The media set out to find any woman who are anti-strike. This backs up their stereotype image of women as always "moderate", always anti-union. Portraying women as fighters for their families, their class, their communities just isn't on. Showing the unity of interest of working class men and women doesn't suit the press barons and their lackey journalists. But unfortunately for the press, working class women are potentially a very militant section as today's wives support groups show.

But this isn't a new or unique experience. In 1970 women in the Leeds textile industry rejected a national pay settlement which gave men 5d. an hour more and women only 4d. To the horror of the union who had "won" this agreement, women walked out of one factory, formed a demonstration and marched on the next factory, surrounded it, banged on the windows and shouted "Out! Out! Out! Don't be blacklegs!" Within 10 minutes that factory was closed and they marched to the next one. These tactics brought 50 factories to a standstill with 20,000 workers on strike. Eventually negotiated back to work by the union, these women had gained an improved offer and demonstrated dramatically their ability and readiness to struggle.

Throughout the seventies and into the eighties women have been involved in fighting for equal pay, better conditions and against redundancies. The Trico equal pay strike in 1976 saw determined women out for 19 weeks whilst men continued to scab. The women won their battle.

More recently women occupied the Lee Jeans factory and women have been central to Hospital occupations in St. Benedicts, Elizabeth Garret Anderson and now Bradford's Thornton View Hospital. The health service strike in 1982 showed that women were prepared to strike in defence of living standards.

But it would be wrong to claim that women are always militant class fighters. Being both workers and mothers means that many women are not active in unions and workplace organisations. Pressures of time and energy are made worse by the constant re-inforcement of women's less than equal role. They are expected to be perfect mothers, wives, nurses and sex objects by the press and TV. They are expected to be subservient and efficient as secretaries and shop assistants. It is hardly surprising that many women are

conservative and susceptible to the anti-working class propaganda that surrounds us. Many are isolated at home with young children, with only the radio for information. Not talking to others in similar situations cuts women off from the struggles, the arguments and thus from the consciousness that makes them ready for a fight-back. That is why some women do oppose strikes, and are the potential supporters for press-inspired campaigns.

But miners' wives have given a valiant demonstration of how to deal with that problem: organise the women, bring them out of the home by providing a rota for looking after the children, and then women can support the strike and get actively involved. In organising this they have unleashed a tremendous force on the side of the miners; one the Tories had hoped to mobilise on their side.

Miners' wives, like other working class women, are becoming increasingly aware of the devastating effect of Thatcher's policies on their whole life. The whole working class faces high levels of unemployment, attacks on union rights and cuts in services, but women are specifically hard hit. Over 60% of women who work are employed in low-paid jobs, many of them part-time, where the average hourly rate is only 58% of the hourly rate for male workers. The Tories have decided that even these slave wages are too high. By introducing private contractors into the health service and local authorities, where many women work, they are cutting wages and jobs.

Women cleaners at Barking hospital are on strike over proposals from their private contractor that costs are cut by 41% by reducing hours and earnings by a third; by cutting holidays from 4 weeks to 3 weeks; by having no sick pay. This in effect makes fewer women work harder for less money! Thatcher would like this kind of "saving" to spread throughout industry, and in trying to achieve that, the government anti-union laws have curtailed union rights. By making effective strikes, solidarity and picketing illegal they hope to prevent effective action. These ironically named Employment Acts, also pay special attention to women by restricting eligibility to maternity benefits and attacking part-time workers' rights.

Women's dual role - as worker and mother, wife and carer, makes cuts in social services particularly harsh for women. Not only are jobs lost as hospitals close and school dinners are abolished, but we are also the ones expected to step in and perform those same jobs, at home, free of charge! As the Tory Family Policy Group put it, they aim to "...encourage families...to reassume responsibilities taken on by the state, for example, responsibility for the disabled, the elderly, unemployed 16 year olds." These policies supplemented by attempts to "encourage women to stay at home" show what is in store. The sickening hypocrisy is plain to see. Rich women still pay for nannies, au-pairs and private health care, and we've seen no evidence of Margaret Thatcher about to give up her right to work!

Cuts in the health service have also restricted access to free abortion and contraception, an essential provision if women are to be able to decide when to have children and when not to. Family planning clinics are threatened with closure or even returning back to the private or charity sector, abortion facilities have never been adequate under the NHS and are steadily being cut through lack of funds. Attacks on the limited right of individual women to decide when to have an abortion (already having to persuade two doctors is bad enough), are coming from right wing pressure groups like LIFE and SPUC who want to cut the upper time limit for abortions.

