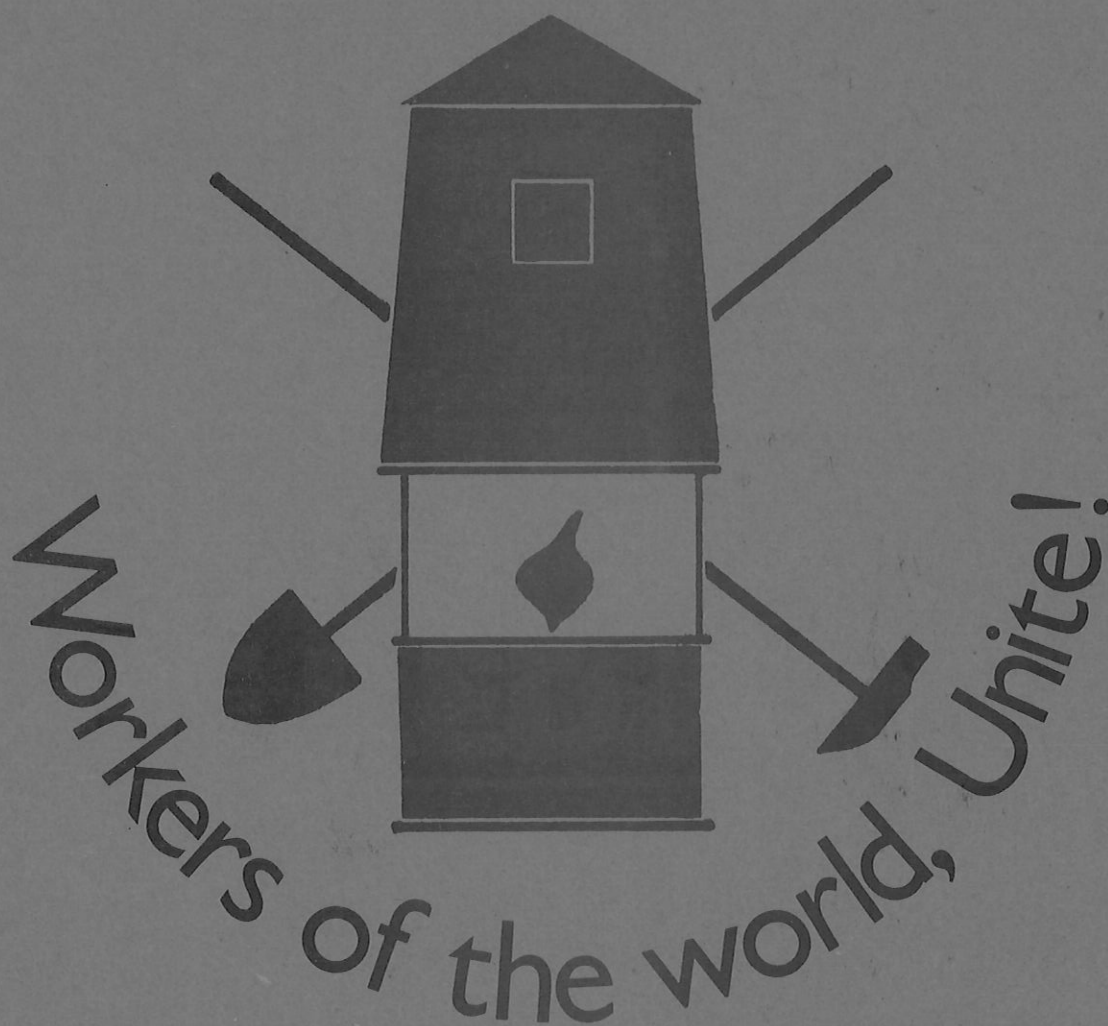


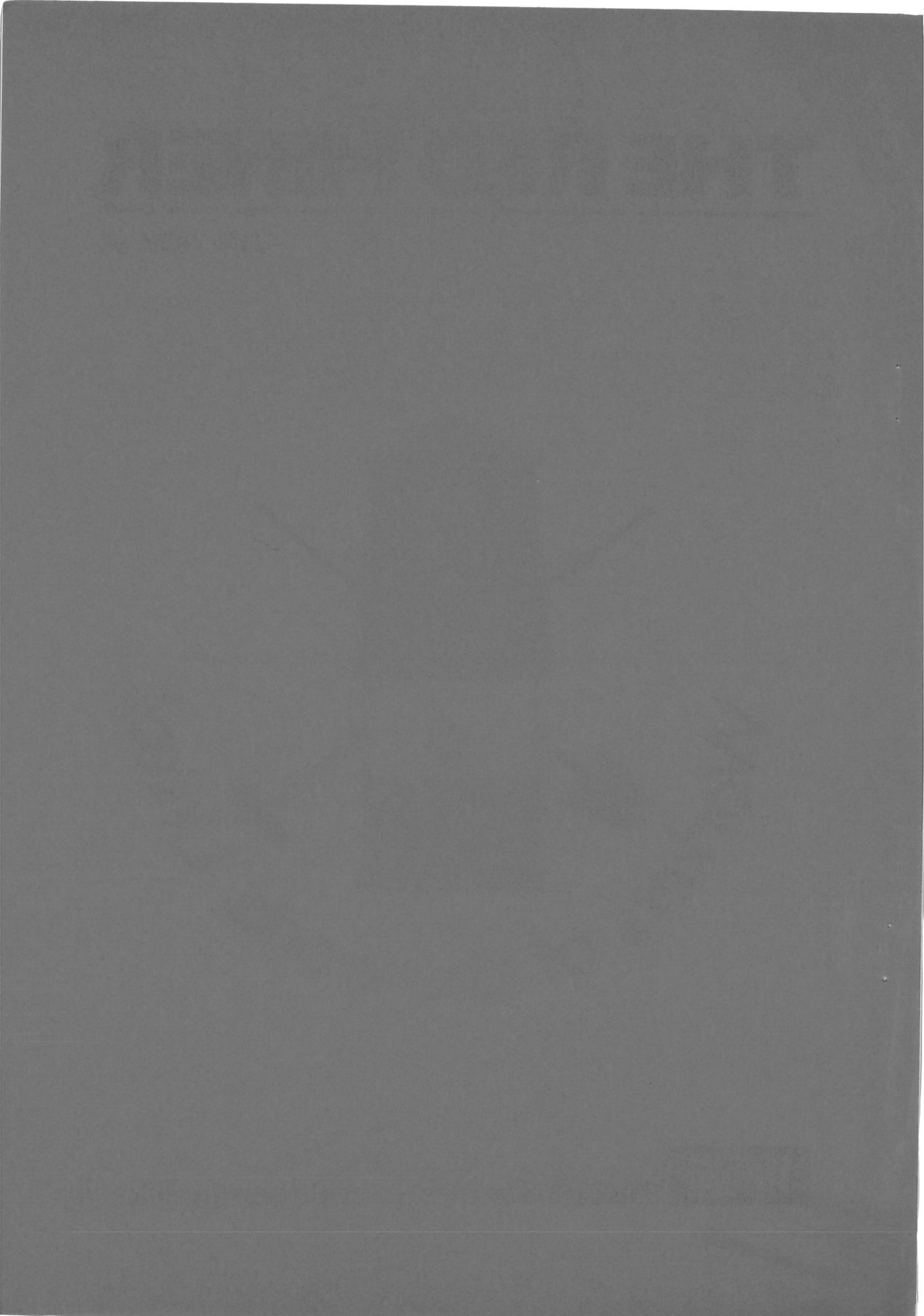
THE RED MINER

Nº5 NOV. 85



**workers
power**

Bulletin for miners and their families 10p





The institutions of British Justice are very dear to Neil Kinnock judging by his performance at Bournemouth, dearer by far than the hundreds of sacked and imprisoned miners. One element of British Justice especially dear to Neil is the English Common Law which he informs us allows a citizen to sue, for redress, the high and mighty of the land.

Of course there are a few dark spots on this beautiful picture that Neil doesn't tell us about. Like the need to have a spare few thousand quid to hire the lawyers. Of course if you are a scab - herder like Roy Lynk or Silver Birch then some rich toff out of the sheer goodness of his heart may help you out. When ' John Citizen ' approaches the bench of justice what will he find there? Will he find an impartial Solomon (that famous biblical judge) chosen by the people to dispense justice that is not class biased ? Ask any miner who was on strike ! Perhaps Neil's praise of the judges and the Common Law was a reversion to the days when he did the comic warm-up at the Conference Tribune Rally.

In reality the judges that ' interpreted ' the rules of the N.U.M. as they saw fit, who seized its funds, are members of the ruling class, selected by their own class and profession, unremovable, unanswerable to any democratic body. This glorious feature is known as " the independence of the judiciary ". They are certainly independent of the great majority of the people who have no say whatever in their appointment.

Kinnock is fond of saying that he is a democratic socialist. It is pretty clear he is no socialist but he's not much of a democrat either. His praise is of single unelected judges sitting without a jury and not even applying a statute passed by an elected parliament, simply interpreting a union's constitution in the light of his own innate class prejudices against the miners. How can

these people be regarded as having any moral influence , obliging obedience from the citizen!

As socialists we should know in addition how empty and hollow parliamentary democracy itself is when a few millionaires can churn out so much in the way of lies and distortion that even the once in five years ' democratic choice ' is rendered almost worthless.

