

workers power

25p/10p strikers

paper of the Workers Power group

RENEW THE OFFENSIVE

NO WORKER IN Britain should be fooled into thinking that the miners' strike is collapsing. It most definitely is not. What is happening is that the Coal Board, in concert with the press and television and under direct orders from Thatcher, are using lies to try and strengthen a limited back-to-work movement.

Every news bulletin now contains the latest tally of "new faces" ie scabs. It's just like the weather forecast - and about as accurate. The NCB is claiming that just over 13,000 miners have broken the strike in response to their offer of dirty money before Christmas.

It is undoubtedly true that a few thousand miners have stained their hands and blackened their legs, by accepting this bribe. However, the NCB's figures are false, as they have been throughout the strike. This much has been proven by a report in the Sunday newspaper *The Observer* (25.11.84).

The report is based on NCB documents. It shows that while the NCB was claiming 60,000 back at work by mid-November auditors called in by the NCB would only confirm that 51,000 were back at work.

By November 23rd the NCB was claiming 66,409 back at work. This figure includes 12,600 miners not at work but on sick leave. Once again it brings the real figure closer to 51,000. Even in the so-called collapsing area of North Derbyshire the real figures show that only one third of the miners, not half as claimed, are scabbing.

THE LIE MACHINE

The NCB propaganda offensive has two aims. Acting on the Dr. Goebbels motto that the bigger the lie, the greater its chance of being believed, the Tories and the NCB are trying to use the so-called "surge" back to work in order to create one. They are callously exploiting people who have been suffering hardship for nine months and who may be wavering.

The second objective of the lie-machine is to demoralise the solid areas and restrict the pickets to their local pits. They are hoping by these means to wear down their resistance so that when they move coal stocks from the pits they will be facing smaller and



weaker pickets lines.

In the face of this new offensive there can be no room for complacency in our ranks. To counter the NCB we must take the strike forward. If we do then not only will it remain solid. It will also win new adherents. This has been shown over the last 2 weeks when, faced with NCB intimidation, 200 new strikers have come out.

To take the strike forward means taking it to other sections of workers and winning them to support it actively. Power workers and transport workers are crucial. At the moment support is patchy. Rail workers at places like Mantle Lane in Leicestershire, and at Didcot, Tilbury and West Thurrock power stations are blacking coal. Their action must be built on and spread.

The TGWU and GMBATU have not organised any serious campaign in the power stations. The result is that while coal is being blacked in many cases a switch is being made to oil.

Stewards in the power stations must organise mass meetings to be addressed by striking miners. The case for blacking all fuel must be won. This way we can really turn the screws on the

NCB, the electricity board and as a result, the whole of industry.

Any power stations that handle scab fuel must become the target of renewed and rebuilt mass picketing. At the same time a new offensive in transport is needed. More rail, road and dock workers must be won to refusing to touch scab coal.

According to the *Financial Times* (24.11.84) a convoy of tipper lorries are ferrying 1000 tonnes of coal a day into Didcot power station. As with the power stations the way to deal with this is to organise meetings of TGWU drivers, rail workers and so on so that they can hear the miners' case. If scabbing continues the unions like TGWU must discipline the offenders.

Winning solidarity action is the key to victory. This can be won by demonstrating the common political interests that all workers share in the fight against the Tories.

The car strike showed that the anti-union laws used against the miners are a threat to all workers in struggle. The closure of two steel plants shows that the miners' fight for jobs is vital to stop the Tories going even further in their

Build Councils of Action!

A RACE IS on at the top of the trade union movement. The TUC chiefs are falling over each other in their scramble to distance themselves from the struggle of the miners. Scarcely a day passes without one union baron or another denouncing miners' pickets on TV or radio.

Men like Clive Jenkins of the ASTMS and Tony Christopher of the Inland Revenue union are busy urging the miners to compromise and reach a negotiated settlement. These men who have not lifted a finger in support of the miners are now raising their hands to stab them in the back. Unless the miners give in, say the TUC traitors, then the pathetic official support that they have not given to the miners (apart from some money) will be withdrawn.

Arthur Scargill and the rest of the NUM executive have remained silent about the TUC's treachery or keep their criticisms confined to carefully coded jokes at rallies. They still retain the public position that official channels will secure the backing the miners need.

BREAK WITH THE PRETENCE

It is not one moment too late to break with the pretence that the TUC are organising support for the miners. They are not, and now is the time for all trade unionists who support the miners to act in concert to make sure the miners win.

At a national level and in every area we need to build Councils of Action representing all workers who will act to back the miners. In the first place we must put the demand that the NUM leaders issue the call to establish a national action council without delay, name their delegates, and invite all other union executives to do the same.

Let those leaders who have claimed to support the miners - Buckton and Knapp in particular - turn their words into deeds by backing such a call and naming their delegates too. In every

union militants must fight to get their unions to back the call for a NATIONAL ACTION COUNCIL. Now is no time for peaceful diplomacy. The NUM should openly fight for other unions to join with them in the struggle and denounce the saboteurs and backsliders in Congress House.

If the leadership of the NUM spear-headed such a campaign, deploying their activists in every area and every support committee to fight for local councils of action as well, then a real breakthrough can be made. Not only NUM militants but the thousands of activists supporting the union would be given a new impetus to raise and win active support for the miners in every workplace.

A CLEAR CALL

Even if no immediate call for local councils of action is made by the NUM, militants should fight for them in every area. The local NUM or delegations of striking miners should take the lead with a clear call for all workplaces to hear a speaker to put the miners case and elect their delegates to the local action council.

All union area committees must be won to back the call. Workers who are taking action with the miners - on the railways, in the docks or in the power stations - should get out to the workplaces with the miners and help win the case for action. The miners' support committees must use the networks of contacts and sympathisers they have built to aid the fight to build delegate based action councils in every area.

The TUC must not be allowed to rat on the miners any longer. Every day we lose increases the danger that the miners will be left isolated by the traitors of Congress House. The NUM and their supporters at all levels in all unions must raise the call for ACTION COUNCILS -- and set about building them now.

job-cutting plans. A common front of struggle can be created if miners everywhere go out to the working class and fight for the general strike.

Arthur Scargill said to other trade unionists, "How much longer can you stand to one side and see this union battered? We are asking you to come out now and stop scab coal being delivered into power stations."

This was at a rally. It is a correct statement. But it needs to be translated from platform rhetoric - which is unfortunately all it is at the moment - into an open campaign by Scargill and the NUM for a general strike.

Most militant miners agree that a general strike is needed. Most, however, object that there is no possibility of one. Albert Bowns from Kiveton Park colliery told one left paper. "I think a general strike is less likely at the moment than it has been in the past."

In the absence of a lead from Scargill the conclusion drawn from this view by militants is that because a general strike seems impossible, then there is no point in fighting for one. The result? Passivity in relation to the rest of the working class apart for appeals for money.

The question of whether a general strike is possible is the wrong way of looking at the issue. The possibility of a general strike cannot be assessed or determined in advance of a struggle for one.

Throughout this whole strike the miners have not systematically waged such a struggle. That is why the prospects for a general strike look bad. Militants must look at the question

from a different angle. Is a general strike necessary? Yes in order to win our demands. A general strike will tie up the power stations, cripple industry and force the NCB to give in. Yes, in order to smash the anti-union laws that allowed judges to steal South Wales NUM funds, and to demobilise the Austin Rover strike.

If it is necessary miners must fight for it. Every labour movement meeting must be told - we need your money to survive, but we need your industrial muscle to win.

MAKE THE LINKS

If such a campaign is launched now then the possibility of a general strike will become greater. If rail workers or printers were won over to the call then pressure on other sections would mount. Militants in every industry would be well placed to make links between their struggles and the miners.

A mass strike wave developing along these lines would give us the strength to force the TUC leaders to act and call out the whole movement. It would give us the strength to control the strike once called.

Leaves and waiting for the effects of winter cannot bring victory. The message must ring out loud and clear from every rank and file miner, from every lodge and strike-committee, "we need a general strike, we are going to fight for a general strike, help us make it possible by fighting now with us." Victory to the Miners General strike Now!

INSIDE: The politics of starvation



France Rank & file
El Salvador

workers power EDITORIAL

The problems of Leadership

THE TORIES AND the NCB used the last round of talks with the NUM as a deliberate ploy. They were a manoeuvre in preparation for their "back to work" drive. By appearing willing to talk, and by hatching a rotten deal with NACODS, they were trying to set the NUM up.

It is crystal clear that Thatcher and MacGregor are still set on forcing the NUM into unconditional surrender. Even Peter Walker the Wet, stands in a solid block with Thatcher on this. They know that the stakes are now too high for them to afford a fudge. An NUM that can plausibly claim victory and that has bolstered its ranks with thousands of young activists would remain a real threat to Thatcher. It would stand as a formidable obstacle to the NCB's plans for mass sackings and more closures.

It is therefore alarming that the momentum of the strike is slowing down. Some members have gone back to work. Mass picketing is not nearly widespread enough. Solidarity action is limited. The militants are being turned into an army of money collectors.

The leadership of the NUM - Scargill, Heathfield and McGahey in particular - have responded to the new situation in the strike with a "stand firm" appeal. Victory is certain, was the message from the recent rallies addressed by the leaders, provided our ranks remain solid. Arthur Scargill spelt out the same message in *The Miner*, "Above all, I say to everyone of our members who has stood solid over the past nine months: Don't blacken your name now with the winning post in sight." (21.11.84)

Such an appeal clearly shows that the leadership still wants to win. They are not consciously sabotaging the fight in the way that Sirs did to the steel strike in 1980. They are made of different stuff to Joe Gormley. Nevertheless their strategy for victory is flawed.

Over the nine months of the strike this paper has never concealed our criticisms of the NUM left leaders whenever we thought they were wrong. We argued from the start that they were wrong to delay for 5 weeks before calling a national strike. This gave the scab areas the chance to hide their scabbing behind local ballots. It gave the police the chance to perfect their scab-herding operation. We argued that secret deals with fellow union leaders like Sirs, Buckton and Knapp could not guarantee solidarity action. The railworkers' settlement and Sirs' open call for scabbing demonstrated the validity of our objections.

As the strike developed the need for a general strike became clearer and clearer. Yet, instead of fighting for such a perspective at the TUC Congress in September, Arthur did a deal that seriously weakened the strike. The agreement that solidarity action should be organised strictly through official TUC channels has led to no real increase in solidarity action. At the same time it gave Willis, Basnett and Buckton a chance to get their hands on the conduct of the strike. In particular they were able to force the NUM to get back to that haven of bureaucrats who are seeking a sell-out - ACAS.

It is to the NUM leadership's credit that they did not stitch up a really rotten deal at ACAS. They were under enormous pressure from Willis, Basnett and Kinnock to do so. Nevertheless it is disturbing that they were prepared to make important concessions that would have robbed the miners of total victory. Arthur Scargill revealed on TV to Peter Jay on November 23rd that the NUM had complied with ACAS requests to compromise. Explaining what ACAS wanted, Scargill explained that ACAS had asked, "Are you prepared to at least change your position on the March 6th proposal and instead of insisting on the work 'withdraw' will you in some way modify, will you change? And we said alright. We are prepared to agree if we can get an acceptance on other points, that the announcement on March 6th should not be proceeded with. And secondly they said that the Coal Board couldn't automatically keep the five pits open because it would treat the five pits differently from all other pits in Britain. Our response was, alright, these pits are already the subject of an agreement between the Coal Board and the Union. What we will agree is that those pits should complete the programme which was agreed and at that point in common with all other pits come within the review procedure."