One group of working women facing severe attacks from the state is black women. The deportation of Afia Begum, whose only "crime" was that her husband was killed, highlights the horrific brutality of laws which allow the government to proclaim that someone should not continue to live where they wish, where they have lived and worked for years. Black women face harassment by officials seeking to "prove" their legitimate right to stay in Britain - these immigration laws must be smashed and women threatened with deportation should be defended by the whole labour movement.

MINERS' WIVES LEAD THE WAY!

The miners' wives groups have shown that there is a very important role to be played by special women's organisations. By organising initially around welfare questions, women have been drawn into activity and have become more and more politically aware, than if they had been at home waiting for their husbands flying visits between picket duties. They have pushed forward to be involved in the running of the strike with representatives on some strike committees and union bodies. This needs to go further, giving women a say in the organisation of picketing and

It's our strike as well

Interview with Lynne from the Hatfield wives' support group.

WP: What have the women in the group learnt from the experience of setting up and running a support group?

Lynne: Personally, I've learnt to speak at public meetings and how to involve people outside the community in the strike. I've learnt a lot about the police and just how much Thatcher and the government are out to get us.

WP: Have your ideas on those things changed throughout the strike?

Lynne: Take the police: I've never actually liked them but now I've learnt never to trust them because of the brutality on the picket lines and the blockades.

WP: How do you combat the way the police have operated?

Lynne: We need bigger mass pickets. I think we should get more men out on the picket lines to show solidarity with their fellow workers. There are too many staying at home. With 150 out of 1100 actively picketing at Hatfield only the minority are out there fighting for other people's jobs.

WP: What has been the reaction of the men and the union to the women organising?

Lynne: At first they caused a bit of a problem. They thought that the women should be at home. I had difficulty with my husband, he was against me going out on a picket line! I said "Well, we'll have to see about that" so I went and it turned out good. He was glad in the end to see the women in support.

Some of the men weren't altogether happy about us forming the support group, but when we went over their heads and decided that we would do it anyway, they were grateful for it.

WP: Have the women had any direct involvement in the strike committee and do you think they should?

Lynne: No we haven't yet, but I think we should because it's our strike as much as it's the men's strike. The strike committee in Coventry (though its unofficial) allow the wives support group into the strike committee meetings. We should be allowed in. We've had a report from the delegate conference but that's it.

WP: WP argue that women from the support group should be involved in a movement of working class women to take up other questions and issues around strikes and struggles which affect women workers.

Lynne: I think that the support groups that are going now should still get together after the strike is over to work on things like cuts in education and the health service because its important that we should try and put a stop to these cuts. Women can play a big part in this.

WP: In this strike you have come across revolutionary organisations. Have you been surprised by the politics?

Lynne: I can't say that I've been surprised by your politics. But the work that Workers' Power has done around the support group has been fantastic. You have been a great help to the cause.

WP: What do you think about what the Labour Party have been doing around the strike?

Lynne: Not a deal at all. I'm disgusted with Neil Kinnock. When I had to go and vote last week, of course, I had to go and vote Labour but I was disgusted with myself for having to vote Labour. But I had to do because I couldn't give my vote to the Conservatives. I've never felt that way when I've voted before.

This strike has fetched a lot of things to mind for me. I always thought the Labour Party were the party for me and that it was a workers' party but I don't think that anymore.

What put me off Kinnock was when we heard that Kinnock wouldn't speak on the same platform at a rally with Sammy Thompson (Yorkshire Executive). Before that I had every confidence in him - for some reason or another.

He wants to be in the middle of the road. You can't do that now. You get knocked over. If they were brave enough to come out we could get rid of this vicious Tory government. ■



John Sturrock (Network)

solidarity action - they have certainly proved their abilities in both these areas of work!

Being based on exclusively wives and girlfriends does have its problems however, in terms of sustaining the group. For women to become a more vocal and effective section in the future they need to organise action groups based on their workplaces and trade unions, a development which miners' wives who work should be organising now. The factors which unite working class women, give them a common fight against the government and employers are clear.

Coming together in a movement of working class women would really strengthen all the sectional struggles which women are involved in. The question of uniting struggles, bringing other claims forward and taking action now alongside the miners is a vital one if the government are to be defeated. Health workers have a claim in now - rather than waiting for prolonged negotiations and a sell-out by the unions, nurses and hospital workers should go for strike action now and consolidate their historic solidarity with the miners. Miners' wives who work in hospitals could be instrumental in this development by organising meetings at work and building a caucus of militants in each hospital.