Kinnock is desperate to cover up what hundreds of thousands saw clearly and millions sensed in the historic 12 months of the miners strike...that the law was class law. That there was and can be no impartial justice in the class war. That the police and the judges were by their very nature and function on Thatcher's side.

Many miners saw something else too - that Kinnock and his entourage were also on Thatcher's side when the chips were down. The reason is simple and he is cynically frank about it. His very job begins and ends with fooling the working class into believing that they can use the law and the state to carry out ' socialist policies ', reforms which can end the hell of rotting on the dole, of atrocious living conditions, of low wages and decaying social services. Kinnock's argument is that if we don't obey the law then how can we expect the bosses to do so when Lab Labour makes the laws.

There is a double lie in this argument. One - Kinnock, and Callaghan, Wilson, Gaitskell and Atlee before him have no intention whatsoever of implementing ' socialism ' - even in the sense of clause Four of Labour's Constitution. They have no intention of even moving towards an economy owned and controlled by the working people. Why ? Because they know perfectly well that as soon as they make a move to touch the profitable businesses, factories

and banks of the ruling class the democratic gloves would be off. In fact even to advocate a few serious partial measures such as Tony Benn did sets the bosses and their agents to work weakening and breaking up Labour, -using the mass media from without, and their many trusted agents from within the party's ranks.

Kinnock's answer to the bosses veto on socialist policies, and even on any serious reforms that might hit their profit levels, is to stigmatise these goals and reforms as lunatic and unrealistic. 'Realism' always sounds good. But you must always ask realistic for whom? To the unemployed, with no hope, no future, except increasing boredom, misery, and the temptation to alleviate it by petty crime or drugs? Is it realistic for Labour to give back the jobs Thatcher and Callaghan took away? Not at all. One million jobs in two years is the height of hattersley's expectations. And even this is realistic only providing there is no run on sterling, no dangerous increase in inflation, and above all else, providing workers in employment are prepared to keep their wages down.