Scargill made clear that the NUM had accepted a form of words, that included these concessions, from ACAS.

Since these talks the NUM's whole strategy has been to get more negotiations. The national delegate conference they called outlined no new moves on picketing, on winning solidarity or against the scabs so that the strike could be taken forward. Now the national executive has been busy talking to that arch compromiser Stan Orme, and to, of all people, a group of Bishops. Letting Buckton and Basnett get their hands on influencing the strike was bad enough. Letting bishops in on the act is barmy. The Bishops' preaching of conciliation will carry all the more weight now precisely because the NUM have had a private talk with them.

This particular nonsense is of a piece with the strategy of the Communist Party and CP member Mick McGahey. In a pathetic bid to attain respectability, the CP have always been eager to bring the Tory Party at prayer (the Church of England) and that anti-abortionist bastion of moral reaction, the Catholic church into their broad democratic alliance. As a tactic for winning the strike this move was worse than useless. It was dangerous.

Now we have come to a situation where Arthur Scargill is issuing calls to other rank and file workers to take action in rallies. Yet he is not organising his members to go out to other workers to win such action. As with our previous criticisms of the NUM leadership this one is not simply about a particular tactic. It illustrates the difference between our strategy for victory, which is based on revolutionary communist politics, and the NUM leadership's which, despite their leftness, is fundamentally bureaucratic.

The argument over the national strike is a case in point. The leadership actually did a deal with the right-wingers on the Executive. They did not dare trespass into the scab areas to rally support from the start, their respect for the authority of Chadburn, Jones, Richardson and at that point, Vincent, prevented them.

Worse, when the chance existed to forge links with rank and file dockers in both July and September the leadership concentrated all its efforts on a deal with the TUC. It is no exaggeration to say that in doing this the best opportunity for kick-starting a general strike and placing the TUC leaders and the TUC Congress under enormous militant pressure, was thereby lost.

The reason for this is exactly the same as the reason for the mistake over the national strike call. Scargill and the other leaders were not prepared to breach the norms of bureaucratic diplomacy by demanding that the leaders act and preparing to by pass them and go straight to the rank and file of the other unions if they failed to do so. The truth is that Scargill does not want to be placed in a similar situation when asked for support from other workers. He wants to make sure - and did in the case of the steel strike and the Laurence Scotts dispute - that he is in control of any action taken by his members. To ensure this he sticks to the bureaucratic rules of the game with other leaders.

To make victory certain we cannot rest content with such methods. They have kept the miners isolated. They have dampened the momentum of the strike and its picketing. Our politics, revolutionary politics have a different emphasis. We do not ignore the existing leadership of the unions - we demand they act for the workers. But if they do not we are not paralysed by bureaucratic norms. The task becomes the direct appeal to the rank and file, the building of direct links through joint strike committees, councils of action and so on. This strengthening of rank and file independence is vital for the prosecution of class struggle politics.

The militancy of the miners is tremendous. Moreover they have a leadership dominated by men who want to fight the Tories. Both facts make victory even without revolutionary leadership possible. But with revolutionary leadership the mistakes we have criticised would not have been made. The struggle for the general strike would have been central. The turning of the NUM into a fully fledged class struggle union would have been carried through with the aid of the new young militants. That these things have not happened make victory that much more difficult to achieve.

Mineworkers Defence Committee Conference

IN THE NINTH month of the miners' strike with the Tories going all out to break the NUM and planning the mass movement of coal from the pit heads, the Mineworkers Defence Committee Conference called for December 2nd has important tasks before it.

Throughout the country Miners' Support Committees, often set up under the auspices of Trades Councils, have drawn together militants from workplaces, Labour Parties and activists working to build support for the miners. Their activity has centred on organising collections and levies, rallies and benefits, and using existing contacts to invite miners to speak at workplaces. This rank and file activity has been vital, given the union leaderships' backsliding in maintaining financial and moral support for the miners.

The committees have, however, suffered from real weaknesses. These weaknesses urgently need to be overcome if the committees are to play an important role in throwing back the latest NCB/Tory offensive and ensuring victory to the miners. The resolution printed here attempts to address these problems and has already been circulated nationally by the Conference organisers, having been passed by the Coventry Support Committee with the support of Keresley miners.

The aim is to commit the December 2nd Conference and every support committee and trade union organisation to a strategy which can win the strike. This means above all going beyond the committees' routine work of collections, important as this remains and starting a real campaign to get miners to address new workplaces and revisit others to whip up practical support.

It also means turning workplace support into active delegates participating in every aspect of the support committees and setting up support groups in each workplace. It means transforming the committees into bodies really representative of the local labour movement, action councils which can fight for and win mass industrial action alongside the miners.

Surprisingly opposition to such a perspective comes not only from the official trade union leaderships and their representatives at a local level, but from some of the largest left groups which pride themselves as being in the forefront of the fight for a miners' victory. In various localities Cardiff and Leicester for example, the Communist Party has attempted to sabotage and undermine existing support committees denouncing them as being under the control of the ultra left and whispering filthy slanders about the diverting of strike donations. If the NUM locally gets drawn in behind this splitting campaign, as it seems to have been in parts of South Wales, it will be a cruel blow to its most important

source of support, the rank and file activists.

Groups which claim to be to the left of the CP have also set their face against such a perspective. An unholy alliance of the Socialist League, Socialist Workers Party and Militant have argued against the resolution. The Socialist League have complacently recited that everything suggested in it is already happening. Let things carry on as they are - thank you very much! The SWP crippled by its pessimism and "downturn" theory, declares any perspective of winning mass solidarity action and a general strike to be pie in the sky. Their alternative "strategy" for the support committees is to extend the collections and the levies.

Listening to all these arguments you would think we were in the first and not the ninth month of this strike. If they win their perspective at the coming conference then all we will have is more of the same but more efficient collections. Such a position is tantamount to saying there is little we can do to change the situation in the working class to enable the miners to win.

The conference organisers' statement has attempted to incorporate many of the positions in our resolution and as such should be supported against the hopeless perspectives of the SWP, SL and Militant. But even here the statement is inadequate in certain respects.

While recognising the urgency of the current situation, the statement fudges the necessity of building mass industrial action against the legal onslaught on the NUM and the moving of coal from the pit heads. It calls for "Nationally co-ordinated mass labour movement picketing" only. While this is a vital task it is no sub-

This conference recognising:

- * that the Tories and the NCB have set their sights on the total defeat of the miners and are preparing plans to start moving coal from the pit heads to power stations etc.,
 - * that the TUC and the trade union leaders have failed to implement and fight for the solidarity, blacking action, levies etc, promised by Congress in September,
 - * that the TUC and Labour leaders are now more preoccupied with forcing the miners to compromise with the Tories and condemning unarmed pickets who defend themselves against police violence than with mobilising to aid a real struggle for jobs in the mining industry;
- therefore calls on all miners' support committees, trades councils, union branches, and shop stewards committees to organise the following actions urgently:

1. to launch a new campaign to build the committees into representative delegate based bodies drawing in every section of the labour movement. Winning industrial action in support of the miners is vital. The committees must set this as a priority and to this end they must try to win all workers currently in dispute into a joint fight with the miners against the Tories.

Mineworkers Defence Committee

National Conference

Solidarity with the NUM!



Camden Conference Centre Sunday Dec 2nd 11.30 - 5.30pm

stitute for organising mass strike action as the only sure way of forcing the Tories to retreat.

The statement also remains weak on linking the general strike only to the use of troops, and failing to link it to smashing the legal chains on trade unionism enacted by the Tories. To win that argument with the body of militants coming to the conference and commit them to go back and fight for it in their organisations would bring the actual winning of such strike action that much nearer. If the SWP, Militant etc actively oppose such action they will be consciously adding their weight to those who want to isolate the miners.

For these reasons we call on all militants to endorse the resolution already passed by the Coventry and Reading miners support committees, fight for it at the conference and get it implemented after the conference.

2. To this end efforts to organise meetings in every workplace addressed by miners and workers supporting the miners (eg rail and power workers who are taking blacking action) to put the case for supporting the miners must be stepped up. So too must efforts to step up the levies, food collections etc. be renewed in every workplace.
3. Regular propaganda against the bosses' media lies through mass circulation of *The Miner*, bulletins and leaflets must be organised in the workplaces.

4. Industrial action against the bosses legal attacks on the miners and against any attempts to move coal from the pit heads must be fought for now. The TUC should be called on to implement Congress policy, but no miners' support committee should wait for the TUC to act before campaigning for industrial action.

Conference recognises that the miners' strike can now only be won if a massive display of solidarity action from the rest of the working class is forthcoming. It commits itself to fight for general strike action to defeat Thatcher's attacks on the miners and to smash the Tories anti-trade union laws through which the Tories aim to shackle the labour movement and destroy effective trade union action.

HOLDING THE LINE IN KERESLEY

COLIN WARD TOLD us what living with the "drift back to work" was like in Keresley.

"The main problem has been a drift back to work due to the bribery and blackmail the board have used against strikers. This propaganda was over the holiday pay that the board have held illegally and which the members were entitled to anyway. Now they're offering it coming up to Christmas and some of the members have cracked and gone back to work for their own money. It's caused a split in the village. We've had quite a bad fortnight where we lost about 150 members. The majority are still out, but it was depressing for the strikers and their families but this has lifted now and at the strike meetings we've had recently there was a happier atmosphere.

The people still out find the tension has eased a little now. The determination is building back up again now and the people still out at the pit and the Homefire plant are determined to stick it out to the end and achieve victory. We've had eight sacked here so

far. One lad was sacked when after a meeting at Newdigate Club he punched a scab after an argument in the bar. He was charged with assault, which he admitted and served 14 days in Winson Green jail. On his release the manager at the pit saw him and sacked him, but this incident had nothing to do with picket lines and took place off colliery premises. There have been a few incidences of this where the management have been taking the law into their own hands and sacking our members. One lad's been sacked for an alleged incident on a picket line and hasn't even been to court yet.

To overcome some of these problems we've grouped more closely together and feel happier, not only in the village but in the outlying areas. We're getting better contact with the members and getting more information to them. They're coming to the meetings more.

There's one major development I'd like to reveal to you. In Derbyshire they've been asked to sign no-strike agreements on going back to work and have been pressurised by management.

Also in South Derbyshire in ten years before the strike there's not been a death in the pits, yet during the dispute 3 scabs have been killed and 2 have died of heart attacks. Obviously the board are pushing them to the limit and breaking safety regulations and the mines and quarries regulations to get the coal out.

In Notts 120 went back and actually 20 came out again in disgust because they were told to sign a no-strike agreement and promise not to be active in the union for one year. They couldn't be charge hands, they couldn't do anything.

Also here at Coventry there's a working miners committee. When the new scabs go in they have to be interviewed. On this committee are scabs, police and management. The riot act is read to the new scabs. The police are there reading out their ledgers and logs as to whether people have been picketing, arrested, collecting and so on, and the police have all this in their books and sit on these committees!"

THE PITFALLS OF BROAD-LEFTISM

ON A RECENT TV special about the miners' strike a Welsh striker neatly summed up the feelings of many militants. He told the interviewer that the only way the strike would lose was if "Arthur Scargill capitulated." Arthur represents the hope and determination of the rank and file. Yet, when it comes down to it, most militants have no clear answer to the question, "How do we exercise control of Arthur, to stop him from capitulating?"

