

# **THE RED MINER**

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**workers  
power**

**Bulletin for miners and their families 10p**



## VOTE ERIC LIPPITT

**RED MINER** goes to press as the campaign for the post of National Vice President of the the NUH goes into it's final week. The two main candidates, Eric Clarke, General Secretary of the Scottish Area and Sammy Thompson, Yorkshire General, Secretary offer nothing to those rank and file miners who want to take on the board and stop any further backsliding by our national leadership.

Clarke has the backing of right wing figures on the executive such as George Bolton who miners will remember as the character who came out of his hole, after the strike was over and attacked Arthur Scargill's leadership of the strike. In addition Clarke has been largely responsible for the collaboration with the Scottish Board which has seen the decimation of the Scottish coalfield and the weakening of the Scottish Area of the NUH. A vote for Clarke is a vote for Kinnock's new realism and will strengthen the hand of the right wing on the executive.

For many miners the man to vote for is Sammy Thompson. He has the backing of the militant Yorkshire and Kent areas, he is also seen by many militants to be a "Scargill man". Now while it is true that Thompson has never been a leading critic of Scargill it is also true that he has never been a leading advocate of class struggle policies. During the great strike he along with Jack Taylor blocked the effective picketing of Orgreave for many weeks, and his attitude to the Kent pickets at the end of the strike was certainly not that of a "Scargill man".

**RED MINER** readers may want to argue "that is all water under the bridge" so it is worth looking at what he stands on now, and what he has been arguing during the election campaign.

The only real differences between the manifestos of Thompson and Clarke are, Thompson's makes a

great deal about the fact he is from Yorkshire, (half of the statement in the latest Yorkshire Miner goes on endlessly about Sammy being Yorkshires man, so much for fighting for one NATIONAL union), while Clarke's makes a big deal about the fact he is on the National Executive of the Labour Party.

On the major issues which will be facing miners over the next few years, such as privatisation, pay, sorting out the UDM, attacks by British Coal on our working conditions, and the sacked men, both candidates have given the stock vague answers. They are in favour of re-instatement, unity in the mining unions, preserving conditions, saving jobs, etc, but unfortunately neither candidate says how any of this will be done. In fact Thompson went as far as to say during an election meeting at Hatfield Main that "the sacked miners' issue was lost the day the strike finished". If that is the case then we had better all stop campaigning and tell all the sacked lads to get used to signing on for the rest of their lives.

For both candidates the solution to the problems miners face is to elect a Labour Government. Both are convinced that labour will win the next general election, but neither say anything about how they will force a Labour government to stand up for miner's and other worker's interests. If the Tories get in again, well god knows what they think we ought to do.

What is certain is that neither Clarke or Thompson are in favour of organising the rank and file of the union, or trying to lead a militant fightback against the Boards attacks.

**RED MINER** is calling for a vote for Eric Lippitt, a sacked miner from the Midlands Area. Eric is standing openly as a candidate of the rank and file, in

opposition to those in the leadership who are back-peddalling, and in defence of the traditions of the great strike. He is for the reinstatement of all sacked men and the release of all miners imprisoned as a result of their activities in the strike.

He regarded the Executive's refusal to give a recommendation on how to vote to the delegate conference that ended the strike as an abdication of leadership. Eric is in favour of a campaign to rebuild the union's strength through a fight for the full wage claim. He is for demanding of a Labour government the repeal of all the anti-union laws, for legislation to reimburse all the NUM funds lost in the strike. Lippitt is also in favour of waging a campaign against the UDM, and argues that they must be kept out of all conciliation bodies. He is for resistance to the pit closure programme.

Thus far in the election campaign the big regional machines have weighted the votes in favour of Clarke and Thompson. Rank and file miners must resist the propaganda and look to the policies which the candidates are putting forward. Only Lippitt reflects in any way the militancy and determination which exists amongst rank and file NUM members. A vote for Lippitt is a vote against the right wing drift in the leadership of our union.

VOTE LIPPITT

## MARGAM

Just what exactly do the South Wales Area Executive think they are going to gain by crawling on their belly to British Coal? And what exactly do they think the result of their actions will be on the National Union of Mineworkers, and on miners in other areas.

Conditions which miners won in the first ten years of this century are to be sold for the promise of 900 jobs in the new Margam colliery. If the Board manage to introduce a compulsory 9 hour shift and a compulsory 6 day week at Margam it will give them a green light to introduce it in other areas.

There is a lot of talk of future privatisation if the Tories win another term, Duffield's argument is that the Boards terms must be accepted in order to save the Margam development from going into private hands. What absolute rubbish! British Coal are trying to re-introduce 19th century working practices in order to make the industry appealing to the sharks in the City of London. Acceptance of British Coal's conditions will actually make privatisation more likely.