Kinnock's 'realism' has nothing to do with the reality of working class lives or what we really need. It is Thatcher's and the bosses reality that he wants to force us to accept.

If you can't get vital reforms through electing Kinnock to Number 10, then what price socialism? The miners experience showed clearly that even trying to hold on to our jobs can get thousands of us arrested, our homes smashed up, our communities invaded, and hundreds imprisoned and sacked by the real core of the capitalist state, the police, the judiciary, and the bureaucrats in Whitehall. A Labour majority sitting in Westminster could never win this machinery, these top civil servants, these judges and police chiefs- let alone the general staff of the army- into promoters and defenders of socialism and workers rights, even if they wanted to. And Kinnock, it is plain, does not want to.

Capitalism's vicious anarchy has become painfully obvious to millions again in the late 1970's and the 1980's. The necessity of an economy planned to meet

human need, and able to draw on everyone's capacity for useful work has never been more sharply posed. The 'Democratic Socialists' have to persecute and witch-hunt, not only Marxists and communists who point this out, but also stab in the back any workers bold enough to fight back. Especially if the police are 'provoked' into clubbing them down.



Kinnock is desperate that workers should not realise that the "democratic" (meaning parliamentary & electoral) road to socialism is a blind alley. It may get a few hundred MP's good jobs. It may get Neil Kinnock 5 or 10 years running the bosses state for them - attacking the working class as Wilson & Callaghan did - but it will never achieve socialism.

For that we need a different road, a different sort of party and different leaders - a revolutionary road based on class struggle, a revolutionary party willing to see every fight through, and revolutionary working class leaders who will not flinch from defending their class against every attack the bosses launch. This is the road, the party and the leadership that RED MINER stands for.

REGIONAL ROUND-UP

SOUTH WALES

Arthur Scargill's claim that the Great Strike was a victory for the N.U.M. rings very hollow in South Wales at the moment. Amid general demoralisation and confusion, the N.C.B. has been panicking miners into accepting redundancy so they can qualify for unemployment benefit next year. Following the closure of Bedwas and Treforgan soon after the strike, in recent weeks Celynen South, Markham, Aberpergwm, Abertillery and Penrhiwceiber have all been shut or accepted closure.

To date around 4,000 jobs have been lost out of a workforce of 18,500 in March. Other pits are threatened but only Mardy, and St. John's colliery Maesteg, are continuing to fight closure - though it would seem that even a public enquiry finding in its favour will not save St. John's. The result of the review procedure is expected soon.

Penrhiwceiber perhaps sums up the overall situation in the coalfield at present. An historically militant pit (with no scabs during the strike), it was seen by many militants as a focus for a fightback against closures in South Wales. However, after voting to oppose closure in August, the vote has recently been overturned and the pit will close in the next few weeks with the loss of 520 jobs.

The South Wales Executive has finally been forced to accept that the so-called "deal" struck with the N.C.B. at the end of the strike is worthless. In response they have belatedly called a Coalfield Delegate Conference to start a campaign against further pit closures. A classic case of too little too late.

There is clearly an urgent need in South Wales to build a militant rank and file movement in the N.U.M. to counter despondency and misleadership. Following a recent tour of the coalfield by the N.R.F.M.M. links have been established and these must now be built upon. There is still a



willingness to fight, as has been shown at Nantgarn where, at the time of going to press, the 600 men have been on strike for a week in protest at hardline management attitudes.

Stop Press : Mardy voted unanimously on 6th October to fight its planned closure!

STAFFORDSHIRE

Five Hem Heath miners now released from jail have been refused their jobs back. The manager tried to justify this by claiming "they came out of prison too early" and that "there was feeling against them" at the pit. Since when did the N.C.B. sense any feeling from miners! Just over a couple of months ago Hem Heath miners showed their feelings for the transfer of 16 Yorkshire scabs to their pit by holding a day of strike action. Pickets achieved a 75% turn back - of course the manager conveniently ignored the feelings of the men!

Meanwhile the campaign to win the sacked lads' reinstatement goes on. A petition is being organised around the pit and days of action are being considered.

Five scabs are still suspended from the union despite the Midlands Executive's disgraceful opposition to this. Needless to say, the Yorkshire scabs are not being allowed in the union.

Woolstanton's closure has been announced. The prospect of a fight to stop the closure looks bleak. Doubtless the N.C.B. will be encouraged by this and

proceed to the butchery of Holditch - where next?

WARWICKSHIRE

Readers will remember Red Miner's (no.4) account of Daw Mill's scabby history and its vote to breakaway from the N.U.M. Well.....hold on.....since then they have been on strike! Why? The belt was not moving fast enough - therefore they were not making the bonuses they thought. We now know how to bring the bastards out! Stop the belt!

At Keresley the belt was stopped for better reasons. Recently a highly successful 24 hour strike was held in support of reinstating all the sacked miners from the pit. Only a handful of scabs went in out of 1400 men. But the management were not impressed and the sacked men stay sacked, although 5 of them were said by and industrial tribunal to have been unfairly dismissed.

A recent joint meeting between the NUM and power group discussed what further action to take. They decided to call a ballot for an overtime ban and the stopping of split shifts to make the ban more effective. This seems a strange course of action given the strength of the one-day strike. About 20%- 30% of the workforce work overtime, so it will take some time to affect production, and meantime will management really be pressurised by this?

However, some militants see that it is important to build up the confidence of the workforce gradually, taking every new step after secret pit-head ballots as stated in the new union rules. But arguments had at branch meetings are probably forgotten by the time voting comes around. Voting should follow discussion at mass meetings, preferably in worktime.