When you think back to his isolation on the Executive over Orgreave then this question, extended to ask how do we control *all* our leaders, acquires burning importance.

Arthur Scargill's inability to overcome the reluctance of the other leaders to support the Orgreave mobilisation had an important practical impact on the picket lines and the subsequent course of the strike. This should teach us that one man's charisma is no substitute for many members control of their own union.

The 1984 strike has activated a whole layer of militants inside the NUM. From day one the flying and mass pickets have been dominated by young strikers. Many of them were still at school during the 1972 and 1974 battles. Likewise in the scab areas it has been young strikers, led by a small number of older militants, who have held the line for the union against terrible odds.

These new militants are eager to be involved in the union. They have learnt the importance of militant politics on the picket lines. They are a force for turning the NUM into a real class struggle union.

The loyalty of this new layer of militants to Arthur Scargill is immense. It also causes a problem. It means that when Scargill is pressurised into a conciliatory direction, as he clearly was during the last round of negotiations, the militants can only sit back and nervously await the outcome. It means that, around Orgreave and subsequent mass pickets, the militants were unable to organise action independently of the hesitators like Jack Taylor or Emyln Williams.

A key feature of the 1984 strike is a combination of tremendous militancy on the picket lines with relative passivity when faced with manoeuvrings by the *left* leadership of the union at both national, regional and local level.

The Broad Left within the NUM are content with this situation. The Communist Party/Left Labour alliance led by McGahey, Scargill and Heathfield, see their task as simply integrating the young militants into the existing union machine. This is possible, because after a long period of preparation, this machine has, by and large, been captured by the left. To this end the Broad Left has organised at least two schools for activists in Durham and South Wales. The case of the North East coalfields highlights the thinking of the Broad Left leaders.

The North East was a moderate area. The official machine was in the hands of a majority of right wing officials. In both Durham and Northumberland the Broad Left have been organising for some years to oust these officials. The strike has drawn on new forces and given new strength to this endeavour.

The aims of the left in the Durham area were expressed by a declaration from several lodges prior to Scargill's election. It read:

1. To secure the election of Arthur Scargill to the NUM presidency on the retirement of Joe Gormley.
 2. To replace the Durham Area NEC member with a left-winger.
 3. To campaign throughout the "moderate" Durham area for progress and change."
- (Listed in *Militant*, 2.11.84)

The left, spearheaded by militant lodges such as Wearmouth, have and are continuing to have success in these aims. They are enjoying electoral success.

Yet the problem remains that electoral success alone is insufficient when measured against the task of transforming the NUM. Nottingham illustrates this all too clearly. Steve Abbot, a Notts militant, summed up the danger of the "electoral" strategy in an interview he gave to *Workers Power* in July:

"We had a Broad Left Executive (in Notts -WP) but you come to the question of how broad is broad? We were supposed to have a left executive but when it came to a resolution instructing members not to cross picket lines we were split 8-5."

Remember also that the leading Notts Broad Lefter, Henry Richardson, blocked with Chadburn in telling his members they could go to work at the beginning of the strike.

Of course the electoral strategy, open to the Broad Left in a changing area like Durham, is not so clear cut in the Midlands. In the scab heartlands the more favoured model for change is one based

on Arthur Scargill's old Barnsley Forum. In the late 60s this acted as a meeting point for militants to discuss general politics. Also as the 1969 strike in Yorkshire showed, it acted as a means of organising mass rank and file action independently of the right-wing leadership in Yorkshire.

At the moment the Midlands rank and file initiative, described by Colin Ward in an interview in this paper, is based on a political mobilisation of the rank and file against the scab leaders. It has to be.

Even in this case, however, dangers need to be overcome. For instance, the problem with the old Barnsley Forum was that after it had enabled Scargill to capture the Yorkshire union machine, it was wound down and finally wound up. In fact Yorkshire, despite being a very militant area, has nothing in the way of any formal Broad Left, let alone a rank and file organisation. This left the militants powerless when faced with Taylor's demobilisation tactics around Orgreave.

Two lessons can be drawn from this experience. First, the rank and file movement in the Midlands must not end its life either after the strike or after the Midlands areas have been won back by the left. The Broad Left ignore the fact that once elected, all officials, even left ones, come under enormous bureaucratic pressures - pressures from the right, from the consultative processes with the NCB and from the need to get re-elected.

The best and most militant leaders have nothing to lose from being saved from those pressures by placing themselves under the control of the rank and file.

Secondly the rank and file movement, and

here we agree with Colin's view, needs to be national. If both these things are achieved in scab and militant areas and the rank and file are put in control of their officials, then the damaging sweet-heart deals done with the steel leaders in Ravenscraig, Llanwern and Scunthorpe would never have been made.

A practical start can be made *now*, during the strike, towards building a permanent national rank and file movement. The Midlands initiative needs to be joined up with the rank and file committees established in Notts, the West Midlands, South Derbyshire, Leicester and Staffs. These committees must be co-ordinated into an all Midlands area rank and file committee.

This body must fight for union backing for the campaign to drive out the scabs. It must also organise a campaign in the militant areas to put the case for a rank and file movement in every coalfield. The development of the Midlands movement can be a spur to the young militants in the other areas if the Midlands men take their case for a national movement directly to these militants.

Of course *one* task of such a rank and file movement would be electoral. We are not saying that the election of left wingers is unimportant. However this one task amongst many must not predominate. The major tasks of a rank and file movement must be to transform the NUM into a class struggle union. That means that the movement must unite the militants around common goals.

It cannot be so broad as to include those like Richardson who dither at the crucial point. Nor can it simply be a forum for many political ideas and discussions that have no bearing on the practice of the militants involved. The rank and file movement must be armed with a clear programme, decided democratically by itself. Once agreed that programme must be the minimum that every participant fights for, though not a limit on militants arguing to go further than the agreed programme.

Workers Power believes that the key elements of such a programme must involve:

- † the wholesale democratisation of the NUM, placing all officials under strict rank and file control,
- † the breaking of all forms of collaboration with the NCB and the struggle instead for real workers' control,
- † the winning of the NUM to outright opposition to capitalism, and to revolutionary struggle against it.

In our next paper we will outline in far greater detail the demands of our programme.

Our programme may not be accepted in full by a rank and file movement today. That is no obstacle to our building and supporting such a movement. But the argument we will ceaselessly put is that to prevent either a lapse into a movement of Broad Left electoralism, or into a movement of convenience not tied to a definite programme the movement must unite itself around a clear commitment to transform the NUM. If it does so, then winning such a movement to a full scale revolutionary programme and to a revolutionary party will be one step nearer.

by Mark Hoskisson



John Harris (FL)

The Midlands Minority Movement

Workers Power interviewed Colin Ward about the question of the rank and file movement in the Midlands. Colin is the chair of the Coventry Colliery Strike Committee.

WP: I'd like to ask you about the rank and file movement in the Midlands - not just the NUM Midlands area but Notts and Leicester as well. What are the aims of this rank and file movement?

CW: Throughout the strike we've realised that we need a rank and file movement in the Midlands areas - what they call the Midlands minority areas - because of the vast problems we've had with scab officials and the need to build up a progressive trade union movement in the Midlands areas so's we never see another 1984 where we've got scabs in us own union. We also want to attempt to build a union where there is one industry, one union and one rule book, so that areas like Warwickshire, Notts, Leicestershire and Derbyshire can't use their own rule book to squirm out of such strikes as this. We also need the rank and file to be able to have a voice within the union, and when we get proper people into positions, that they will carry out what we want and we can still keep a hold on them.

WP: Should it be a national rank and file movement?

CW: Yes, I still feel there's a need in places like Yorkshire, North East and Durham, South Wales and Scotland to keep the rank and file movements going, to keep the pressure on officials. Sometimes once they get into their official positions they seem to forget where they came from and lose contact with the rank and file. The rank and file should continue after the strike.

WP: If a rank and file movement had existed before the strike, would this have alleviated some of the problems you've faced?

CW: Possibly in some of the coalfields but in the minority coalfields what's happened is that the rank and file members have come forward and virtually run the strike. The only way it could have helped before the strike is if they'd been properly organised, held regular meetings to discuss tactics on how to organise for the strike. The only problem with this was they never thought there was a need to organise a rank and file movement. They thought that the officials would automatically come out on strike being supposedly good trade unionists. The members in the minorities fell down here.

WP: How would a national rank and file movement actually organise?

CW: They would probably have to do this mostly on their own, as I don't see there being any funding from the union. Regular meetings together to discuss the problems within the union, in the industry and also nationally would be a good idea.

WP: Many trade unionists think that trade unions should just be concerned with "trade union issues" and that "politics should be kept separate" i.e. in the Labour Party. Do you think the strike may have changed their ideas? If so, do you think a rank and file movement should have a political programme?

CW: Yes, definitely. The politics has completely turned over many people's views. We had politically minded people before the strike. When I say this I mean the vast majority were Labour Party members. What seems to have happened is that they've moved further left and they're very disillusioned with the Labour Party. The other section have become politically minded during the strike and have taken their first step by joining the Labour Party. In the village alone 36 new members have

joined. On the rank and file political programme I think politics and trade unionism should be more closely linked because any political decision that is taken involves the membership of some particular trade union.

WP: If rank and file movements had already existed in the power unions or the T and G for example, would it have been easier for you to make links with them?

CW: Yes. We have pockets of assistance but only small. Perhaps they could learn a lot from the rank and file movement in the Midlands minorities where mistakes have been clearly shown that it was left to the leadership and scab officials. They shouldn't trust their leadership but build up a rank and file movement in their unions and put demands on the officials and make sure they're carried out.

WP: How would you link these rank and file members across unions?

CW: Well we've seen the great so-called Triple Alliance and what that never did - specially Sirs - we have had assistance from NUR and ASLEF but jointly I feel they need their own meetings and get sorted out the same as we've had to do. The links made during the strike should be kept up with discussions, meetings and regular news bulletins so's we know what's happening in other industries and workplaces in their struggles.

WP: How would you replace scab officials?

CW: Shoot them! I feel that under rule 51 that if the national union are to make any progress in the Midlands minorities we first of all have to put the demand under rule 51 that any official of the union right down to branch level who has scabbed and worked against the strike should be barred from office for life. They should actually be barred from the NUM for life.

WP: In other areas with no scab officials, would the rank and file still organise politically?

CW: Yes, definitely. I feel in some areas of Yorkshire they had left officials elected and thought that was all that was needed and this happened also in Nottingham with Henry Richardson and the Broad Left. They thought there was no need to continue after that. Officials must be pushed to the full by the rank and file.

WP: How could you make sure that rank and file militants themselves wouldn't lose touch with their members if they became officials?

CW: They can be recalled. The great majority now get voted in for 2 years. That's a long time if you get a bad 'un in. I feel it's fair though as long as they do have to attend monthly meetings and report back. If they don't carry out policies that the membership decide at meetings, we should change the rule whereby you need an 80% plus majority to remove that official. It should be a simple majority. Then they'd be more under pressure to carry out our policies.

WP: In the Barnsley Forum in Yorkshire, militants organised to turn Yorks from a "right" to a "left" area. But now there's no organisations of militants at all there. How can you avoid this happening again?

CW: It was an excellent forum. What happened was they elected people and thought that was it. After '74 they seemed to sit back 'cos we were going through a period when the union looked good after '72 and '74 and I think the vast majority of the membership felt that was all they needed to do. Looking back that was a mistake. Now during the strike you've seen good rank and file militants come through and they'll never forget this. They'll continue. This strike may have divided the union but it'll be a better union for it afterwards.