Arthur Scargill recently stated, "We want the Margam development and we want it desperately. But we don't want to be blackmailed into unfair practices". RED MINER also wants to see more jobs but we realise that the South Wales NUM's acceptance of this deal will weaken the union and probably mean less jobs throughout the nation as a whole.

## WORKERS CONTROL

The way we should be introducing more jobs is with a shorter working week, not a longer one. That however involves a fight something our leaders seem less and less likely to lead. Without a fight the prospect is 19th century conditions, privatisation, and job cuts.

Elsewhere in this issue there is an article on nationalisation and workers control, the struggle for new jobs is inseparably linked to that fight for workers control of the industry, for without workers control we are forever at the mercy of governments and banks whose master is profit.

That fight for workers control takes us forward on the road to the removal of their stinking system and it's replacement with one where production is geared to the needs of working people. That is the goal of RED MINER, we ask you to make it yours.

# REGIONAL ROUND-UP

## N. DERBYSHIRE

The new bonus scheme still dominates the area. Three pits were chosen, at first, for a trial period on the new scheme, Highmoor, Renishaw Park and Shirebrook. This has now been extended for another month and all the pits in the area are on a trial basis.

The Board and our own Area officials have been falling over backwards to push this through with the least resistance. NUM Area President A. Fairest has played a disgusting role in dangling the carrot to the membership, going round the area speaking at pits in favour of this scheme.

The introduction of a new range of incentive schemes at pits is to offer contracts to small teams in any part of the mine not just at the face, and to replace pay bargaining at National level. This will help to hasten the changes outlined in the Wheeler report. No doubt some men will be better off on this new scheme, but the purpose of these schemes is to divide our members to get pit against pit, face against face, inbye against outbye and the surface. The unity of the union is at stake - don't let the carrot fool you.

Opposition to this new scheme which is not unlike the Doncaster option has been growing. Warsop and Renishaw Park voting against it at recent branch meetings.

Recently a few NUM students were brought before a kangaroo court in front of our four area officials to the charge of having subversive elements in their group.

In a disgusting show of bullying tactics even to the extent of one official offering a student outside (probably to hit him with the new realism stick), the officials would not or could not substantiate their allegations of talk amongst the group that the officials were selling the membership out, splitting the union and of our Area President going over to the other side (the Coal Board) Given their involvement in trying to get the new bonus scheme through and of the Area President's disgusting role (some would say he is already on managements books) the rank and file have the right to oppose them on their stand on this or any other matter concerning them.

The rank and file are the union, officials are the servants of that union, not the masters!

## F.S.V.'s AND DIESEL FUMES.

The Board's introduction of Free steered vehicles at an increased rate in this area and the coalfield as a whole, should show our members the increasing attacks by the Board on the Health and Safety regulations at pits. The MINERS UNION OF AMERICA have won a seven year campaign to ban all diesel trackless vehicles in underground union mines because they believe that the fumes can cause cancer.

## NORTH EAST

The first in a series of meetings organised by the Durham NUM, inviting leading trade union and political figures was launched on the 7th February by Arthur Scargill. He spoke on the current state of the NUM and the industry to a lively meeting of over 400 miners from the Durham area.

Scargill didn't confine his remarks to the state and tasks of the NUM but he did point out that the Coal Board were still on the offensive and that since the strike 51 pits had closed or merged and that 56,300 jobs had been lost.

*"By any stretch of the imagination our industry has been savaged by the Tory government's monetarist policy."*

The whole sentiment of his speech was on the need to fight back and not give in to the Tories or the Coal Board. His remarks were pointed and especially relevant given that the meeting was held in the shadow of the sell out of the printworkers strike by Dean and Dubbins. He said,

*"It is not my responsibility to make detailed comments about what other unions have done (ie SOGAT AND NGA) but if other trade unionists continue to expose the view that a sequestration of claims for damages means that the working class cannot continue, then they are raising the flag of surrender to those who oppose us"*

P.T.O. →



He went on to talk about the anti union laws, pointing out that he was still in contempt of court - he said;

*"They can take our money, they can take our cars but for Christ's sake, they cannot take basic trade unionism from us."*

They certainly seem to have taken it from some notable TU leaders. It is important that we comment and condemn them when they sell their members out or scab on other workers like the BETPU did.

*"not all leaders are prepared to compromise, to collaborate or prostitute principles when it comes to the position where you have to stand up and fight. The trade unions are going to resist and if that means defying the law then so be it because without that defiance there isn't any one of you who would be here today"*

After talking about the nature of the Coal Board's attack on the wages claim, pension rights etc. he outlined a strategy for fightback.

*"Faced with threats of conciliation, the Wheeler plan, 6 day week, what can we do? I'm told to go and negotiate and if that means putting our case forward logically OK - but it isn't about logic or fairness"...."There comes a time for men and women to say enough is enough. I'm prepared to say either by limited action or overtime bans or whatever it takes - we must force the Coal Board to negotiate."...*

*"I am pleased Durham NUM agreed and imposed the OVERTIME ban and selective strikes and that Wales and Yorkshire agreed the same. After action by miners the Coal Board are prepared to negotiate."*

Reflecting his isolated position on the NUM executive Scargill outlined his call for what he described as a rank and file conference.