But some of the sacked men are becoming dependant as their solicitor has advised them to appeal to the House of Lords, and then (in 5 years time?) their case may come before the European Court of Human Rights. If this is their only hope then some will be tempted to take the compensation money and give up the fight in the union. But as one NUM member says, "We mustn't let this rest, even if there are only 2 men prepared to fight for the reinstatement of the sacked lads. We must press on."

Coordinated strike action should be built up locally and nationally. A fighting union is needed to get the jobs back and stop the increasing round of demoralised pit closures. If the union leadership will not do this, the rank and file must show the way.

DURHAM

Forty-two mines, all members of Sacriston Lodge were sacked from a number of private mines for refusing to cross NUM picket lines during the strike. Along with blackleg labour, four men from Bearpark Colliery who have taken redundancy money are being used to replace the sacked men. As one sacked miner said, "The way we have been treated is a sign of the way private owners behave towards trade unionists." Those miners who work for the NCB should be wary. They could be receiving the same treatment if this government goes ahead with its intention to privatise the pits.

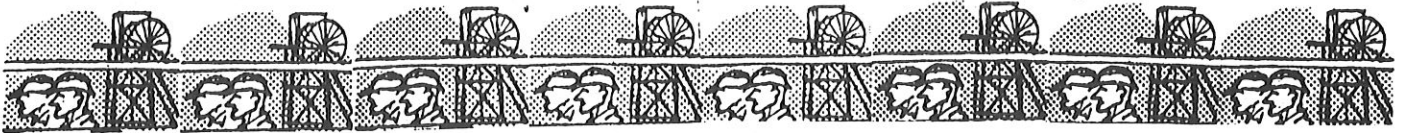
NORTH DERBYSHIRE

A police visit to Ireland Colliery was met with a 24-hour strike as an appropriate greeting. If management thought they could ~~rb~~ our noses in pig shit - well, they couldn't have been more wrong!

SCOTLAND

The so-called review of sacked miners in the Scottish area makes disturbing reading. Many men say their interviews with management have turned out more like an inquisition. Tales abound of miners being grilled on their political views and opinions about the Royal family!

ISSUES IN THE UNION



PIT CLOSURES : AND THEN THERE WERE....?

Everyone expected it. Everyone feared it. And on September 24th the NCB's Technical Director, Ken Moses, finally confirmed it: "Through the next five years we are hoping to stabilise the industry at a production level of 90 million tonnes".

Or, put less delicately, the NCB wants to cut annual capacity by around 10 million tonnes. Inevitably this means yet more pit closures. We've already lost some 40 pits since March last year. But the Board's latest bombshell means that at least another 50 pits and 50,000 jobs could go.

Just to put the icing on the cake, the Board also announced that its subsidiary, National Smokeless Fuels, was living on 'borrowed money' and that the 4,000 plus NSF workers could also expect to feel the butcher's knife.

The NCB will hit hard and fast. The present NCB caretaker, MacGregor, indicated to the industry journal "International Coal Report", that most of the proposed cut would be implemented by March '87 when the Board's current subsidies from the government expire.

Of course, the pits that will be closed are those Moses bluntly called 'hopeless cases' - those pits which can't get production costs down to £39 a tonne (or less) over the next 18 months. The axe is likely to fall hardest in areas like South Wales, Kent and Scotland where most pits don't stand a cat in hell's chance of reaching the £39 a tonne target. But no area is going to escape unscathed. By the end of the decade the Board wants the industry "slimmed down" to 100,000 men, with production concentrated in a handful of "super pits", mostly in the central English coalfield.

If the Board gets its way, these super pits will then be privatised. The Board said as much on September 24th when it declared that it had no long term plan for the industry any more. After all, what is the use of a long term plan for the industry if you're aiming to sell off the remaining pits?

Anyway, privatisation is clearly the aim of the Tories and their class whose interests the Board has always represented and implemented. The day after the NCB announced its proposals, the Tory 'think-tank', the Centre for Policy Studies, published a document entitled "Put Pits into Profit". Not surprisingly,

this document also calls for a reduction in output and manpower in the industry. But obligingly, it sets out some of the details the NCB 'forgot' to mention...ie.

- i) wholesale privatisation of the pits
- ii) the lifting of restrictions on private operators and on the licencing of opencast mines
- iii) the ending of government subsidies to the industry.

Make no mistake about it, the "Put Pits into Profit" document is the Tory/NCB blueprint for the industry. If it was ever to be realised, those 'lucky' enough to be left in the industry would find themselves under a ruthless private capitalist regime in the pits - just like the days of the old coal owners.

This must never be allowed to happen. But the only way we can be sure of defeating the butchering and privatisation of the industry is fighting to place the pits under workers control. Now - before it's too late.

BRITAIN—IRELAND'S ENEMY WITHIN

Northern Ireland is rarely, if ever, out of the news. Consider the last 12 months. There was the Brighton hotel bomb last year. This year Leon Brittan has stopped us seeing a programme on Ireland on television. The reason? It showed an interview with Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness. Most miners will need little introduction to Leon Brittan, Home Office supremo in charge of the policing operations against NUM strikers. But despite the fact that most miners, like all Irish Republicans, hate the Tories, most miners do not regard their "enemy's enemy as their friend", as the old saying goes. Most miners do not support the Republican cause, let alone the IRA. The Tories and past Labour governments, have gone to great lengths to develop and maintain anti-Republican feelings amongst British workers. At the same time they have developed repressive laws to crush the Irish Republicans and harass their supporters in Britain. The Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984 allows for constant harassment of Irish activists in the Six Counties and in Britain. Thatcher has banned Sinn Fein members from putting their case here personally. Over the last ten years over 4,500 people have been arrested and detained. Less than 10% have been charged. While Sinn Fein and the IRA are not allowed access to put their views across, the Tories and their hired journalists fill the pages of the gutter press with lies and slander about Irish Republicans.