A working class women's movement based on groups of militant women in unions, at work, on estates and in unemployed groups would be able to build the solidarity needed to win disputes. Women are not very well represented in the labour movement because of problems with home responsibilities, lack of confidence in political matters due to years of conditioning and oppression, and not least because of the sexism and lack of seriousness about women's issues in the unions themselves. Women would still only make the tea and organise the jumble sales if the attitudes of the men at the top were accepted.

Struggle to unite

Some people think that a specific women's organisation is unnecessary and divisive, but as the miners' wives have shown it is a necessary way of drawing women into struggle and helps to unite the working class. Those who oppose women's special forms of organisation would rather women battle alone and isolated as individuals in male dominated structures. Women have always organised themselves together on certain questions - precisely because they have to be concerned with food, welfare and children. However working class women do not organise to exclude men on principle, as many feminists do. They organise themselves in order to build up effective unity.

The women's organisations which exist in the Trade Unions and Labour Party are ineffective. The women's TUC meets every year, allowing national union representatives to talk a lot and organise precisely nothing. The Labour Party women's conference is also toothless, lacking the right to elect delegates to the NEC or take significant decisions itself. Both these bodies need to be transformed into organisers of effective action by becoming representative of rank and file women's organisation within the unions and LP.

Building a militant working class women's movement should be started now, led by the women organised around the strike. By making links with other women in struggle, visiting hospital occupations, organising a national co-ordination of all the groups, the beginnings of such a movement can be made. Such a movement would have to be built on the basis of a commitment to action in defence of women's rights, jobs and transforming the trade unions to fighting organisations of the class. ■

by Helen Ward

TEACHERS: for an all-out strike not 'selective action'

BUREAUCRATIC CHICANERY HAS left Britain's largest teachers' union, the 235,000 strong NUT without a policy on salaries.

Local associations (branches) of the union had prioritised resolutions calling for flat rate increases and the amalgamation of the lowest pay scales. Basing themselves on the undemocratic NUT constitution the Executive introduced a Memorandum on salaries policy to pre-empt discussion on these resolutions. This Memorandum, while it made a nod in the direction of rank and file wishes by proposing amalgamation of scales one and two, also made a dangerous concession to the employers by accepting the possibility of negotiations to introduce a new Entry Grade for newly qualified teachers.

Such a new entry grade lies at the heart of Tory plans to increase control over teachers by close vetting of new teachers over a three year probationary period. Sir Keith Joseph is openly trying to blackmail teachers into accepting this by linking any sizeable increase in pay to re-structuring.

The Executive's disgraceful concession to this blatant attack on teachers' pay and conditions prompted a great number of critical amendments. Motions opposing the entry grade and adopting a flat rate policy (as against percentage increases which benefits the higher paid senior teachers) and amalgamation of scales one, two and three were passed by conference. Whilst it would appear, at first sight, that this represents a victory for the left it is more realistic to see it as a pragmatic response to the blocking of promotion prospects as a result of government spending cuts. If promotion to a higher scale is impossible then amalgamation of scales is the only route to higher pay.

What was certain was that these resolutions were a major defeat for the Executive (a majority of whom are senior teachers, deputy heads etc). On their behalf, Don Winters, ex-President, called for the resolutions to be rescinded on the grounds that they would mean that months of negotiations would be wasted and unity with head teachers and the other teachers' unions would be threatened. Unfortunately a majority of delegates swallowed this and the Executive appeared to have been let off the hook.

However, on the last day of conference a Special resolution, resurrecting



Striking miners join teachers' Day of Action.

the flat rate policy, was moved. Once again it was easily passed by a show of hands. The Presidents ruled that a card vote was needed. This confirmed that the resolution had won a majority but, surprise, surprise, the result was not announced until ten minutes after the official end of conference and the President, therefore, ruled that it was not binding. As a result the union has no policy until a Special Conference has been held in the Autumn.

The debate around the salaries policy highlighted the glaring need for a determined opposition to the Executive. It also showed up the inadequacy of the established left groupings represented at conference. By far the biggest of these is the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA). This tendency has been built as a typical 'Broad left' electoral machine. As in past years it showed itself more interested in cobbling together resolutions that could command a majority of votes than in fighting for correct policies. The STA adopted the disastrous position of calling for selective strike action on the pay claim.