*"We need more accountability in this union. I go to lots of conferences and only see full time officials. I want to see more rank and file members."*

This is certainly to be supported and we must push forward on this one but also push Scargill further than he is going at the moment. Demand that he mobilise those who support such extensions of democracy in the NUM into a rank and file movement which can hold the union leaders to account.



## WARWICKSHIRE

### DAW MILL

At Daw Mill the rumour is that many more are about to desert the UDM and return to the NUM branch. Meanwhile Dick Emery arch scab and UDM organiser is saying he will definitely stand against the Labour candidate in the next General Election as an attempt at blackmail. This follows the refusal of the prospective Labour candidate to meet with the UDM.

### COVENTRY COLLIERY

As we reported in the last Red Miner an otherwise promising one-day strike by the power group at Coventry Colliery was marred when NUM lodge president Barry Daynes crossed the picket line. He has refused to resign saying he "played it by the book" and the region is going along with this. The members require a 4/5ths majority to make him stand down and this is not likely. Why not just a simple majority? If this is playing it by the book isn't it time rank and file NUM members wrote another one.....

The workforce at the colliery have been individually sent plates to commemorate 1m tonnes produced in the year up to 11.2.87. On the back is a promise for a 1,750 workforce and increased investment in the pit if this is maintained. Over 1500 of these limited edition plates have been bought by the management and posted out to homes at a cost of £1.70 for the postage alone. Is this to hang alongside the plates mugs and badges from the strike? There's even a wire plate hanger enclosed so you can proudly display it in your living room! Too bad...the sacked lads aren't getting plates. They could always have used it to feed the dog, if that isn't an insult to the dog.

# SOUTH WALES

As predicted in the last issue of Red Miner, British Coal have finally given the go-ahead for the £90m Margam development in West Glamorgan. However the strings attached to the deal are an attempt to blackmail the NUM into accepting a longer working week. The history of the on-off saga of the Margam super-pit, together with the issues raised by British Coal's conditions, are covered in a separate article in this bulletin.

## JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

Following a failed attempt last year, a South Wales branch of the National Justice for Miners Campaign was set up at a meeting in Pontypridd in mid February. Although not widely advertised by the South Wales NUM, the meeting still attracted around 30 miners, miners wives and supporters. The chair of the meeting appointed by the SW executive, was careful not to allow any political debate, most of the time was spent discussing ways of raising money for the sacked and jailed lads and their families. Obviously this was very important, but it cannot be separated from how we campaign for their release and reinstatement ie. the political basis of how we achieve success.

Real debate on the politics of the campaign was stifled on the basis that "we all agreed" with the aims of the National Campaign - however these aims are extremely ambiguous. According to some of the lodge officials the politics will be discussed at some later date ie. never!

In an attempt to base the campaign on solid foundations Workers Power/Red Miner supporters put a resolution calling on the South Wales branch to "campaign for the following;

1. The release of all jailed miners.
2. The reinstatement of all sacked miners.
3. Reimbursement of all NUM funds.
4. Full compensation for all victimised miners and their families.

This campaign to be waged vigorously at all levels of the labour movement, but particularly in the lodges, union branches and Labour Party wards ie. amongst the rank and file."

This attempt to give the campaign a political basis and develop it from the narrow focus on money raising and its subordination to the SW executive, was ruled out of order...no reason given.

However, despite the weaknesses of the South Wales Campaign, the forces exist for an active campaign by the militant minority who are still willing to fight for their victimised colleagues. Workers Power supporters are committed to building the

campaign in the coming months, on the basis of the above policies, and urge all those who agree to do the same. We owe the sacked and jailed lads nothing less.

## LABOUR PARTY WITCH-HUNT

Disciplinary proceedings are now ready to go ahead against Ian Isaac, former lodge secretary of the St. John's colliery (now closed) His constituency Labour Party, Ogmore, has voted 41-4 to forward, because of a report concerning his alleged support of the Militant tendency, to the LP's new witch-hunting body, the National Constitutional Committee. Given its built in right wing majority the NCC is virtually certain to expel Ian.

Ian was a leading figure in the fight to save St. John's from closure. His case against expulsion must be taken up throughout the South Wales Labour Movement, Ogmore CLP, and it's ultra right MP Ray Power, must not be allowed to get away with expelling socialists like Ian Isaac, if they are successful his expulsion will be the green light for other right wing CLPs to do likewise.