The three main questions that British workers must ask are: Isn't the trouble in Northern Ireland simply a religious feud? Aren't the British troops generally doing a necessary, if thankless, task in keeping the Protestants and Catholics apart? Whatever their grievance doesn't the use of bombs to kill innocent people make the IRA out as a bunch of mindless criminals? Let us answer them.

RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL?

Protestants and Catholics live side by side in many parts of the world. But why, in the Six Counties, is there such bitterness and violence? The answer lies in the economic structure and social history of Northern Ireland. Over 800 years ago Henry II invaded

Ireland to steal the land of the native Irish. Resistance over the next few hundred years was savagely put down. Protestantism the dominant religion in Britain was used as a way of stabilising English rule. Scottish protestants were settled as farmers in the North East of Ireland. In just 60 years, up to 1700, the Catholics' 60% share of the land plummeted to 14%. In the nineteenth century the Protestants' privileges were extended but took a different form. The growth of the textile, shipping and engineering industries occurred in the North East. The vast majority of employers were Protestants loyal to the English monarch and tied politically to the Tory Party. The bulk of the skilled workers were Protestant too. This state of affairs persists up to the present. In all industries hit hard by the recession since the 1970s it is the Catholics who have suffered most. Major employers such as Shorts Aircraft or Harland and Wolff shipyards have as few as 5% Catholics in skilled jobs, although they are 30% of the Six County population. This picture of discrimination applies also to benefits and housing where Unionist control of local government ensures partiality. So although many of the symbols and some of the language of resistance takes a religious form much more is at stake. The Loyalists are 'loyal' only to the maintenance of their privileges and to any British government that will back them up. Religion is a smokescreen for this economic reality.

TERRORISM?

What are we to make of the accusation of terrorism? Thatcher and Kinnock always denounce the IRA for not taking the 'democratic road'. Even when Sinn Fein do contest elections these same politicians refuse to deal with elected representatives; councillors have been banned from travelling here; prisoners have been disqualified from standing in elections. But the fact is - as Sinn Fein recognise - that a 'democratic road' for the Catholic minority is not open.

They have already won the majority of working-class nationalists' support. Further progress is obstructed. Why?

In 1918 an overwhelming majority of Ireland's population voted for independence from Britain. The British government replied by dividing Ireland in 1921, imprisoning a large Catholic minority in a completely artificially-created 6 county state carved out of the 9 county province of Ulster in order to create a permanent Protestant majority. For 50 years an armed Protestant police force (the Specials, now the RUC) terrorised the Catholics into accepting their second-class status, and by openly fiddling elections even denied them the limited rights they had.

CATHOLICS FOUGHT BACK/TROOPS SENT IN

The armed resistance of the Catholics was inevitable given this repression. After 1969 the Catholics in the North rebelled and sent the RUC state reeling. The unionists were rescued by the intervention of the British troops to prop up the Protestant rule. It was a Labour Government which sent the troops in.

It needs to be remembered that the IRA hardly existed in the North when the troops went in. They only organised the resistance of the ghettos in 1971/72 after detention without trial was introduced and after Bloody Sunday in January 1972 when 13 unarmed civilians were murdered by British troops. The fact that the IRA use guerilla methods(i.e. shooting of individuals or small groups of soldiers or police or informers, bombing of shops etc.) is not because they are cowards who won't fight in the open. No, it is a state of affairs forced upon them by the overwhelming military superiority of the British oppressors.

As for the IRA's bombings in Britain itself we must understand why they take place. The war against the Irish has long been conducted on Irish soil. The attacks by the IRA on Britain itself are an extension of its war of defence and liberation. It is a sad fact that in war civilians get killed. But this cannot affect which side we choose to stand on in the war itself.

The vast majority of IRA (or INLA) victims (1,200) to date have been members or ex-members of the security forces. But of the nearly 900 Catholic deaths at the hands of British/UDR troops or Protestant paramilitary groups only 225 have been members of the

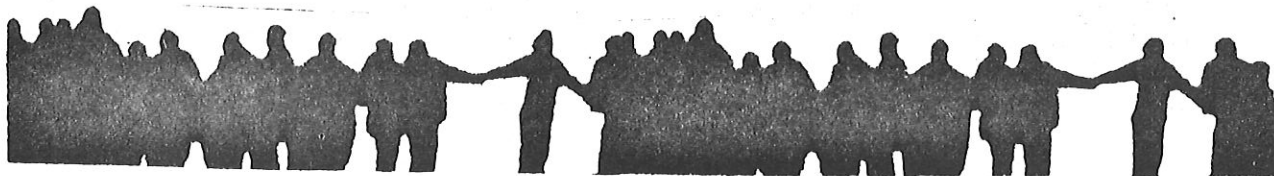
IRA or INLA. The bulk are ordinary Catholic workers. The violence against them is designed to terrorise them as a community into submission. The methods are frighteningly similar to the methods used by the police during the strike - the military occupation of a community. This reality exposes the propaganda lie that the British troops are simply peacekeepers. They do not systematically harass the Protestant community. Their lead and plastic bullets have been aimed in virtually every case at nationalist youth and workers. They are on the side of the loyalists against the nationalists.

THE I.R.A.