POLISH COAL AND THE BRITISH

THE JARUZELSKI REGIME'S doubling of coal exports to Britain has immeasurably strengthened the hand of Thatcher and MacGregor. At the same time it has thrown the various fragments of the disintegrating Communist Party of Great Britain into an even greater state of confusion. Their alarm and despondency shows in their ranks.

On the one hand the *Morning Star* editorial team has refused point blank to print any condemnation of Jaruzelski's scabbing. It refused to publish an open letter condemning Polish coal exports from, amongst others, Mick MacGahey who sides with the Euro-Communist pro-Solidarnosc wing of the party. For the *Morning Star* editorial team the Polish Party's behaviour is simply its own affair as it pursues its own national blacklegging road to "socialism".

But not all those elements who supported the crushing of Solidarnosc have found it quite so easy to close their eyes to the scabbing operation of the Polish government. Malcom Pitt- President of the Kent NUM- has gone into print repeating that the Polish government should meet "the very basic demand which we are putting on every section of the international working class movement that we want them to block the movement of all coal and allied fuel stock from coming into Great Britain." (Interviewed in *The Leninist*, November 1984).

Arthur Scargill who, while not a member of the CP supported martial law against Solidarnosc and denounced the union as anti-socialist has repeatedly denounced the scabbing and in an important about-turn, publicly rejected an offer of assistance from Poland's stooge state miners' union.

Solidarnosc's behaviour in the dispute has also served to confuse and muddle many who refused to hail Jaruzelski's crushing of Solidarnosc and those who call themselves Trotskyists. The *Sunday Mirror* "scooped" an interview with Lech Walesa in which he apparently lauded Margaret Thatcher and urged compromise on the miners. Some materials circulated within Solidarnosc are openly confused and contradictory on the strike.

CONTRADICTIONS

An article in *Tygodnik Mazowsze* which has been reprinted in *Voice of Solidarnosc* talks of how "The miners have good cause to strike" yet then seems to distance itself from Arthur Scargill "trying to shift the fight onto political grounds" and miners attacking "un-armed police" at Ogrzeve. Less confused however has been resolutions from Mazowsze region and Upper Silesia Solidarnosc which have backed the British miners and denounced the Polish regime's scabbing (See *Workers Power* 62 for details).

Such a confusing picture comes as no surprise to us. We have always argued that as a mass workers movement Solidarnosc contained elements who were openly reactionary and anti-socialist as well as a mass of working class militants who were seeking to defend and advance the interests of the working-class in the face of Stalinist repression.

It remains the task of revolutionaries therefore to support the Polish workers struggle to organise and fight intransigently against those - and Walesa is just one of them - who would divert the Polish workers from taking political power into their

Mass meeting of Solidarnosc in a factory.



own hands. To warn against the misleaders is itself part and parcel of international solidarity.

We have never needed to whitewash the leaders of Solidarnosc in order to solidarise with the Polish workers. Not so *Socialist Organiser*. SO guru John O'Mahoney reached for his pen after Walesa's "interview" appeared in the press. So what if Walesa did endorse Thatcher and urge the NUM not to bankrupt their employer? No problem for O'Mahoney.

The heaviest charge he could lay against Walesa is that he was "short sighted" and guilty of a "misunderstanding" induced by the fact that Thatcher and Reagan "are strident enemies of the Kremlin". And anyway, Walesa's respect for Thatcher is preferable to Western Stalinists' respect for the East European States. (SO, no.200 11.10.84).

He compares Walesa's misunderstandings favourably with the blindness of those in the West who look uncritically to the Eastern Bloc regimes for inspiration: "The 'easterners' view is probably less one sided and less false than that of the Stalinist workers in the West."

It's not hard to tell why O'Mahoney - a born again Labourite these days - should see things this way. According to him Western oppositionists should know better because in the West the workers have won the right "to organise freely". The existence of democratic rights, a sharp contrast to Stalinist repression, exonerates pro-capitalist oppositionists in the East from the same degree of criticism as Stalinists in the West who have had the opportunity to breathe the air of democracy and should know better.

DEMOCRATIC MAUNDERINGS

While Western "democracy" gets the praises, there is one absolute glaring omission in the democratic maunderings of O'Mahoney. He dismisses as insignificant the fact that the Eastern Bloc economies are nationalised. They are not nationalised in the way that the NCB or British Leyland have been simply in order to maintain the regime of profit throughout the rest of the capitalist economy. They are nationalised as a result of expropriating the capitalist class and the creation of planned economies.

It is because of this great historic gain that we cannot turn a blind eye to elements in the Eastern Bloc - particularly if they have the respect of significant numbers of workers - who look to the capitalist west either for assistance or as a model of political and economic order.

The mirror opposite of O'Mahoney can be found in the pages of the Spartacist's new *Workers Hammer*. For them Walesa's purported interview was like water in their intellectual desert. Did this not prove what this Stalinophile sect had been saying all along? Was Solidarnosc not revealed as a "Polish company union for the CIA and the bankers?"

True the *Workers Hammer* fulminates against Jaruzelski's scab coal but it does so from the camp of solidarity with him against Solidarnosc. That Solidarnosc miners have rallied to the side of the NUM and denounced scab coal means nothing to a group which has proved itself incapable of understanding the contradictory character of Solidarnosc as a mass movement of the Polish workers.

Workers Hammer is wrapped up in precisely the same mess as Malcolm Pitt and *The Leninist* which interviewed him. They too cheered for Jaruzelski when he brought in martial law but despair of the regime's scabbing on the NUM. They just cannot understand that these two acts are not opposites - one good and one bad - but part and parcel of the entire political programme of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Malcolm Pitt talked of how Solidarnosc was anti-socialist and how the NUM was right to oppose it. *The Leninist* was proudly addressing Jaruzelski as "comrade" back in 1983 (see no 4) and still insists that the Polish leadership "stamped out counter-revolution in the form of Solidarnosc." They both insist on describing Poland as a "socialist" regime.

PROCESS OF TRANSITION

What would a socialist regime look like? It would be more than the planned and nationalised economy without which socialist advance is impossible. It would be a society in the process of transition towards the eradication of all the economic forms and moral norms of capitalism. Its international policy would be subordinated to the spread of workers revolution on a global scale. Its policies would be aimed at the gradual elimination of in-

The 'Ostia' unloading Polish coal at Hunterston.



Wives Conference: a lost opportunity

THE SECOND NATIONAL Miners' Wives Conference was held on the 9th - 11th of November in Chesterfield. The press statement issued afterwards declared it to have been, "a highly successful conference" from which, "a national womens organisation has been established."

Before the conference, wives groups up and down the country had expressed their concern about the conference and particularly about its unrepresentative nature. Despite this, it went ahead as planned with barely 40 miners' wives to represent the hundreds of groups which have been set up around the coalfields. It also appears as if resolutions submitted to the conference were not even put to the vote.

The most significant result of the conference was the setting up of a national committee of miners wives to coordinate activities at their regular meetings. It is this committee of 17, comprised to match NUM structures of one delegate per NUM area - which is to plan future activities.

A general statement was issued outlining the need "to develop a relationship between the NUM and the women's organisation", and further, "to campaign on issues which affect the mining communities, particularly peace, jobs, health and education." and, "to promote and develop education for working class women".

It has to be said that the Conference was a success from the point of view of its organisers but not when measured against the long term interests of miners' wives groups or the organisation of working class women as a whole. The Conference has to be judged in terms of whether it deepened and extended the mass and active character of the support groups. Tens of thousands of wives and girlfriends have been radicalised by the strike. They have become the vanguard fighters for all working class women. Hundreds of groups expressed this vitality.

The NUM officials, however, both welcomed the movement and treated it with suspicion. The wives' support has stiffened the backbone of the strike. Yet the layer of NUM officials were wary of the dynamic uncontrolled character of the

equality and of a state machine standing separate from the mass of workers.

Poland and the other Eastern Bloc countries are clearly not moving in such a direction. All are ruled by an entrenched bureaucracy that jealously guards the privilege of its rule from the working class through a large machine of state repression. Jaruzelski has his sights on topping up Poland's stagnant economy by getting in on the IMF and following Hungary and Bulgaria in introducing market relations between state enterprises and the profit motive to judge their performance.

PRIVATE AGRICULTURE

He shares this programme with many in Solidarnosc's leadership, ironically.

Jaruzelski has no intention of moving against the agricultural private sector which dominates Poland's hopelessly antiquated farming. In order to maintain their privileges the Polish bureaucracy can only strengthen the remaining elements of capitalism in Poland and prevent the working class discovering their power to manage the planned economy to end privilege, inequality and oppression.

If the term is to have any meaning whatsoever we cannot call Poland "socialist" by any stretch of the imagination. We don't have to embrace

movement. In an ironic parody of the NUM Scargill and Heathfield's wives stepped forward and assumed the role of leaders of this movement. No one has ever elected them.

The danger is that such activities will serve to channel and contain the wives movement. Active women must guard against the danger that such conferences will be used as a means of training a layer of activists from amongst the best leaders of the support groups who can be used to transmit the methods of the NUM bureaucracy to the wives movement as a whole.

Of course, no one is suggesting that a leadership and an apparatus are unnecessary. They are vital. But the leadership needs to be representative and the apparatus accountable. At the beginning of its existence a small conference of 40 women was hopelessly unrepresentative as is a national committee of 17.



John Sturrock (Network)

LEFT

the crazy logic of the Socialist Workers' Party and deduce from this that it must therefore be "capitalist". It remains a workers' state to the extent that its property relations are based on the overthrow of capitalism throughout the Eastern Bloc. But it is definitely not advancing to socialism. Jaruzelski and his ilk are a counter-revolutionary obstacle to that *advance*. Poland remains a degenerate workers' state.

They deliberately stifle the only force that could effect the transition to socialism - the self-organised working class. They deliberately encourage and co-exist with the very force that will undermine the planned economies - international capitalism itself.

The Jaruzelski regime's crushing of Solidarnosc was carried out in order to destroy the independent organisation of the aroused Polish working class. That organisation threatened the privileges and rule of the entire Stalinist bureaucracy. The scabbing on the NUM is the other side of the same anti-socialist coin. They hope to preserve their regime by earning hard currency from Thatcher in her hour of need. For Malcolm Pitt, the *Leninist*, and *Workers Hammer* to want "comrade" Jaruzelski without scab coal is to want an omelette without breaking eggs.

FATAL REACTION

When Arthur Scargill and the NUM backed Jaruzelski it was not, as the *Leninist* called it, an "almost gut-reaction class solidarity with socialism in Poland." (August 1984). It was a fatal political reaction of solidarity with Jaruzelski's scab bureaucracy. To many western workers Solidarnosc may not have looked a pretty sight. Thirty five years of "socialism" had served to discredit the programme of socialism to millions of workers.

The church was about to put enormous reactionary pressure on the movement. Open reactionaries did speak up in its assemblies as well as workers who were looking for a way of controlling the planned economy in their interests *against* the ruling bureaucracy. That so many western workers remained silent or backed Jaruzelski positively strengthened the hands of those who were arguing that it was Thatcher and Reagan, and *not* the international working class, who were the natural allies of Poland's workers.