# YORKSHIRE

So far this year we have seen plenty of evidence of a fight back against the Board in the Yorks. area with a major strike from the Selby area. The week long strike started after a full week's bonus was docked after miners walked out at Whitmoor when a top Board official was on a visit. Management refused to negotiate and challenged the union to bring all the 5 pits out. £1.5m later.....

## VICE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Sammy Thompson's campaign to secure the Yorks. vote has been totally uninspiring, with his main plank being the fact he is a Yorkshireman. Few have turned out to hear him speak. For Red Miner's arguments why to vote for Eric Lippitt see editorial comment.

Scargill Speaking at one of these pre-election meetings at Brodsworth Welfare with Sammy Thompson, the day after the South Wales decision to accept 6 day working for the new Margam pit, Scargill made it clear that they had gone against the rules of the union. No area can take a decision on working practices that so obviously affects the rest of the areas without a national decision. There will be a national delegate conference called to try and get them to change their minds. If these shifts are worked more not less jobs will be lost he told the meeting. It is precisely these changes the Board want in exchange for pay this time round ie. the 6 day week, the 9 hour day, increased productivity. Scargill said he was not prepared to negotiate these things away.

# MARGAM: DUTFIELD SELLS OUT!

British Coal have finally decided to proceed with the long-promised South Wales 'superpit' at Margam in West Glamorgan. However, the strings attached to the deal, that of a 6-day week, have been rightly condemned by Scargill as "unacceptable blackmail". He added, "What we want to see is a reduction in the working week from five to four days with no increase in the hours worked per day."

## BACKGROUND.

The history of the Margam development has been a long and bitter one. South Wales miners leaders have regularly promised a new mine at Margam ever since the results of the first test bores in 1954, which discovered top quality coking coal deposits of over 200 million tons. At that time the NCB gave the 'economic climate' as the reason for not going ahead. Twenty years later with the 1974 'Plan for Coal' Margam was revived again as coal exploration throughout Britain rapidly expanded. By 1979 the Coal Board in South Wales decided a new mine should be developed; costing £200m, producing 1.2m tons of coal a year and employing 1,070 miners. The economic recession at that time, including the reduction in capacity of British Steel's Port Talbot and Llanwern works - the main intended market for Margam, again caused postponement of the project.

In 1984 the NCB produced another plan, this time for a low cost drift mine employing 650 men and producing 700,000 tons a year. This was the investment used by the NCB to try and bribe S.Wales miners back to work during the strike. Needless to say, at the end of the strike, Margam again disappeared from view.

Following the drastic closure programme in the coalfield, the Area Director prepared a third version of the Margam project, this time an £90 m. development producing 1.2m tons per year and employing 780 miners. This is the development now on offer to the NUM. It would provide work for an additional 1000 people during its 4½ year construction period. British Coal is looking for a massive productivity rate of 7.5 tons/manshift when full production is underway. They claim that only such a rate, achieved through a 6 day working week, could make the coking coal produced 'economic' compared to the costs of current imports.

British Coal have cynically tried to use the understandable desire of the S.Wales

NUM leaders for Margam, to try and introduce a longer working week of 6 days. At the same time the CB bosses hope to cause a division in the NUM over the issue. South Wales President Des Dutfield complained that Scargill should have kept his mouth shut until after local talks with British Coal. The discussion about Margam at the Feb. NEC meeting was apparently a stormy affair. It came to no decision although it vetoed local talks with management.

Since then the S.W executive recommended acceptance of the offer to the special delegate conference. (7/3/87). With Dutfield saying that the Margam project would go ahead even if the national NUM refused to co-operate. He said the 6 day working would not lead to increased hours. The Board have been keen to support him - for them a S.W. acceptance would be sufficient. The delegate meeting has in fact agreed to accept the deal.

## NATIONAL ISSUE

Because of the fundamentally new working practices involved, this is clearly an issue for the union at national level. Already Haslam has said he wants 6-day working at all the new mines and has named developments in Warwickshire, Yorkshire and Leicestershire that won't be started without it. The S.Wales decision has opened the door to further encroachment of working conditions in all pits and is an important step for them towards future privatisation of the coal industry.

## SHORTER WORKING WEEK.

The NUM are committed to a campaign for a reduction of the working week to four days, together with a 6 hour day. With the rapid introduction of new technology into the pits these demands take on a new urgency if we are to defend conditions and jobs. If implemented they would lead to the hiring of new workers as well as benefitting those already in the industry. See page 2 for editorial comment.



# Campaign For Trade Union Sanctions

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## WHAT IS THE CAMPAIGN FOR TRADE UNION SANCTIONS AGAINST APARTHEID?

CTUSAA began in July 1986 when a dozen trade union branches came together, prompted by a call from Birmingham Trades Council to lobby the July meeting of the TUC.

The lobby demanded that the TUC fight for a campaign for workers sanctions against Southern Africa. We recognised the fact that the Tory government would oppose to the death any imposition of effective sanctions out of naked financial interests — far too much profit is made by British financial interests in Southern Africa, through the exploitation of black workers.