The IRA on the other hand, are not mindless criminals. They grew in the North with the support of the great majority of the nationalist population. The election of hunger-striker Bobby Sands (murdered by Thatcher) to Westminster in 1982 by a massive vote showed the real extent of mass support for the IRA. How many other "criminals" are there who can poll thousands of votes like this? How many criminals risk death when no material gains are to be made from their actions. The IRA are fighting for political reasons. It is on these reasons - not on their military tactics - that they should be judged. They are fighting to free Ireland from the rule of Britain, Britain's bosses. By that fact alone, they deserve to be supported by every worker in this country.

The way to end violence in Northern Ireland (and related violence in Britain) is to remove the source of that violence. The British Army are there to preserve the loyalist state. This is the real source of violence. Get the troops out and support those struggling to destroy the loyalist state and hasten the day when peace, through national liberation, can come to Ireland.

WORKERS HISTORY



THE LESSONS OF THE SEVENTIES

In 1972 and 1974 the union was led by NCB lovers like Gormley and left fakers like Daly. Yet one of the greatest victories in the history of our union was won. In this article we'll look at why 1972 was such a triumph. In the next article we'll look at why 1974, despite being a tremendous victory, actually paved the way for the further fragmentation of our union, and at how its aftermath contributed to our defeat in the Great Strike.

The 1972 strike came about when the NCB turned down an NUM demand for £5 - 9 increases on basic rates. This was the largest claim ever lodged by the NUM. It originated in a motion from Yorkshire passed at the 1971 annual delegate conference and reflected the growing militancy of miners fed up with being pushed further down the wages league.

This militancy had erupted into unofficial strikes in 1969 and 1970. In both these strikes Yorkshire, using flying pickets, brought out large sections of the industry - including Notts! While neither strike brought victory, both rekindled the spirit of militancy, boosting rank and file confidence and helping rebuild the NUM as a fighting organisation.

The NCB answered the 1971 claim with an offer of £1.60. Gormley, a company director - very much a product of the pre 1969 days when a whole layer of NUM officials had come to power by proving themselves able collaborators with the NCB and its Labour and Tory Government paymasters - reluctantly ordered a ballot. To his horror the miners voted by a 58.8% majority for a strike. Gormley panicked and tried to set up behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Tories who, riding high after beating the postal workers in a long pay strike, chose to fight it out. Heath's mood was ref-

lected by the anti-union witch hunter Woodrow Wyatt, who wrote in the Mirror:

"The coming coal strike billed for Sunday is the saddest industrial cock-up since the war. Rarely have strikers advanced to the barricades with less enthusiasm or hope of success ... even if the strike lasted two and a half months it would have little effect on electricity supplies." (Quoted in The Militancy of British Miners by V. L. Allen, p. 207)

The rest of Fleet Street issued similar warnings. But the massive involvement of thousands of militants in the strike proved to be the decisive factor. The determined actions of this sizeable minority on the picket lines boosted the morale of the mass of workers and made the strike solid. A layer of young militants from Yorks, S. Wales, Scotland and Kent used the flying picket to great effect. Figures like Scargill emerged as talented mass organisers, targetting all fuel supply centres as well as power stations and other large coal consumers.

Within a month there were blackouts all over the country. The strike was entering a critical stage with both sides appearing equally determined. Then, in early February, the Battle of Saltley Gate shattered the government's nerve.

The police had been trying to beat the mass flying picket and, in their efforts, had callously allowed a lorry to run over and kill Fred Mathews, a Doncaster miner. At the same time they were aiding every cowboy firm that tried to scab. To help the police the government had massively increased their powers by calling a State of Emergency on February 9th.

Meanwhile the miners were trying to shut down a major source of fuel in the Midlands - the coke depot at Saltley, Birmingham. Lorries from all over the country were, courtesy of the police, queuing for coke at this depot. From February 4th to February 10th miners, first in hundreds and finally in thousands, picketed the

depot. This battle was becoming a symbol of the entire strike. Victory for either the miners or the government would prove decisive.

Realising that the miners alone could not beat the police, rank and file leaders began appealing to the Birmingham working class for physical support. In words that would have been apt in the Great Strike - but sadly were not uttered by any of the left leaders - the young Scargill told the Birmingham East District Committee of the AUEW:

"We don't want your pound notes. Will you go down in history as the working class in Birmingham who stood by while the miners were battered, or will you become immortal? I do not ask - I demand that you come out on strike."



The Birmingham working class did indeed respond. On Thursday February 10th 40,000 of them struck, with 10,000 marching to Saltley to help the miners close the gates. And close they did. The police were overwhelmed on the day and the government was numbed by the display of solidarity strike action. The spectre of a general strike appeared at Heath's Cabinet meeting. It was enough! Scargill himself described the class strength displayed at Saltley:

"And then over the hill came a banner and I've never in my life seen so many people following a banner. As far as the eye could see it was just a mass of people marching toward Saltley. There was a huge roar and from the other side of the hill they were coming the oth-

er way. They were coming from five directions and our lads were just jumping in the air with emotion - a fantastic situation."

After Saltley victory was clearly within the miners' grasp. The militants knew this and pressed on with their picketing campaign. Unofficial strike committees were blossoming. The rank and file was feeling its power. No wonder then that the bureaucratic fat-cats like Gormley tried desperately to regain control of the strike. After Saltley they tried to prevent mass picketting. National Office advised Area Secretaries:

"to review the position so as to ensure that only the minimum number of men should be involved essential for effective picketting." (Quoted in Allen, see above, p. 199)

Despite Gormley's manouevrings the rank and file carried on mass picketting. Heath, terrified of more Saltleys, gave in. A committee under Lord Wilberforce was hastily convened, met for three days and recommended awarding the miners rises of between £4.50 and £6. The government couldn't oblige quickly enough. Its pay policy was in tatters. The miners, not having struck since 1926, were victorious. Overnight they had become the advance regiment of the working class. And in 1972 their victory paved the way for other regiments - dockers, nurses and teachers to name but a few - to march all over the Heath government.