This is a particularly dangerous policy in a union so uneven in the attitudes of its members as the NUT. Outside of the working class, inner-city

areas, "professionalism" is still very strong. Selective action, which would almost undoubtedly only be taken by the militant associations, would reinforce the divisions between the Shires and the cities. As an ineffective policy it would also carry the danger of wearing down the determination of the militants.

On the face of it the SWP's position of all-out strikes, flatrate increases and amalgamation appear a principled alternative. However, their refusal to fight for the building of a rank and file movement NOW, coupled with their refusal to stand for election against the present leadership means that they leave teachers with a stark alternative: join the Party or leave everything to the Executive. Clearly this is no way forward for rank and file militants who are not yet revolutionary socialists but who want to wrest control away from the bureaucrats and transform the NUT into a fighting union rather than a passive professional association.

The massive response to the one-day strike on May 9th shows that the potential exists for a successful fight. Militants in the NUT should fight for an all-out strike to win a flat rate increase. There is no better time than now to begin such action: before the exams start, and with the miners in a fight to the finish with the Tories.

The strategy of selective strike action, dragging on for months and causing minimum damage should be rejected. It is a road which has already led the Health workers and the Civil Servants to defeat. All attempts to blackmail teachers into submission "in the interests of the children" should be resisted. A strong teachers union, fighting for better pay and conditions, against education cuts and for an education system that will benefit and be under the control of working people is a far better guarantee of their future. The shambles at the NUT conference demonstrated that a struggle to transform the NUT is needed more than ever.

by Adrian Swaine (Newham NUT)

STRETCHING THE LAW

Five Pickets have been charged with "conspiracy to cause criminal damage". This represents a serious escalation: there is no need to provide proof in a conspiracy case and there is no maximum sentence. It is a law that has been used very selectively in the past in test cases like the Shrewsbury pickets, the Bradford 12, the Angry Brigade etc.

The judges could be lining up yet another "show trial" when their case is re-convened on July 5th.

Bail conditions too have been tightened. 2000 miners have now been arrested during the dispute. Many are still on bail that stops them "approaching NCB property" and will be for the rest of the strike. This has backfired in some cases. At Blidworth, for example, miners barred from picketing the pit now treat every scab to his own personal front-door picket each morning.

Even the top people's paper is getting the jitters. In an editorial last Saturday the Times reminded the powers-that-be that "Account has to be taken of the other parts of the country which have their police force depleted as a result of drafting men to defend the Nottinghamshire miners". Very true. Especially if, like many "top people" you live in rich parts of London only a stone's throw from Brixton or Southall. "What would be the result" asks a worried Times editor, "of some wholly unforeseeable event led to a substantial call on the police while so many were occupied on the picket lines?"

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

of using the 'all or nothing' argument that given that the TUC will not call a general strike nothing can be done whatsoever.

If put under pressure their natural bent is for calling token 'days of action' to give the impression they are doing something and in order to keep the militants tied up. One 'day of action' has already taken place in Scotland on May 9th. The Yorkshire TUC is calling one. So too is the South Welsh TUC for June 12th.

These 'days of action' present militants with the task of winning their members to undertake action that is not enough to win. Militants must obviously mobilise for such days once they are called and use the days as a platform to raise the call for the general strike.

But this call for the general strike will have to be fought for against the official left's plan for a circus of 'days of action' spread out throughout the miners strike. This is only a recipe for an ever increasing number of days of hopelessness.

The alternative is to call on the official leaderships to take strike action alongside the miners, demand the TUC calls an immediate general strike to win the miners strike and smash the anti-union laws and for militants to prepare to stop their potential betrayal.

In events of the magnitude of a general strike it is possible for a revolutionary party to win thousands of the best militants over to a revolutionary strategy for victory. A mass rank and file movement and a revolutionary party can provide a real alternative to the existing leadership. To do so needs foresight and courage - the courage to be a minority opposition today but to say what needs to be said.

The working class - and first of all its most militant and conscious rank and file leaders - will find its way to such an alternative on one condition; namely that it exists, even in a tiny nucleus, and that it dares to speak up against the present leadership and even against the present illusions and prejudices of the rank and file.

WORKERS IN ACTION



B.L. BOSSES BACK OFF

Longbridge management caved in last Tuesday when a dispute on the Metro System 2 threatened to halt the entire plant. The dispute originated three weeks ago when management removed 8 of 14 operators and then tried to discipline the remaining six for not reaching set 'efficiency levels'. Systems 2 and 3 day and night shift walked out and were joined by Mini trim workers. All Metro and Mini track workers were then laid off. By Thursday Rover Acclaim had walked out and by Friday large numbers of other areas were voting in support. A picket was called for Tuesday morning after the holidays.