We also recognised the fact that the most effective sanctions would be those imposed by workers in the most highly organised sections of the British working class — dockers, seamen, airline workers, transport and communications workers.

We demanded that the TUC campaign vigorously amongst workers to support them and encourage them in imposing boycotts, such as those carried out by San Francisco longshoremen in 1984 and 1986, the Dunnes strikers in Dublin, NUPE health workers in Portsmouth, and members of the Civil Service unions.

We felt it opportune by the fact that Ron Todd and Norman Willis had just returned from a 'fact finding' mission to South Africa.

After the first lobby, a meeting was held in a nearby hall at which it was decided that the campaign should continue its pressure with a lobby and fringe meeting at the TUC conference in September.

Despite having to mobilise for the activities around the TUC conference during August, when many trade unions do not meet a further dozen labour movement organisations joined the campaign.

During the course of building support for the lobby,

a meeting of the organisers was held in Birmingham at which it was agreed to convene a recall meeting to ascertain the level of support from trade union branches for a national campaign for workers sanctions.

We felt that there was a real need for some kind of organisation which could work to co-ordinate and extend the hundreds of actions already taking place on the individual initiatives of workers, as well as pressuring our trade union leaders to do the job they were elected for.

The conference was held on December 13th 1986. 59 different labour movement organisations sent delegates. Catherine O'Reilly from the Dunnes Store strikers spoke of the necessity not to wait for Thatcher, or the TUC or for somebody else to take action, but for workers to make the decision now to carry out sanctions.

A number of decisions were taken at the conference, one to organise a speaking tour of one of the San Francisco longshoremen who successfully set up picket lines and demonstrations to prevent the unloading of South African cargoes.

It was also decided to issue a regular newsletter to co-ordinate boycotting activities, to inform and encourage workers by telling them of other actions being taken. The aim is to change the picture from that of individual isolated actions, to actions as part of a national campaign, and to give workers the opportunity of getting information of company's links with South Africa.

We would like to encourage contributions from all workers, with news about their activities in relation to Southern Africa.

We would also like to say to all workers, as Catherine O'Reilly said to us, **now is the time to act.**

THIS IS THE FRONT PAGE OF THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR TRADE UNION SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA. WE ARE ASKING ALL RED NINE READERS TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN AND SUBSCRIBE TO THE NEWSLETTER. FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THIS IMPORTANT CAMPAIGN WILL BE REPORTED IN SUBSEQUENT ISSUES OF RED NINE.



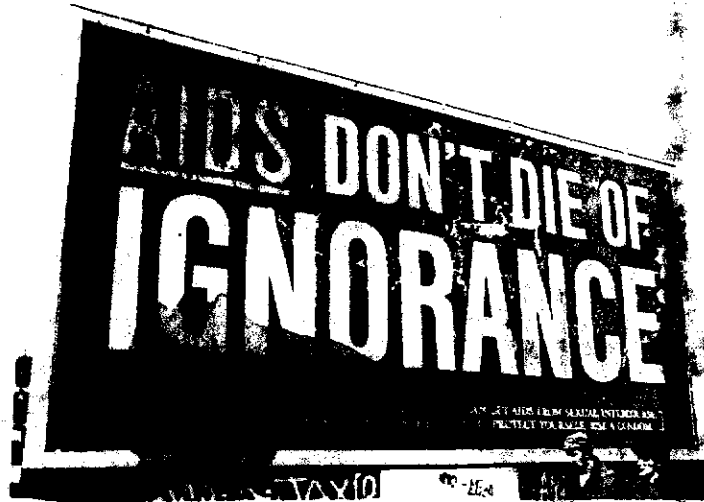
# AIDS: TORIES MORAL REACTION

Having watched AIDS week on the telly I now know how to put a condom on a plaster penis. That was the only light relief from a week where the overwhelming message was, less sex, and less homosexuality. AIDS week while slightly more subtle than last month's raid on a gay pub in London by a posse of MET officers wearing rubber gloves was based on the same reactionary morality.

Ever since AIDS emerged on a major scale the bosses press have been vociferous in calling it a "gay plague", the government for the past four years has been largely indifferent to what they regarded as a gay-only disease. Now that it is clear that heterosexual people can also catch the disease the government has decided to spend some money on AIDS prevention.

The Tories have made much of the fact that they have spent £20 million on AIDS. But of that £20 million most is to go on advertising and preventative health education. Research into the causes of the disease and finding a cure is still massively underfunded. An article in February's New Scientist pointed out "if the world had not ignored the discovery of the AIDS virus, researchers might now be a year ahead in their fight to cure victims of AIDS".

The only winners from the Government's campaign are the advertising agencies such as Saatchi and Saatchi, the losers will be anyone who catches AIDS, and the homosexual community. Attacks on homosexuals by both the state and reactionary bigots have increased over the past year, fuelled by all the rubbish about AIDS which has been spewing from the television, newspapers and government.