The real lessons of 1972 are that maximum rank and file mobilisation for involvement in - and, through that, control of - a strike are essential for victory. Deals with the leaders of the unions are no good. Substitute deals were relied on by Scargill during the Great Strike and they brought no real solidarity. In 1972 the strategy of the militants was to go to the rank and file of other unions. In all future battles we must go out and forge links, not with the Ron Todds, Basnetts or Knapps, but with the Texaco drivers, the Coalville railworkers, and all the other rank and file workers who showed willing in 1984/85, but who were given no lead. We must give them that lead.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE RED MINER WE WILL LOOK AT THE 1974 STRIKE AND ITS AFTERMATH.

militants
points of view

INTERVIEWS

militants
points of view

During the strike the Dirty Thirty Leicestershire striking miners became famous up and down the country. They stuck it out to the very end of the strike. Once back down the pit they found themselves out of union membership and unable to speak or vote at branch meetings. Meanwhile their leaders were left unharmed by the National Union to plot a breakaway. Now it seems that Jack Jones has bottled out of holding a ballot to breakaway. We talked to one of the leading spokesmen of the strikers about conditions in Leics. at present.

Q:What happened when the branches voted on joining the scab union?

A:The first branch to meet was South Leics. colliery. They voted not to leave the N.U.M. The next branch should have been Whitwick branch. They never got a quorum so there was no meeting or vote. The next branch was Ellistown where there are only 3 striking miners and two of them are in the power group. Ellistown voted for a ballot with a view to leaving the N.U.M. The delegate there is a top class scab and is also President of the Area N.U.M.

The most important branch was Bagworth Colliery where the majority of the miners that were on strike were. The men at Bagworth had to take a High Court injunction out to allow them to speak and vot at their own branch meeting. The delegate tried to get them to postpone the meeting in the light of the injunction on a show of hands but failed. Then it became obvious that if there were any vote about leaving the union the striking miners would carry the vote against leaving the national union.

This meant that when the delegates from the branches reported back to the Area Executive the following week, they would have been mandated by a majority of the branches not to leave the union.

So when the striking miners moved a motion that Leics. should stay in the NUM they ruled it out of order

So when the striking miners moved a motion that Leics. should stay in the N.U.M. they ruled it out of order saying it was irrelevant as there had been no move to leave the N.U.M. This left them free to do to the Area council and do as they liked behind closed doors.

Q. Will the Leicestershire area join the scab union or stay in the N.U.M?

A. At the present time there's no move to break away but that's not to say there won't be. Certain officials in the Leics. Area with delegate positions are not prepared to come out off their own bats and say they want to leave the union because it would leave them in the same position as Lynk and Prendergast. But they would definitely like to join Notts. and South Derbys. At the moment though they're frightened about their own positions if they stay in the N.U.M. So at the moment there's no move to leave but that could change over the coming days.

Q. What's the current position of the Dirty Thirty as regards union membership ?

A. We are paying our subscriptions weekly, but we are still non-financial members of the union even though our injunction allows us to speak and vote at branch meetings.

Q. What is the future of the pits left in Leics ?

A. This question is not of paramount importance to the striking miners. We didn't take part in the strike purely for selfish reasons. We are dead against the Federal structure of the union. Two of our pits close next year. Of the two that will remain open nobody's sure whether they will keep them open 'til the Vale of Belvoir is open or, if they continue to lose m money, shut them.

Q. On the programme about Orgreave Scargill said ther'd need to be another strike. What's your opinion ?

A. Because of the way the strike ended and what has happened since, my opinion and that of all the strikers in my

area is what Scargill's saying is dead on the button. We need to strike again. But I'd make one proviso. Some of the lessons we supposedly learnt should be put into practice. We couldn't win if we didn't do this. In the first place it seems ridiculous that we've called off the overtime ban and the Coal Board are building up stocks again. The tragedy is we need to strike quick. We haven't got years to put the problems right. We've got to be on strike again in the very near future. I know the union is pre-occupied with the breakaway union but it shouldn't be allowed to run the union fullstop.



Q. What do you think of Kinnock's position of opposing the return of funds and freeing the jailed miners ?

A. I heard Kinnock, it was a brilliant speech in regard to oratory, but for want of a better word I've never heard such crap in my life. He's turned his back and tried to turn the whole of the labour movements back on the militants who do all the front line fighting. I'd give both my arms and legs to be Scargill on that rostrum answering Kinnock. I'd like to say though even though we want the money back the most important thing is reinstating the sacked lads. If they don't want to do this they're saying to the militants you'd better cover your own backs in future because we'll shit on you. And the problem is that the Labour Party over the last few years have a history of shitting on those that stand up and be counted.

This interview with Dave Pennington, a sacked miner from Bold Colliery in Lancashire, covered a number of issues which included militancy in Lancashire, the breakaways and the scab issue, the Levy and the Labour Party. Unfortunately, due to the limited pages of Red Miner, we have been able to print only the following extracts:

Q: So you agree with the perspective of rallying the men around industrial action for reinstatement ?

A: Yes. Well, it's coming up this at the special delegate conference in a couple of weeks' time over what tactics to take. But it will be compounded with the fact that the Coal Board won't offer a pay rise this year as well. They keep on promising that if the Labour Party gets back in power we'll all get our jobs back. I don't believe it for one instance. When they got in in '74 there were lads there, Shrewsbury pickets, still in jail and they did the full whack - no remission. Under a Labour Government !

There'll have to be a complete drastic change in the management of the industry and the Government. I think we'd get reinstated if we had a Labour Party full of Dennis Skinners and what have you - and Eric Heffers - but not with this mob.