Jaruzelski has repaid his supporters in the NUM and elsewhere with an inevitable kick in the teeth. No wonder so many of them are squirming now. Workers must repay him by increasing their efforts to back the Polish workers. That does not just mean cheering on Solidarnosc and its leaders. The Polish workers themselves must break from those who would lead them into the clutches of the church or the capitalists. *Socialist Organiser* can play no role in that struggle. Neither can the motley crew of Stalinoid fragments who insist on backing master-scab Jaruzelski-Thatcher's favourite coal exporter - against the Polish workers.

by Dave Hughes

portunity

Pat from Dinnington and Sheffield Women Against Pit Closure was elected as one of the 2 South Yorkshire delegates to the conference. She told us that although she was satisfied with the conference, "I'd gone to argue that we wanted another national conference with a representative from every group....I'm one of the delegates from this area and I still know there isn't enough representation."

The conference set itself only the short term aim of organising the distribution of money and food to the groups in time for Christmas. It has no plans for a further wider conference in the New Year. The conference statement underlined the support groups' commitment "to ensure victory to the NUM in the present struggle to prevent pit closures and protect mining communities for the future."

Yet by not allowing a wide-ranging debate on fundamental political questions to take place - on the terms of settlement, how to relate to the NUM's structure, how to deal with scabs - the conference narrowed the existing horizons of the thousands of women in struggle. This does not bode well for the future of the national wives' movement.

The NUM officials, together with the ex-officio leaders of the National Wives Support Groups, have a narrow conception of the movement. Essentially, they see it as no more than an auxiliary organisation of the NUM.

But the strength and importance of the movement to date has been its character as the core of a mass working class women's movement. It has extended its links with thousands of other women trade unionists and working class women in the community. It has done so in the conscious recognition that all of them are struggling on different fronts (jobs, wages, social services, abortion) in the same war against capitalism. The activists in the local groups who have done so much in this direction to date must reassert this perspective in the weeks and months ahead.



SWP TAKE WRONG TURN

THE SWP HAVE had a "turn". Over the past two months SWP members have appeared in Miners' Support Committees all over the country, have built them where none existed, have raised large sums of money, organised levies, toy collections and boosted some of the more flagging committees.

This turn was confirmed at their Party Conference in late October and has been seen by many in and around the SWP as a great step forward. Banned from their literature is the term "the swamp" previously used to describe the labour left. United front and comradeship are the order of the day. So what has changed?

"The art of revolutionary politics, as Lenin's career shows, lies in shifting and changing in line with alterations in the situation. The greatest danger confronting revolutionaries is that they will persist with tactics which, though once appropriate, no longer fit the situation." This is how the SWP Central Committee Perspective document introduced the need to shift the Party.

They argue that although the tactics are different the politics remain the same. On this we would agree. The problem is, however, that the SWP's tactics are rooted in a basic incorrect political method and strategy - *economism*.

This term, unlike "the swamp", has a precise meaning. First formulated by Lenin it applies to those organisations who in their practice and their slogans simply echo the existing level of struggle.

They raise demands only once large numbers of workers, or their leaders, have *already* put them into effect. It is a conscious policy of trimming and adapting to a prevailing mood rather than fighting against the stream for essential components of one's programme (eg rank and file organisation, strike action) It is to give up this fight in the name of "realism".

The most common motif of economism and always present in the SWP is to refuse to prepare workers in struggle around economic, or sectional issues for the political (eg general strike) questions involved in the generalisation of their struggles.

In previous articles (see WP 56 and 59) we have detailed the effects of this method on the SWP's politics in the miners strike. In the early months of the strike the exclusive emphasis on making existing mass pickets bigger was at the expense of raising any demands for generalising the strike by drawing in other sections of workers into solidarity strike action around their own claims and grievances.

In addition the defence of picket lines from police attacks and the organisation of the rank and file miners against the weaknesses of the NUM leadership, was all eschewed in the name of "realism" or condemned as adventurist.

DOWNTURN THEORY

And yet on each of these questions either strikers themselves took the necessary steps or the SWP found their minimum programme made redundant by Scargill calling for an escalation of the dispute.

Throughout all the first 6 months of the strike everything was justified in the name of the "downturn", "...with the election of a Labour government in March 1974, the situation changed, the downturn gradually set in, above all with the progressive erosion of the sectional workplace organisations which had played a decisive role in the struggles of the early 1970s." (Perspectives 1984)

According to the SWP this made it more difficult to get a hearing for revolutionary ideas and militant proposals. Indeed, "The pressure on militants to adapt was reflected in the drift to the right of many SWP members who had previously established some workplace or trade union base."

Rather than face that challenge and trying to build a periphery of militants in the rank and file as a force of opposition to the rightward drift, their response was, "By the 1982 conference we

had done it (changed the style of party work - WP) abandoning all pretensions to build a rank and file movement in the present period." (Perspectives 84)

In practice that meant closing down the remnants of rank and file groups in the miners, transport unions and docks. It meant abandoning shop stewards positions and the loss of many union militants from the SWP.

That "downturn" perspective was in essence tailing the prevailing lack of combativity in the working class and the pessimism and demoralisation that many militants felt. Yet in that situation revolutionaries cannot just abandon trade union work to insulate themselves from rightward pulls, waiting for the upturn when it will be easier to build militant rank and file organisations.

Socialists have to continue the long hard struggle to organise the minority who do want to fight. During that whole "downturn" period there were many struggles - not least the health service dispute and the steel strike which it was vital to relate that perspective to.

ERRORS CONFIRMED

To retreat into the SWP branch, discussing politics in the abstract is to leave militants struggling alone, unorganised against the right-wing bureaucratic misleaders.

The new turn does not involve a recognition of any of these points. Rather, all of the errors are confirmed. What the turn recognises is that the general level of combativity has altered. What the turn represents, however, is the continuation of economic practice in changed circumstances.

The truth of this can be seen in the practice and paper of the SWP over the last period. To begin with they have rediscovered the united front as the basis for the turn to the miners support committees and trade union work.

They have made a proposal for joint work with the labour lefts. In SW (20.10.84) they included a letter to the editorial boards of *Tribune*, *Militant*, *Labour Herald* and the *Labour Co-ordinating Committee*.

In this they recognise "...there are many matters on which we disagree. We don't believe these disagreements should sweep under the carpet. We are in favour of friendly and open political debate on the left." (SW 20.10.84)

Looking at the practice of the SWP since that statement was made, it is clear that they are throwing their considerable weight behind the work of the Labour left in the support committees. They are also working with the Broad Lefts in the unions.

The "open political debate" is rather more difficult to see. The pages of *Socialist Worker* have made no criticism of the bureaucratic way in which many support committees are run. The SWP have not come out with a clear political lead raising the question of solidarity strike action which can really win the dispute.

They have been content with raising more money, regular levies and organising Christmas toy appeals - necessary activities but not exactly cutting against the grain of the lefts in the Labour Party. Once more, the SWP are tailing behind work already being done by others, without arguing for anything more.

Even in their call to their own members in *Socialist Worker* (17.11.84) they only argue for very basic solidarity work with no mention of arguments about blacking, picketing or strike action. The lead article in November *Socialist Worker Review* is content with the statement, "The miners can win. But the fight promises to be to be long, drawn-out and bitter. It is not the time for facile optimism, but realistic solidarity. That means stepping up the support for miners among other workers. The collections, food convoys, twinning with individual pits can all ensure that the miners are not starved back to work."

Yet the harsh truth is that money will only sustain the existing level of the strike. Revolutionary propaganda has to insist that the strike will remain isolated if rank and file miners and solidarity committees do not use the renewed round of visits to workplaces to agitate for solidarity strike action now.

What seems to the SWP to be unrealistic could so easily become so if the 4,000 SWP members turned themselves into an army of agitators for this perspective.

'REALISTIC PROPAGANDA'

Meanwhile in support committees where Workers Power members have raised a resolution calling for building delegate-based committees, seeking solidarity action and calling for a general strike the SWP have opposed us, but not offered an alternative. It is not that they think solidarity is good enough at present, but they will not take on a political fight for it.

Recently the SWP have tried to justify economism under the new name of "realistic propaganda". In *Socialist Worker Review* in September Duncan Hallas wrote an article called "What do we mean by ...Agitation and Propaganda?" These are the ways in which revolutionaries put across ideas to workers.

Agitation presents one or two ideas to a wide audience in a call for action such as in a leaflet calling for support for a picket. Propaganda is a more systematic explanation of revolutionary ideas, still involving action but directed towards a smaller audience who are open to more socialist ideas.

Hallas's shabby invention insists that "There is a distinction between abstract propaganda, and that propaganda which can hopefully lead to activity, concrete or realistic propaganda."

DISTORTION OF LENIN

The 'realistic' propagandist in a factory "will argue for a set of demands which hopefully can lead the struggle to victory, and certainly beyond the tokens of the trade union bureaucracy. So they will argue, for example, for a flat rate increase, the full claim, all out rather than selective strike, etc."

This is a mis-understanding of Lenin's concepts. The implication for Hallas is that propaganda either leads to no action call or outlines action that cannot be realised presently. For Lenin both agitation and propaganda were calls to action, but directed at different audiences.

To insert a 'middle' way which is neither wide-reaching arguments for revolutionary political action nor immediate agitational calls to action is simply to hide away from fighting for your political ideas. For revolutionaries to only argue for 'realistic' demands relating to the existing level of struggle results in just following the most militant workers.

This is not revolutionary leadership. Leadership requires a struggle and argument for what is necessary to take the class forward, not what is likely or easier to win.

A united front in support of the miners is necessary, and it is helpful to have the SWP involved in support work. But this latest 'turn' is not a correction of past mistakes. It is simply a continuation of their economism, but tailing an active struggle rather than a 'downturn'.

SWP members and supporters who have welcomed the move back to union and workplace work would do well to think over their recent history.

Giving revolutionary leadership is not easy, but to shy away from the tasks towards 'realistic' demands is a sure recipe for a rightward drift.

by Helen Ward

HOW IMPERIALISM STARVES AFRICA

"DIGGING DEEP FOR the miners" has run into an obstacle in the last month. Following extensive harrowing TV coverage of the Ethiopian famine some of the same people who have given money to the miners have rerouted their pounds and pennies to various charity appeals.

A Tory conspiracy to intensify the NUM hardship before Christmas? Some miners have thought so. After all the famine has been wreaking havoc for eight months. Whether it's true is hardly the point. The danger is that miners might see the 'wretched of the earth' in Africa as competitors for sympathy and solidarity.

However, miners and their families should not be deceived about 'natural disasters' as if the lack of rain, an arid climate was something new in sub-Saharan Africa. The harsh truth is that those - like Labour and Tory MPs - who are now wearing their bleeding hearts on their sleeves are primarily responsible for helping cause the endemic food shortages that effect virtually the whole of black Africa.

The publicity on the famine has exposed one of the most glaring examples of the criminal insanity of the capitalist system. In Europe and America huge grain mountains testify to the subsidies paid to the big cereal producers. Public pressure has so far succeeded in mobilising only a fraction of this for the famine stricken areas.

Of course there's a point in storing grain. Every society above the most primitive makes such provision. Indeed African societies in the pre-colonial era protected themselves against drought in that way - until the colonialists tore apart the old society. But Europe's grain mountains are nothing to do with rational planning - they are a result of the protectionist Common Agricultural Policy which guarantees high prices and profits to wheat growers. The real winners are the big capitalist farmers and agribusinesses of Europe and the USA. Meanwhile 800 million on this earth are undernourished while food is stockpiled in the imperialist heartlands.