Kinnocks press secretary sent out a letter after the Greenwich defeat which said "the gays and lesbian issue is costing us dear among the pensioners". What can this mean except that the Labour Leadership is buckling under the pressure from the bosses press.

We remember the support organisations such as "Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners" gave to us during the great strike it is up to us to now stand with them in resisting the reactionary drive that the government is sponsoring.

It is up to us to fight:  
For a massive expansion of the NHS budget and of AIDS research.  
For the nationalisation of the drug companies under workers control, so that we can direct research into finding a cure and not into making profit.  
For opposition to any moves to introduce compulsory screening.  
For articles in the Miner and regional NUH papers explaining what the disease really is and countering the moral backlash being whipped up by the Tories and media.

# TORIES COOK UP NEW ATTACKS

The Tories are preparing the great charade they intend Election '87 to be. They now claim a concern for the health service alongside the old recipe of new union bashing laws and sell-offs of state assets.

Thatcher needs to broaden her appeal beyond the 'greed and selfishness' brigade who do not form the majority of the electorate.

However with the Alliance having robbed Labour of at least 5-10% of its traditional vote and where the Alliance share of 20-25% is grossly under-represented, Thatcher stands a real chance of pulling off the treble.

## CAN THINGS GET WORSE?

Some argue that it doesn't matter believing that things couldn't get any worse. The truth is they can and with another lease of life from an election victory Thatcher will push on with new attacks.

Kenneth Clarke (Minister for Unemployment), has already outlined phase 4 of anti union laws.

1. These will hit the closed shop removing legal immunity from prosecution for any strikes in favour or in defence of a closed shop.
2. It will outlaw strikes in essential services.
3. They intend to remove a union's right to discipline or expel a member who scabs on a strike.
4. They are even going to set up a special fund to help individuals take their unions to court.
5. Last but not least they intend to extend the principles of bosses 'democracy' even further into the unions by outlawing workplace balloting. Not satisfied with preventing decisions being made at mass meetings, they want no possibility of workers being able to experience collective strength or hear the arguments from their own stewards or reps. Instead they want to impose postal ballots to give the press and the media a monopoly over what we hear.

All this so Thatcher can continue the shift in favour of the millionaires and their hangers on. Another way they intend to do this is to attack progressive taxation, that is tax that increases in %age terms the bigger your income...eg. income tax. The Tories plan to slash it, perhaps by half. But they intend to double VAT. This tax



makes every one, unemployed through to industrialists pay the same tax on their purchases. This shifts the tax burden more dramatically onto the backs of ordinary people.

Another wave of privatisations and carve-ups is inevitable if Thatcher wins again. British Coal is an obvious target with the profitable superpits being handed over to private owners and a new wave of closures mopping up the rest. The Post Office is also widely tipped for sell-off.

Thatcher is gambling on snatching a victory with a minority of the electorate again, giving her more seats than the other parties together. She will be out to "rid Britain of Socialism" - her declared life's ambition

After Labour's election disaster at Greenwich Labour voters may have given up hope that she can be stopped. All this showed, though, is that she won't be stopped by the methods of the Labour and trade union leaders. For them winning the election is the only way, and to do that they believe they have to woo the young middle class (yuppy) voter who voted Tory or Alliance last time. So Kinnock presents a package of second hand Alliance policies that will neither win the yuppies nor convince the potential working class Labour voters.

If Labour put forward a massive programme of re-employment and reconstruction it could mobilise the millions of unemployed, their friends and relatives from the vast areas of industrial destruction. But Labour dare not do this as it fears the answer to the question, who will pay. It dare not give the only answer - the rich, the capitalists whose system caused the misery and destruction in the first place.

Of course this answer won't guarantee election victory but it will mobilise millions of workers against the Tories and junior Tories in the Alliance.

This said, we have to fight for a Labour victory now for two reasons. Firstly, to block the Tories will cause, temporarily, some confusion for the bosses. And secondly and more importantly it puts Kinnock in the hot seat in front of the whole working class.

But the worst thing we could do is to try to get victory in Kinnock's way by holding back struggles and not rocking the boat. We must step up the resistance to the Tory and employer offensive.

The election campaign is an opportunity for militants to get across what the Tories have done and what they intend doing to the working class. We can show their policies are the product of a capitalist system that can't provide a decent life for the great majority of people. We can warn of the attacks to come and the need to fight them tooth and nail. We can show that Kinnock's answer is no answer and fight to build through struggle, a renewed movement, a new leadership and a new party that can put working class power and socialism on the agenda for millions. Then far from Thatcher wiping out socialism - socialism will wipe her, or her successor, out for good.