Despite a relatively small picket to start, further crucial support was gained when internal and external drivers voted to support the action and they were joined by the Machine Shop. In an important act of solidarity a lively group of miners joined the picket line from Keresley and Birch Coppice Collieries. Indeed they were heard to remark, on seeing only three policemen present, that it was a bit like a holiday!

By 10.30 am with virtually all production stopped and Cowley being within one shift of being laid off, management thought better of it and conceded the Trim workers demands. Even then they tried to delay implementation of the agreement and the trim workers had to walk again on Thursday before management quickly found an extra 8 workers.

This dispute was a small but important victory for the Longbridge workers. It shows that management is not willing to stand up to a united workforce willing to strike in solidarity with sections under attack. Longbridge workers must take this opportunity to strengthen their organisation and take the offensive against erosion of conditions in other areas. They must also respond to the miners show of solidarity by upping the support being given to the strike: inviting miners to section meetings, establishing effective levies through the plant and sending delegations down to the picket lines. A miners victory will have a dramatic effect in turning the tide in Longbridge.

MINERS INTERNATIONAL

POLAND

THE USUALLY buoyant Arthur Scargill was less than communicative when he left the Polish Embassy on Friday May 11th. He had headed a NUM delegation asking the regime of General Jaruzelski to stop its exports of coal to Britain. He did so as the Polish regime was poised to dispatch a special delegation to Britain in search of new markets for Polish coal.

Perhaps Scargill hoped to cash in some chips in exchange for his support of the Polish regime against Solidarnosc. While many NUM lodges backed the Solidarnosc miners in their battle against bureaucratic privilege and repression Arthur Scargill remained loyal to the Polish Stalinist regime. There is no sign that the Polish bureaucracy will reward him for his work in isolating Solidarnosc. They feel not an ounce of class solidarity with fighting British miners.

The May Day demonstrations in Poland showed that Solidarnosc is still alive in the underground. The Jaruzelski regime cannot silence it. It is the Polish miners, the majority of whom were organised in Solidarnosc and are boycotting Jaruzelski's stooge state unions, who are the natural class allies of the British miners.

All blocking and picketing of Polish coal imports must be accompanied by clear demonstrations of support for the struggle of the Polish workers. Let the seamen take the coal back with the clear message that British miners back

their Polish brothers and call for their support in winning this vital fight. By supporting the Polish workers against Jaruzelski miners can help forge a miners international that stops miners being divided on national lines once and for all. Arthur Scargill's courtship of the Stalinist regime in Poland can not serve that cause.

IRELAND

IT HAS BEEN brought to our notice by Irish readers that NCB mined coal is being re-exported from Ireland back to Britain in a bid to break the miners strike. The company behind the shipment of screenings from Dublin to Liverpool Birkenhead is none other than Powell Duffryn International Fuels.

Powell Duffryn was one of the largest colliery companies before coal nationalisation. One of its top managing directors became the first Chairman of the NCB. The enormous compensation it received on nationalisation was invested in operations ranging from pollution control, fuel marketing and shipping to travel. Now the old owners are reaping profits from organising to break the strike.

Both Tebbit and Treasury Minister John Moore have recently blurted out their plans for privatising the pits to the press. If the Tories get their way Powell Duffryn will doubtless be well up the queue to buy up the high-tech super pits and set up as colliery owners once again. No wonder they are working so hard to smash the NUM.

FRANCE

A RESOLUTION OF solidarity with British miners was unanimously passed by miners of the CGT branch at Marienau pit and the CGT day-section at Wendel pit, both in North-West France. The resolution concludes, "We the French miners are confronted with the same type of plan put forward by our government and affirm our solidarity with the British miners. We call upon our union federation to take all possible steps to provide moral and material support to our British comrades. VICTORY TO THE MINERS! LONG LIVE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' SOLIDARITY!"

The resolution follows an initiative by members of Groupe Pouvoir Ouvrier, our fraternal group in France. They argue for no movement of coal from France to Britain, for financial assistance from the CGT to the NUM, for the CGT to organise NUM speaking tours in the French coal fields. The attack on coal and those who mine it is Europe-wide. There should be a European conference of rank and file miners delegates to plan an international fightback against the bosses plans.



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