Yet unequal distribution of existing surpluses is only part of the problem. The truth is that it is imperialism itself which has exacerbated and even created death and hunger. Climate and terrain are certainly difficult in parts of Africa, especially the Sahel belt where the rains fail from time to time.

But the imperialist stranglehold makes sensible land use an impossibility. Africa's total cereal production has declined by 1% annually since 1970. In the 1930s Africa was a food exporter, in the 1950s it was self sufficient in food. But by 1980, sub-Saharan Africa was importing 8 million tons of cereal annually.

Colonial policy began the impoverishment. Having carved up Africa, the colonial powers -

Britain, France, Portugal and Belgium - established the terms on which Africa would participate in the world economy. Kenya would plant coffee, Sudan should grow cotton, Ghana cocoa plantations. Traditional African food crops (maize, cassava, sorghum) were restricted to areas of low agricultural potential. Next came mineral production and the forced movement of labour from

When African states gained political independence, they found the big imperialist companies and governments still in control. To develop their own economies, they needed foreign investment and foreign exchange. In return, they had to continue to produce the goods the West wanted. Investment only came for projects where profit was to be made - again, only in limited areas.

These are the cash crops and they dominate (ie distort) the economies of black Africa. For example, while the area under cereals and root crops increased by only 6% in the period 1971-81, the area under coffee and sugar in the same countries increased by 50%

In 1983 over 65% of Ethiopia's exports were coffee. But in the case of Zambia and Uganda copper accounts for virtually 100% of the export trade. In similar fashion coffee smothers Burundi's economy, uranium Niger's and diamonds that of Botswana.

The consequences of this imperialist straight-jacketing during trade crises are evident. When the prices of those commodities such as coffee, cocoa or copper fell, African countries were hard hit. They were forced to borrow on the international money markets. They were caught in a desperate spiral - only the production of further goods for export could earn exchange to pay interest on the debts, which now stand in excess of £150 billion.

Africa is held in thrall by companies like Anglo-American in mining and the agribusiness giants like Lonrho, Brooke Bond, Firestone and Unilever which monopolise the best agricultural land for cash crop plantations.

The land that is left is of the poorest quality and becomes the last refuge of the desperate subsistence peasant. Deprived of the cash for adequate irrigation or fertilizer the land becomes exhausted.

This in turn is helping the desert grow. Amongst UN aid professionals, it has become fashionable to talk of the process of 'desertification'. This idea can be extremely reactionary - tragedy is put down to yet another 'natural disaster'.

But even if the UN figures are correct - six million hectares of the world's land are being lost to the desert each year and a further 21 million become infertile (*New Internationalist* September 18 1984) - this process is neither 'natural' nor irre-



Famished villagers in Mozambique forage for scraps of grain.

versible.

It is the policies of growing for export and the pressure on the land which brings soil erosion and the growth of the desert. Trees are cut down in the savannah belt so tractors can be more efficiently used by the big companies. Yet those trees are crucial for the water balance.

The full hypocrisy of the hue and cry about Ethiopia is finally exposed when one looks at the nature of the 'aid' that imperialism offers up as a solution to a problem of its own creation.

Most so-called 'aid' is directed at perpetuating the dependence on cash crops. By 1975 the World Bank had invested over \$200 million in Tanzania without supporting a single project designed to produce basic foodstuffs (*New Internationalist* September 1984). Land irrigated by the big irrigation projects in the Sahel in West Africa, in countries like Bourkina Fasso (Upper Volta) has been earmarked by the agribusinesses for producing salad vegetables for the European table!

Even the 'famine-relief' aid - meagre as it is - is totally dependent not on humanitarian sentiments but on political calculation. For that reason the existence of a Moscow-leaning nationalist government in Ethiopia has been used by Britain and the USA as an excuse for withholding systematic, meaningful long-term famine-relief aid from the Ethiopian starving.

There is only one thing that rises higher than the pile of statistics documenting human misery through famine and undernourishment and that is the stench of the mountains of hypocritical sympathy that are piled up to obscure the fundamental facts of imperialist exploitation in Africa.

There is only one positive legacy of imperialist exploitation of Africa and that is the creation of an African proletariat. Small and super exploited it undoubtedly is, but it is also concentrated and the socially decisive force within these nations.

Today there exists the technology and knowledge to master the ravages of nature. But the only class that can put it to this purpose must first liberate it from the control and ownership of imperialist governments, companies and client governments - dictatorships and democracies alike.

While the labour movement in the West is obliged to fight for emergency, unconditional aid to these countries, the perspective must be to expropriate the relatively small number of large landowners in Africa, to redistribute the land and organise production for need on the stable foundation of adequate machinery, fertilizers and irrigation. Only this - not the perennial drip-feeding of liberal charities - can put an end to the human misery hypocritically packaged and processed for our TV screens.

by Sue Thomas

FITZGERALD BOWS TO THATCHER

It is, after all, the Conservative and Unionist Party. And in Thatcher the Tories have one of the staunchest supporters of Northern Ireland's loyalists. So Fitzgerald came expecting little and got less. After the initial fake diplomacy of the post-summit conferences the truth came out. The Irish Premier said to his Cabinet that Thatcher had been "gratuitously offensive". So why did he come and what did he seek?

As head of the Fine Gael-Labour coalition Fitzgerald was obliged to press home to Thatcher the conclusions of the New Ireland Forum report of June of this year. The report briefly refers to the systematic oppression of the nationalist minority in the Six Counties, fulsomely condemns those, like Sinn Fein, trying to resist it and tamesly outlines three possible territorial and sovereignty changes (confederation, joint sovereignty united Ireland) which the loyalists must agree to before change can occur.

Events in the North occasionally force the thoroughly bourgeois 'nationalists' of the South to pose as the guardian of the interests of the anti-Unionist population in Northern Ireland.

Unusually some of the reaction against the "excesses" of the British and loyalist security apparatus has come recently from Fitzgerald and Fine Gael. When his politically appointed judiciary reversed all precedent and made cross-Border extradition of wanted Republicans almost automatic, the backlash was exploited by establishment "republicans" such as Haughey and Fianna Fail. The fact that extradited victims might be held indefinitely without trial or new charges substituted embarrassed the Government into public expressions of "anxiety". RUC ambushes, the killing of Sean Downes, the use of supergrasses have forced Fitzgerald to acknowledge that the RUC does not have the confidence of the Six-County nationalists.

Yet Fitzgerald crossed the Irish Sea possessing no leverage whatever with the British government. When Haughey met her in 1979 he was able to put on the table the possibility of Irish membership of NATO in exchange for an Anglo-Irish

parliamentary tier. At that time the Republic's economy was riding high on massive flows of foreign borrowing used partly to attract additional massive inflows of American investment. Haughey's rhetorical intransigence coincided also with a cul-de-sac in EEC attempts to initiate a collective military alliance. Ireland's formal "neutrality" was an obstacle. Fitzgerald finds himself bargaining in much changed circumstances.

The economic bubble has burst, unemployment tripled, crippling taxation and pay restraint have bred deep alienation, and foreign investors have massively stepped up the repatriation of their profits, to which end (as recently admitted officially) they have been inflating their Irish production figures by transnational price-fixing to maximise their use of Ireland as a tax haven. The Republic's foreign debt has now been declared the highest per capita of all the "developing" world, so savage measures are being taken to cut public spending. Only days before meeting Thatcher the Fine-Gael-Labour Coalition budgeted to hold all public service pay (a sixth of the workforce) 6% below inflation, provoking union outrage. Far from appearing now as an equal sovereign state on the European stage, the Republic's true nature as a deeply dependent and crisis ridden semi-colony has now been nakedly revealed.

Only months ago, despite popular hostility to Reagan over Central America and the Philippines (due to the protests of Irish missionaries) Fitzgerald grovelled to the visiting imperialist war-monger and has more openly identified with aspects of US foreign policy. Two weeks before meeting Thatcher, and a week before greeting the ASEAN foreign ministers in Dublin with loud support for their positions on Afghanistan and Kampuchea, he was intensively lobbied by 20 US politicians on a visit to Dublin which the US embassy guiltily tried to keep secret! Given the Republic's acute awareness of its economic prostration before British and US finance capital, and the growth of domestic economic unrest, even its merely formal "neutrality" is under threat. The EEC powers have revived the parallel Western

European Union in which Ireland's effective veto on defence discussions is bypassed. Increasingly the southern ruling class is looking for excuses to cover its anticipated abandonment of "neutrality". Gone are the fantasies of trading it for Irish unity!

This situation explains the weakness of Fine Gael's nationalist demands of Thatcher. Fitzgerald aspires to appear as the guarantor and champion of the "alienated" Six-County minority. While Haughey adopts the republican position that Northern Ireland is "not viable", Fine Gael has carefully defined the whole problem as simply the "alienation" of the minority within the North. While the Forum Report briefly acknowledged the material discrimination against Catholics, Fine Gael's perspective in no way challenges the material realities of the sectarian Northern State. Rather it wants symbolic measures to legitimise the minority's expression of their nationalist sentiment. Collaboration with the mainstream of bourgeois Unionism is not just a means but the very aim of Fine Gael's perspective, but whatever little joy they got from Unionist responses to the now abandoned crusade of secular constitutional reform in the South in 1981, there's even less joy in the response to the Forum.

A froth of responses continues from every quarter of British and Unionist opinion - with the exception of Thatcher. The Official Unionists' "Way Forward" in July indicated the limits of "moderate" Unionism: "without accepting that there is any foundation in reality for any feeling of minority discrimination or disadvantage, the Ulster Unionist Party nevertheless recognises that such a feeling does exist and that it may be in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland as a whole to have the rights of individuals set out in legislation of the British parliament conferring devolved government on Northern Ireland." Power sharing and any all-Ireland dimension are ruled out.

The repeal of the anti-nationalist "Flags and Emblems Act" (which forbids the public display of the Irish Tricolour but allows the flaunting of the Union Jack in Catholic areas) is repeatedly

raised as a possible concession to "nationalist identity" - but usually as the limit to what bourgeois unionism will tolerate, and usually as part of packages aimed at more effective "security" and a franker recognition by the South of British sovereignty in the North. The "Kilbrandon" report published on November 1st by a committee under the auspices of the bourgeois British Irish Association, recommended this measure along with involving a Dublin minister in governing the North. The 'independent' committee could not fully agree, however. Four of its 12 members rejected the element of 'joint authority' in favour of devolving power on the Unionist majority. All agreed to the proposal for a British-Irish Security Commission!

The Kilbrandon majority report is the frankest statement of the line Fitzgerald is putting to Thatcher. It effectively concedes all that Thatcher wants on the Irish question at the present time-tighter security and more effective repression of the nationalists in the North. In return the Tories promise nothing except a commitment to "ongoing" contacts on the basis of a "clearer understanding of each other's positions". No political initiative is forthcoming because on the loyalists side the Unionists are intransigent and Thatcher will not move without them; on the nationalist side the initiative still rests with Sinn Fein leaving the constitutional nationalists - SDLP - unable to carry a significant section of the anti-unionist population in making concessions to the Unionists.