*We apologise for the absence  
of the article on workers control.  
Our post keeps going missing so  
if any reader knows anyone  
from special branch, can they ask  
them to send it on.*

#### WHO ARE THEY TRYING TO KID?

Coal News Miners in the Doncaster area have had a copy of the Coal News posted to them. Not just any old Coal News but a 'special'. The headline £10 a week is followed by news that the UDM are voting on accepting a deal based on the good old scab philosophy of stab your mate in the back! Apparently they can have a bonus every 3 months of all of £25 if they take 'no industrial action' and if their unit is free of such action they can collect another £25. They can get extra holiday cash if they have above a 92% attendance for surface workers and 90% for underground workers.....absences include sickness and injury! as well as..well yes you've guessed it in one strike action and unauthorised leave.

# workers power

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# WHAT IS GORBACHEV UP TO?

Since Gorbachev took over in the USSR he's hardly had a day out of our newspapers. Abroad, his arms concessions are pulling so much turf from under Reagan and Thatcher's feet they keep having to shift the goal post. At home he's moving even faster. One day we hear of political prisoners released; the next of KGB and Party hacks on trial for corruption. And while factory managers dazedly come to grips with having to make decisions independently of Moscow, *glaznost* - honesty - is the word on everyone's lips. What are Gorbachev and his allies up to? And just how far will they go?

We all know the Soviet Union is no workers paradise. For 60 of the past 70 years it has been a byword for totalitarianism and inefficiency, a place where the working class is deprived of all political power. A band of privileged upstarts holds tight control over every aspect of social and political life, at the same time excluding the wealth creators from any say in running the economy - just as our own capitalists do. It's tempting to point to this grotesque parody of socialism and say that nothing changes; that in Russia they have bosses and workers, and it's just like everywhere else.

Tempting, but inaccurate. For all their privileges and powers, for all they have as much reason to fear real socialism, the Russian rulers are a different kind of parasite from our own capitalist rulers. Not better, not worse; just different. But the difference is important. It contains the key to an understanding of Gorbachev's moves.

## RISE OF THE BUREAUCRACY

In 1917 the Russian working class seized state power. Over the next few years, despite the appalling problems posed by economic backwardness and western capitalism's military and economic efforts to throttle the project in its infancy, the Soviet state laid one of the two essential economic foundations for socialism. It nationalised all large industrial and commercial concerns as a step towards an economy no longer blindly driven by the pursuit of private



profit, but subject to planning in accordance with human needs.

At terrible human cost the new state survived blockade, rebellion, and foreign invasion. Capitalism remained overthrown. By the end of the Civil War socialism was on the agenda - though still a long way off for want of the other essential foundation, material plenty.

But the war-torn economy lay in ruins. In particular, agricultural and industrial production were dangerously unsynchronised, with the towns short of food and the countryside lacking machinery and fertilisers. The overriding need was to create a centralised administrative body equipped with far reaching powers to enable production to be harnessed to consumption. Thus was the bureaucracy born, in a time of great crisis. Led by Stalin it consolidated its grip on both the Bolshevik party and the nation at large. From 1928 to this day it has remained in the driving seat of the world's first workers state.

## CONTRADICTORY

But though it seems so secure, the bureaucracy occupies a contradictory and therefore instable position. On the one hand its sole reason for existence lies within the planned economy established after capitalism's demise. On the other hand it has no interest in utilising that economy as the basis for socialism, which would undermine all its privileges and powers. Forced to inhabit a no mans land between capitalism and socialism, incapable of going either backwards or forwards, the bureaucracy is ultimately doomed since history will not forever permit it to "run on the spot". But in the meantime the usurpers will manoeuvre as best they can. The key to Gorbachev's new broom approach - and to why it will not succeed - lies in the bureaucracy's equal fear of capitalism and socialism alike.

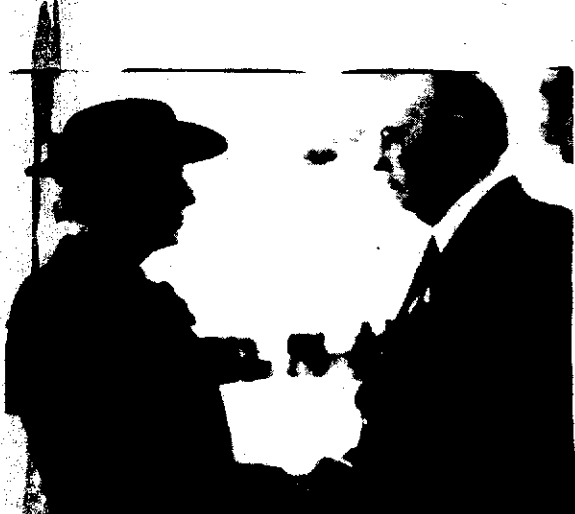


## INEFFICIENCY

Terrified of workers democracy, the bureaucracy cannot allow workers any say in economic planning. And terrified of capitalist revival, neither can it leave everything to market forces. The only remaining option is tightly centralised control from above. But the results of this are all too familiar: gigantic cock ups, shortfalls, absenteeism, sabotage and farcical quality control. And as industry grows necessarily more complex the problems only get worse.