Q: One of the problems that the Rank and File Miner points out - particularly on the role of Taylor - is that as soon as a dispute breaks out, they are pushed back inside the pit and told that it's too early after the strike.

A: Well, he was like that from Day One. He told them all to come out of Nottingham - 'all come home'. Taylor has turned out to be a bloody embarrassment.

Q: Since the strike was defeated and there has been a rightward shift in the TUC, do you see Scargill's position weakened within the Executive, now there is a centre-right coalition which can marginalise Scargill despite his appeal and his base within the membership ?

A: No, I don't think so really, because despite what Willis and Clive Jenkins keep on saying, the rank and file trade unionists are more and more coming over to our side. It was revealed at the TUC carnival. But I've noticed person-

ally in the past 2 months a resurgence of feeling from trade unionists in other industries. Thursday night I was in Deeside to a miners' support meeting. Now, Christ's sake, Deeside! There are 2 pits in North Wales - way out in the sticks. They voted to go back. Well, the Area leadership told them to go back in November because they were isolated. And there's a resurgence from rank and file trade unionists. The person who chaired that meeting was a ASTMS man who's fully backed the miners. COHSE - they're backing us next week. There are rank and file memberships in other industries swinging with us. I'm certain the result of these bloody trials has had a lot to do with it, and the behaviour of the police since. I remember when they started weighing into those so-called hippies at Stonehenge and I was telling people at the pub, 'That's what they were doing to us last year. And when they start kicking your door in, you'll say - Oh, well he was right then'. People aren't that bloody stupid. They see these things, these abuses by the police. At grass roots level there's definitely a swing in favour of the miners' requests at the Labour Party Conference. Problem is, you've got these Willises and Kinnocks knocking around. But Kinnock's really bloody queered his pitch the other week when he said, 'I'll decide what the Labour Party does'. Even right wing Labour Party people and local constituencies were bloody annoyed over what he said there.

Q: There is a general feeling in the Labour Party and to a degree in the trade unions that Kinnock hasn't simply imposed himself on the Labour Party he has been able to come to the ascendancy. The expulsions of Militant are more frequent, his ability to water down the conference commitments over the last couple of years, his do nothing, promise nothing attitude. And yet the left in the Party seem incapable of challenging him, are not going to mount a challenge to him. In that situation, the argument 'At all costs a Labour Government in 87 irrespective of policies' is winning ground. Now, we've argued a Labour Government on those terms is not worth having ...

A: Yes, that's the way I think. All these people talking about at all costs



a Labour Government - they've not been put in prison, they've not been sacked from their jobs like I have and nearly a thousand other lads have. For Christ's sake, I've religiously given my vote to the Labour Party for the last 15 years. You know, I just don't want them. I'm going to be bloody selfish for once. I want your help, so the Labour Party I want is one which is definitely going to push for amnesty, and no other type of Labour Party.

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Sheffield 10.

STAMP OUT THE BREAKAWAY!

The formation of a national scab union - UDM (Under Direct Management) represents a serious setback for NUM militants and trade unionists as a whole. Having gained their ballot majorities, with NCB and Tory support the scab leaders will try to spread their cancer into other areas. They will do this with full assistance from the NCB. Already the Board has recognised the breakaway and is negotiating much improved incentive pay deals with it. This is the carrot that will be used to win more members to the UDM.

A scab union has been on the cards ever since the NUM leadership refused to expel the Notts. scabs during the strike. Now, the situation is even more serious. The breakaway will be supported by the NCB as their main means of stopping any fight against closures and their plans to privatise. For all these reasons the UDM must be destroyed and fast!

Rank and file militants will have to lead this fight. The area and national NUM leaders have been utterly complacent about the breakaway. They keep talking about the history of Spencerism and say the same will happen again. This is a recipe for failure and inactivity. The truth about Spencerism is that it took over a decade before the Spencerites were defeated. Ten years of hard, bitter struggle by rank and file militants of the time caused its defeat. This time the stakes are far higher. In ten years time the coal industry could be decimated and the NUM with it. This time there can be no room for failure.

An immediate, massive national campaign must be set up. In all the " NUM loyal " areas there must be a campaign based on mass meetings to explain the arguments and nip the UDM's growth in the bud. The danger signs are already there. In Agecroft in Lancs, Daw Mill in Warwickshire and North Wales ballots on joining the UDM are being held. In other words the breakaway has potential to grow not die. That is why opposition in the "loyal " areas must be used as a base to go into the scab areas and defeat the UDM at source. Each pit in the loyal areas should " twin " with NUM branches in the scab areas to organise and assist those NUM members who remain loyal. Teams of militants armed with the arguments should be sent around the country to counter the scab arguments. The area NUM leaderships cannot be relied on - they are doing very little, simply hoping the breakaway will disappear.

Even more dangerous will be relying on the T.U.C. and L.P. leaders. These traitors are already talking about " conciliation " and " not rocking the boat ". To prevent U.D.M. members staying in the L.P. and T.U.C., branches must be approached directly and a policy fought for that when implemented means no member of the UDM will be any part of the Labour Movement.

In the coming months the future of any new fight against the N.C.B. offensives could be determined by how swiftly and effectively the UDM is fought against and destroyed.

WHERE WE STAND

RED MINER

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

WORKERS' STRUGGLES

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

REFORMISM

The trade union and Labour leaders believe capitalism can be reformed, made better, but they do not aim to overthrow capitalism. They act as go-betweens for the bosses with the workers. Even militant leaders limit their struggles 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 1984-85 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 1920s. 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 and Chilean revolutionaries in the Movement for a Revolutionary 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, gays 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 1920s. 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 meeting 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.**