The oppressed minority of the Six Counties should at least be a little clearer on all this as a result of Fitzgerald's recent visit. Its only salvation lies with the united anti-imperialist action of the anti-Unionist working-class across all 32 Counties of Ireland which could forcibly smash partition and consign the pale rhetoric of the Forum Report and its adherents to the dustbin of Irish history.

by a member of the Irish Workers Group

EL SALVADOR: FMLN/FDR

WITHIN DAYS OF Reagan's re-election, the US government has renewed its offensive on Central America. Having converted Honduras into a major military base for US troops and organised the counter-revolutionaries to attack Nicaragua, Washington now declares that the Nicaraguan government has no right to obtain the weapons it needs to defend itself! Attempts by the FSLN government to obtain French Mirage jets were blocked when the spineless "Socialist" government of Mitterrand bowed to US pressure not to supply them. Now the US administration has declared that any arrival of Soviet Mig fighters will result in, "surgical air strikes" by the US airforce.

Harassment of urgent supplies to Nicaragua arriving by sea has also been stepped up by the permanent war fleet Washington has stationed off Nicaragua's coast. In the midst of the crisis sparked off by the mythical arrival of Migs in a Soviet cargo ship, 100 US troops were parachuted into Honduras in an "exercise" clearly designed as practice for future operations against Nicaragua. Managua itself was woken up on three mornings in a row by the sonic booms of SR 71-American spy planes violating Nicaraguan air space.

Reagan clearly intends to get the US public used to armed actions in Central America not just by their US-trained surrogates but by US forces directly. This summer, Reagan announced that the White House has asked the Pentagon to draw up contingency plans for US air strikes against FMLN positions in case the guerrilla movement launched an offensive which the puppet Duarte regime could not cope with. In 1984, military aid to El Salvador was increased to \$190 million and General Paul Gorman, head of US southern command in Panama, has already asked for an increase in US military advisers in El Salvador from 55 to 125.

In El Salvador, since the victory of Napoleon Duarte as President in the May 1984 elections, Washington has been pursuing a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand it has been ensuring that the Salvadorean army has the means to pursue its murderous terror campaigns against areas under rebel control — mass bombings of civilian populations in areas under rebel control are now common — and making clear that the US will intervene militarily at any point if the government is threatened. On the other it has, through Duarte, launched a political campaign to force the FMLN/FDR to give up the armed struggle and

leaders seek fatal compromise

make a compromise with the dictatorship.

From the moment of his election, Duarte, a Christian Democrat, set off to persuade the world that the government of El Salvador had changed its spots. His purpose was to undermine the tepid support given to the opposition by some European powers, particularly from Social Democratic and Socialist parties.

In this he has had undoubted success. His tour of Europe this summer resulted in Bonn offering \$18.1 million in aid. \$ 10 million of this was aid that had been stopped in 1979 because of human rights violations. The Belgian government announced that it was considering his request to train military officers while, predictably, he has had very friendly receptions from Margaret Thatcher and the leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party, Mario Soares.

On his inauguration he received a letter signed by Willy Brandt and Filipe Gonzalez as well as other Socialist International worthies from Latin America declaring his election to be "a victory for democratic ideas and for the aspiration of the Salvadorean people to live in peace under a government of laws."

This 'government of laws' it should be pointed out still holds, according to El Salvador Human Rights Organisations, over 600 political prisoners. This does not include over 5,000 'disappeared' political opponents and trade unionists who are either dead or held illegally. It includes a Legislative Assembly which is dominated by the Arena Party - organisers of the 'Death Squads' - and the extreme right wing P.C.N.

So concerned was this government for the 'aspirations of the Salvadorean people' that it completely sabotaged even the measly land reform programme proposed by the US Agency for International Development. In its first phase the



Offering to surrender? Guillermo Ungo and Ruben Zamora at the peace talks

Government and landowners managed to ensure that only half of the 150,000 small farmers who could have benefited did so, while they have blocked the second stage completely. Quite recently they agreed to drop all charges against Lieutenant Rodolfo Sibrian who organised the murder of two US land reform advisers central to the programme.

None of this has stopped the European imperialists and the Contadora countries led by Mexico declaring that the election of Duarte marks a step forward. Since then they have stepped up the pressure on the FMLN/FDR to reach a compromise with the Duarte Government.

These arguments have not fallen on deaf ears. Guillermo Ungo, a major leader of the FDR and Duarte's running mate in the 1972 presidential elections, declared in July "Now Duarte must demonstrate if his mandate is real... the government will have to define itself in action, either favouring a North American invasion or a negotiated solution". Of course Duarte wants to avoid a US intervention, but he wants to do it by forcing the guerrilla movement, or sections of it, into a compromise which leaves the power of the landowning oligarchy intact and US imperialism in firm control.

The present leadership of the FMLN/FDR have already paved the way for this by adopting a new programme for the movement, summed-up in their proposal for "a broad based provisional government". This proposal, put forward as a basis for the negotiations, shows a dramatic retreat even from the 1980 FDR programme. Gone are the commitments to "liquidate... the

economic, political and military dependence on Yankee imperialism" through nationalising the major capitalist enterprises and foreign owned businesses and by taking over "the land held by the big landlords".

In its place is a commitment to maintain private and foreign investment, to honour "the financial commitments made by previous governments" and a declaration that such a government would not allow "destabilisation operations against the governments of neighbouring states", which would of course abandon support for the struggle against the dictatorships in Honduras and Guatemala.

All these compromises are of course designed to win over the "anti-oligarchic bourgeoisie", which for Ungo and Co. politically includes Duarte. In so doing, the leadership of the FMLN/FDR is betraying the interests of the workers and peasants who have fought the bloody civil war in El Salvador for the last four years. If the masses of El Salvador are really to cut at the roots of their oppression and destroy the system of capitalism and imperialism which enslaves them, they must break-up this attempt to compromise with the Duarte regime.

They must also learn the lesson that a popular front alliance with the bourgeoisie can only end in subordination of their interests to those of the capitalists. Only then can they proceed to construct a revolutionary party in El Salvador and Central America which can lead the workers and peasants themselves to power.

by Stuart King

P.C.F. FAILS FRENCH WORKERS

ON SATURDAY 10th November, strikers at Pirault and Sons construction firm, owed 5 months pay, started an occupation and hunger-strike. One of the 'Sons' took a rifle and shot dead CGT (the largest union federation), shop steward, Kemal Ozgul, wounding two others. The next day, an armed unemployed white youth walked into a Turkish workers' cafe in Chateaubriant. Shouting 'Heil Hitler', he opened fire, killing two Turks and wounding five others. Right-wing politicians further used a series of murders in an immigrant area of Paris to call for heavy police action against blacks. On the same weekend, a Turkish paper released an interview with fascist leader Le Pen in which he talked of the threat from the growing number of blacks in the country, and made clear his commitment to 'take up arms to defend France.'

The growth of unemployment and threats to job security have been the backdrop to the past period. Virtually every day has seen a new announcement of sackings and plant closures. Unemployment has now risen to a record 2,515,600, an increase of 16.4% over the last year. For the bosses, however, things aren't looking so bad. The Ministry of Labour predicts that profits are set to rise by over a quarter in 1985.

The reason for this is not hard to find; for those in work, take-home pay dropped by 2% in real terms in 1983, and by a further 1.5% in the first 4 months of this year. Meanwhile, prices are soaring, a year-on-year rate of 12% increase for wholesale prices, 7.1% for retail, while pay rises on offer are usually pitched below 5%.

THE INTERESTS OF PROFIT

As for the unemployed, life is extremely hard. Over 1.1 million receive no state benefits whatever. The state of the French economic crisis and the labour movement response to it can best be seen in the car industry. In the first 9 months of this year, sales of French cars dropped by 16.9%. The biggest problems are faced by the Talbot-Citroen-Peugeot combine. Citroen sales dropped 20.3% over the year, and Talbot's plummeted by 53.2%. The nationalised Renault company saw a drop of 15.7%. Clearly from the bosses viewpoint a massive rationalisation in the interests of profit is long overdue. In September and October, a rash of small scale disputes over bonus payments and holiday schedules indicated the growing combativity of car workers. Strikes and go-slows crippled the highly centralised Renault assembly process. In a series of referendums on negotiations with management, the CGT consistently received the backing of the workforce. Yet the CGT officials did not use this manifest support to organise workers to fight and to extend their



Renault Cleon workers on strike against racist murder - 30.9.84

demands. They were only too keen to get their knees back under the negotiating table with Renault management.

And this at a time when the widely-leaked Dalle report on the car industry - commissioned by the government when the French Communist Party (PCF) was in coalition - called for 74,000 job losses by the end of 1988. The CGT should have responded to this report by launching a fight to stop all car industry sackings. Instead, they continued their negotiations with Renault boss Hanault, over his 'mobility' plan. By continually stop-starting the car workers in a series of disputes over relatively minor issues and refusing to develop the fight into one against the bosses' overall job-cutting strategy, the Stalinist union bosses hope to tame the workers' militancy and get back to negotiations. In fact they run the danger of frittering away the forces of resistance needed to chuck out the Dalle plan.

It is because of their central position of influence in the french working class movement that the political positions of the PCF and the CGT are so important. In July the PCF left Mitterrand's 'socialist' government in which they had been minority coalition partners since the left's massive election victory in 1981. After 2 years of standing by Mitterrand in his increasingly vicious attacks on the workers, the PCF came out of coalition. The reason was their disastrous showing in the European elections. They hit a post war low of 11.3% of the electorate - 2 million votes down on 1979.

A period of opposition and freedom to make

some show of defending workers against the government's austerity policies was vital for the PCF to restore its tarnished credentials. The fruits of this change of tack have been evident throughout the autumn. After years of declining influence the CGT seems to be reversing the trend. Election to Plant Committees over the last 2 months have generally shown an increase in support for the CGT of around 8%.

Yet despite the PCF's break with the government and the CGT's willingness to countenance small scale disputes neither have changed their spots in terms of their overall policies. For example, to coincide with the Paris Motor Show, the CGT issued a plan for the car industry. This consisted of calls to win back and develop the French market (encouraging young people to buy cars etc.); to increase cooperation between firms; to encourage car companies to invest in France, not abroad; and last but not least, the conquest of overseas markets. In a TV interview, the CGT boss Krasucki later added the idiotic demand that drivers of French cars should pay less for their petrol!

The CGT's answer to the crisis is not a militant struggle to protect every job, to win workers' control over production, and a workers' inspection into the nationalisation plans and 'business secrecy' of the big monopolies. Instead it suggests greater patriotism on the part of the bosses and consumers within the framework of existing ownership and management.

In this the CGT is the trade union complement to the PCF's reformist politics. The struggle for

working class power is never on the agenda. Instead various 'progressive' forces must combine to produce a government that will carry out policies favourable to the working class in France. The PCF is thus repeatedly driven to prove it is a completely patriotic party, one thoroughly house-trained in terms of parliamentary democracy.

Thus, despite having just finished a massive campaign for peace and nuclear disarmament, the PCF deputies voted for the military budget in parliament! Whilst they 'abstained' from voting against what they themselves described as Premier Fabius' austerity budget they were only too willing to vote for a militarist, nuclear, imperialist 'defence' budget!

At a time of growing unemployment, with the exploitation of the economic crisis by racist and fascists, the PCF's nationalism is a poison in the bloodstream of the French proletariat. The success of the fascist Front National in the European elections and a simultaneous collapse of the PCF's vote has emboldened the fascists and pushed the established bourgeois parties sharply to the right.

VOTE CATCHING

Gaullist leader Chirac, Mayor of Paris, keen to be President in 1986, has launched a major campaign, focussing on the falling French birth rate, and linking this with opposition both to immigration and abortion. This just happens to be one of Le Pen's best vote-catchers. The political atmosphere here is becoming more charged with racism and the question of immigration.