The bureaucrats have two good reasons to fear this poor economic performance. First, if the material quality of life gets worse then the spectre of internal rebellion, Poland style, raises its head. Second, if the Soviet Union becomes too poor to keep pace with NATO's spending then there is the real risk of invasion from a western capitalism eager to open up her vast markets to private enterprise.

After decades of complacency under Brezhnev, the Soviet economy desperately needs revitalising. But if economic problems pose great dangers for the bureaucrats, so do the solutions available to Gorbachev.



## MARKET FORCES

The most important of these solutions is a controlled dose of Thatcherism. Some of the "chill wind of economic reality" is being allowed to blow through the cobwebbed economy. Managers now have discretion over the use of incentives in the workplace, and factories which meet their quota targets are being allowed to trade the surplus in the private market - outside as well as inside the USSR. Equally novel, factories which perform poorly are to be allowed to go to the wall. Unemployment, traditionally the one curse spared the Soviet working class, now has its part to play in fostering a sense of "realism"

But Gorbachev walks a tightrope. Methods which have served Thatcher nicely are a double edged sword for the bureaucrats. How long before the fear of a strong capitalist class emerging causes him to turn back, as it has recently caused his Chinese counterparts to do?

## ANTI CORRUPTION DRIVES

The Soviet press now regularly carries news of top officials fired, jailed or executed for crimes accepted as normal under Brezhnev. By exercising the surgeon's knife on the most blatant excesses - the fiddled expense accounts, the bribes, the old pal network - Gorbachev hopes to eliminate the stink of corruption that acts as a constant provocation to the masses.

Here again the path holds dangers. Every section of the bureaucracy is neck-deep in corruption. There have already been muted threats from factions who don't like the look of Gorbachev's crusade. Long before he can satisfy the people's desire for justice he will have gone too far for his Politbureau colleagues. They will oust him as they once ousted that other Young Turk, Khrushchev.

## GLAZNOST

The Soviet media is famed for its ingenuity in calling black white. But even here, honesty has become the order of the day. All sorts of previously suppressed news - of poor harvests and high infant mortality; of shoddy goods and services; of police "overzealousness" - is now appearing.

But when the sheer novelty of reading bad news wears off the questions will be asked: who is to blame, and why? Since these questions cannot be answered it is only a matter of time before Gorbachev - or his successor - puts an end to all this awkward, and quite futile, *glaznost*.

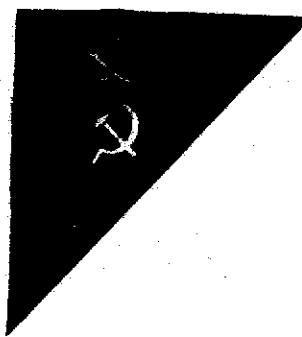
#### POLITICAL REVOLUTION

Gorbachev is clearly a man of courage and intelligence. But he is from, of and for the bureaucracy and so cannot escape its historic bankruptcy. Caught between the rock of socialist workers democracy and the hard place of capitalist restoration, he can only juggle things to buy more time. For all its desire to do so, the bureaucracy is ultimately incapable of defending the planned economy against the international forces of counter revolution. Only the working class, having nothing to fear from socialism, can summon the will to strengthen the Soviet economy. Only the working class, unhampered by the bureaucracy's other

"considerations", can take whatever steps are necessary for its defence.

But if this is to happen the Soviet workers have the preliminary task of recovering the fruits of their 1917 victory. The bureaucracy is doomed, but the cause of its demise is still uncertain. Will it be swept aside by a world capitalism so desperate for the USSR's immense natural wealth and markets - as temporary solution to its own contradictory and ultimately irresolvable problems - as to risk nuclear holocaust? Or will it be swept aside by a working class intent on doing away with the cancer which has for so long deformed the world's first and most powerful workers state?

Barbarism, or the building of socialism? Both possibilities lie in the balance. If this wasn't so then the Kremlin rulers, so deeply fearful of change, would never in a million years have given Gorbachev his head.



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28th MARCH 10:30am  
( For a fighting campaign against the coal bosses )  
CREDENTIALS £2:00 EACH**

# WHERE WE STAND

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## **Red Miner**

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

## **Workers' struggles**

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

## **Reformism**

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

## **Revolutionary Party**

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

## **Internationalism**

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

## **Divisions**

We fight all divisions in the working class. Divisions are fostered by the bosses to weaken us. We are implacably opposed to racism,

immigration controls, fascism, discrimination against and oppression of women, lesbians, gay men or black people.

## **The oppressed**

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

## **Workers' states**

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

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

## **Overthrow capitalism**

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

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