It is all the more alarming, therefore, that the French workers, and the organised left especially, seem relatively indifferent to the potential threat of a substantial growth in the organised fascist movement. Although there was widespread token strike action of 15-30 minutes to protest against the shooting of Kemal Ozgul, little was said about the two racist murders that took place in October, or the other fifty that have been recorded since Mitterrand came to power.

At the end of October, Le Pen organised a march of 2000 fascists and ex-servicemen to oppose the visit of Foreign Minister Chevesson to Algeria on the anniversary of the Algerian insurrection. There was no opposition at all as the fascists marched through the centre of Paris, well protected by the police. Two weeks later the fascist MNR organised a well-publicised meeting to 'Kick out the Stalinist Vermin'. There were posters advertising the meeting all over Paris. Not a word from the left. Nor will there be while the PCF and PS continue to call the tune in the French labour movement.

by a member of Pouvoir Ouvrier

AUSTIN-ROVER: Officials bow to the law

THE COLLAPSE OF the Austin Rover strike was an important victory for the bosses. It strengthened their hands against the miners, it demonstrated the effectiveness of their anti-union laws and it laid the basis for new attacks on union organisation and workers' jobs in the car industry.

Their victory, however, was by no means unavoidable. They did not even have to fight for it. Success was handed to them by the trade union leaders who were determined that there should be no prolonged strike.

That would have meant mobilising their members in direct confrontation with the courts and the police who would have been used to enforce judges' anti-union decisions. It would have meant extending the strike by picketing not only the plants but the docks and main dealers. Above all it would have meant a strike that could have got out of their control and been taken over by the rank and file.

Even before the strike, Ken Cure of the AUEW was arguing that management's offer was the 'best available' and that a strike would be, 'a waste of time'. Small wonder, then, that the AUEW made haste to comply with the court decision that they must actively denounce the strike.

The EETPU, whose leaders specialise in organised scabbing, went as far as to instruct its members to return to work. Even unions like the TGWU which did not go along with the judges' orders equally did nothing to ensure the strike would be strong enough to withstand the legal and media attacks.

From now on this open acceptance of anti-union laws and unwillingness to organise action against them will be the position of the majority of trade union leaders and officials throughout industry. It underlines the urgent necessity of rank and file workers organising themselves to fight independently of the established leaders. The Austin

Rover strike showed that such organisation and alternative leadership has not yet been built.

At Longbridge, for example, virtually no preparation for the strike had been made. There were no plans for picketing or for co-ordination with the other plants, in particular the Cowley plants. Even when the strike was on, only a few dozen of the nearly three hundred shop stewards were to be seen on the picket lines.

However, there were pickets - they were made up most noticeably of young workers, the only ones who can survive the intensity of work on the tracks. It is these workers in particular who must be won to a militant strategy of defence of jobs, improvement of conditions and worthwhile rates of pay.

There will be no lack of need for militancy. The Austin Rover management are already preparing a new productivity offensive. The two-year, 10% deal which Ken Cure thought the best available, is based on a 13% increase in productivity. That can mean either 13% more work from the current workforce or 13% fewer jobs. At Longbridge this might mean as many as 1200 jobs being

axed. We do not believe that the rank and file will timidly accept these new attacks - even though we are convinced the union leaders would. Management hopes to ensure the continued cooperation of the officials by making an example of the TGWU in the courts. But they know that it is the shop floor workers that they have to break in the end. This is what lies behind their refusal to recognise Colin Willets as a senior steward in Longbridge and their suspension of a woman who was identified as active on the picket lines.

From now on anyone who attempts to oppose, or even to object to management's plans can expect the same treatment. Their only defence will be their own workmates. That defence needs to be organised in advance, before the attack comes.

Above all it will mean overhauling the shop steward level of leadership. Stewards who did not join the picket lines should be replaced immediately by workers who did - and can be relied upon to do so again.

No reliance can be placed on the union leaders. Even those who have not yet bowed to the courts' authority did nothing to force their lordships to back off. Grenville Hawley may now refuse to sign the two-year agreement but that is an empty gesture if he will not lead a fight to tear it up.



John Harris (IFL)

BACK FORD WOMEN NOW

THE STRIKE BY women sewing machinists at the Ford plants at Dagenham and Halewood has led to thousands of other workers being laid off. Management are now trying to turn the majority of workers against the machinists by saying there will be no annual pay rise unless the dispute is called off.

Ever since 1962, the struggle for equal pay with men workers has been one of the biggest issues facing women workers at Ford's. Management's refusal to concede equal pay has been strengthened by the attitude of union negotiators who have refused again and again to make it a separate issue in annual pay claims.

The dispute centres around the Ford Grading Scheme. There are five grades, ranging from A, unskilled workers such as janitors to E, skilled workers such as electricians. The majority of Ford workers - those on the production line - are graded B, semi-skilled workers.

The machinists are demanding to be regraded from B to C because their jobs need more skills than line work. They point out that they have to pass a skill test before they get a job - in fact Ford only advertise for 'experienced machinists'. By refusing to pay a skilled wage, Ford underline the double standards that dominate most of industry. 'Women's skills' such as sewing are simply not recognised as real skill.

The women first made their claim for equal pay in 1968. Since then they have taken the fight right through Ford grading grievance procedure with no success. They got the same result when they tried to go through the legal channels set up to 'enforce' the Equal Pay Act. Three months ago an Industrial tribunal considered their claim.

The tribunal was presented with evidence from other C grade workers which showed that they had not had to pass skill tests before being taken on. The same workers also confirmed that, in their opinion, their own jobs were not nearly so complex as those of the machinists. Despite all this the Tribunal predictably ruled in favour of Ford management.

It was after this judgement that the machinists held a meeting with shop ste-

wards and decided on strike action to force Fords to pay the rate for the job.

Their strike must have the support of all other Ford workers. Management's threats should be thrown back in their faces by rejecting their 7% offer. The union leaders who are now recommending acceptance should be forced instead to lead a determined fight for an improved offer and equal pay throughout Fords.

The 1968 machinists' strike marked the end of a long period of passivity within Ford's after the defeat of 1962. It was the beginning of a major period of militancy throughout the company. Today their fight can be the starting point for an immediate counter-attack against the bosses and mark a turning point not only in Ford's but in the wider class struggle.

by a TGWU member (soft trim, Halewood)



Carlos Guarita (Reflex)

WORKERS IN ACTION



SOLIDARITY TOUR

DURING THE LAST week of October an extremely successful tour of Germany and Austria raised over £1,000 for the Hatfield Main Strike Committee and Hatfield Women's Support Group.

The tour was organised jointly by the International Communist League (IKL) in Austria, Gruppe Arbeitermacht (GAM) in Germany and Workers Power. Tony Clegg, a member of Hatfield Strike Committee and his wife Lynn, a founder of the wives support group spoke to about 300 people in five meetings. Tony was speaking in a personal capacity.

The IKL organised a small meeting in Vienna for General Motors workers from the plant just outside the city, as well as a larger meeting in Vienna. Together with other socialists in the town of Salzburg, including the Austrian USFI grouping, the IKL organised a 90 strong meeting on the University campus. As with elsewhere in Austria, the NUM videos "The Lie Machine" and "Only Doing Their Job" on the press and police were shown and well received.

On the Tuesday of the trip the IKL and a trade union opposition group (GOA) inside General Motors organised for a collection to be taken outside the plant during the shift changeover. Several pounds were raised in half an hour before three police cars arrested Tony, two IKL members and the two Workers Power comrades accompanying Lynn and Tony on the tour!

It seems the Austrian police were equally determined to demonstrate their solidarity with the British Police in the coalfields. Lynn herself only escaped arrest by being inside the plant at the time. Fortunately no charges were

laid and after two hours everyone was released. In all approximately £600 was collected in Austria.

With the police no doubt glad to see the backs of the touring party, we left for Germany. On Thursday about 60 left-wing teachers from the Wiesbaden branch of the left-wing Teacher Group within the main Union (GEW) organised a lively meeting. Here as elsewhere the most popular question concerned the level of solidarity support, in Britain and abroad, the problems the scab miners were posing and how miners were dealing with police violence. At the Wiesbaden meeting about £270 was raised through a collection and the sale of *The Miner*. As a result of this meeting the teachers agreed to organise a food and toy collection, with the results to be sent over for Christmas. If victory has not been gained by then the Wiesbaden teachers have agreed to organise more and bigger meetings in the area in the New Year.

The tour ended with a public meeting in Frankfurt organised by the GAM. The vigorous level of political argument over the role of Arthur Scargill, Libyan money and the Labour Party, was matched by financial generosity on the part of the German comrades. The collection at the meeting enabled us to reach the £1000 target we had set ourselves.

Everywhere Tony and Lynn went the hospitality and generosity was overwhelming. There exists in Europe the problem of ignorance over the strike, but the results of the tour measured in hard cash shows that there is a reservoir of sympathy and solidarity abroad that remains to be tapped.

FIGHT DEPORTATIONS

ON NOVEMBER 8th the fight to stop the Home Office denying Muhammed Idrish his right to remain in Britain was lost. The Home Office has now sent him a letter telling him to leave the country. He is appealing against this order. If he loses this appeal the prospects of detention and forced deportation loom menacingly.

In response NALGO, his union, is calling a demonstration in Birmingham for sometime in January. There must be a massive mobilisation for this. One demonstration, however, will not budge the hard-nosed racists at the Home Office. In building for the demonstration the case for strike action by NALGO and for a refusal of Civil Service unions to process the deportation order, must be put and won. This is the surest guaran-

tee of keeping Muhammed here.

The need for effective action against deportations, and the immigration laws that underpin them, becomes even more urgent as the number of individual deportation campaigns continues to grow.

A bid to unify these campaigns in Birmingham has begun. The Muhammed Idrish, Toussef Ahmed, Baba Bakhtaura and Karamjit Singh campaigns have sponsored a West Midlands conference to be held on February 9th 1985 in Birmingham. The aim of this conference must be to turn the various individual legal cases into a united political campaign on the basis of smashing the racist immigration laws. NO MORE DEPORTATIONS! SMASH THE IMMIGRATION LAWS!

Gay March Attacked

ON NOVEMBER 10th one thousand demonstrators converged on Rugby to demonstrate against the Council's recent ban on Gays working for it. Lesbians, Gay men and their supporters came from all over the country to show their anger at this appalling and reactionary decision.

We were told by the police to avoid the town centre on the march to the rally. At the rally itself support for the NUM was much in evidence. As one speaker said "the miners' fight is our fight - if we don't get political we'll never get anywhere."

We decided to march back through the town despite a police warning that "our safety couldn't be guaranteed." We soon found out what this meant when a police snatch squad waded in and arrested 18 marchers for obstruction.

The massive police presence and intimidation shows their hatred for lesbians and gay men, fostered by

the state and media. Imagine the police force's embarrassment when Coventry's Chief Superintendent, Stan Hammond, was nicked for importuning six days later.....!!

Ho, ho, ho....You're Nicked!

ON NOVEMBER 15th the Met nicked Father Christmas. He was outside the large London toy store Hamleys. He was collecting toys for the children of striking miners. The Met decided this was an offence and moved in. In vain did Santa plead that he was "only doing his job".

Not only was Santa (a member of the Westminster Miners' Support Committee) arrested but the toys he collected were confiscated.

So now we know, Scrooge is alive and well and living in Scotland Yard. Help beat him by donating to a miners' Christmas Appeal in your area.

workers power

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