

THE RED MINER

Nº3 JULY 85



**workers
power**

Bulletin for miners and their families 10p

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

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PHYSICS 321

LECTURE 10

STATISTICAL MECHANICS

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STATISTICAL MECHANICS



Many miners learnt many political lessons during the 1984/85 strike. The political role of the police and courts was exposed. The importance of winning support from other workers was demonstrated on hundreds of occasions. The role of Kinnock and the parliamentary Labour Party caused militants to question traditional Labourite political values.

In fact the absolute centrality of politics in the working class struggle to defend jobs, wages, conditions of life and rights is the most important lesson of the strike. Even the most militant 'trade unionism', represented by Arthur Scargill, was incapable of winning the strike. By 'trade unionism' we mean a strategy for improving and defending working class conditions that accepts the terms of reference laid down by the present, capitalist system. It restricts its struggle to the economic issues that concern the individual employer and his/her workforce.

In practice this type of trade unionism means, in the first place, sectionalism. It limits struggles to the economic issues facing a single section of workers. So, when the dockers struck twice the leaderships of the NUM and the TGWU both insisted that their struggles were independent of each other. No serious attempt at linking the struggle and making common cause was made.

Even where links were made trade unionism dictated that they be made between and controlled by bureaucrats. When the NUM wanted support from railworkers it went to Jimmy Knapp and Ray Buckton. These characters promised support but in fact ducked out of a joint fight with the miners on three occasions - over the 1984 pay deal, over closures and redundancies and over the victimisation of their own members at Coalville depot. The story was the same with the TUC. Trade unionism dictated bureaucratic deals that turned out to be not worth the paper they were written on.

The worst aspect of pure trade unionism was its failure to politicise the strike. Its reaction to Tory charges that the strike was political was defensive. If it is political, said the NUM leaders, then it is you the Tories who have made it so. The effect of this on many of the best militants in the strike was to lead them to argue that they were 'not political' and that 'politics should be kept out of it'. In the face of the Tories political offensive this attitude proved fatal.

Of course all of these weaknesses of pure trade unionism suit a particular type of politics very well - the politics of the Labour Party. These politics, which we call reformist, state that all political questions should be left up to the MPs, that political change be brought through the ballot box, and that trade unionists concern themselves with economics. On this basis the Labour Party directs all its efforts to winning elections. But, as the three periods of Labour government since the war show, once in power Labour, at best, simply grants the working class a few meagre reforms. Labour refuses to tinker with the police who bashed the miners, the courts who fined the NUM and jailed its militants, the top civil servants who administered poverty inflicting restrictions on the benefit rights of miners and their families. In other words Labour does not have the policy of destroying the guardian of capitalism - the state - for the simple reason that it does not have the policy of destroying capitalism itself. The false divide between politics (for Labour MPs) and economics (for trade unionism) allows them to get away with this.

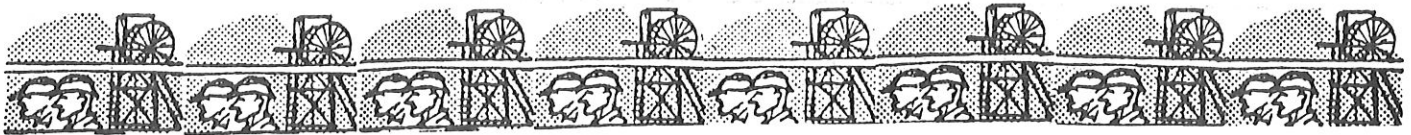
As we have said the strike showed clearly the links between politics and economics. The economic class interest of the miners - to keep open pits - challenged the economic priorities of the bosses. They called in the state - the concentrated political and military force of the capitalist class - to smash us. The unions and the Labour Party were both inadequate for the task of defending us. The Communist Party, long since a non-revolutionary party, was equally useless - busying itself with building alliances with vicars and condemning mass picketing. Its strategy, like Labour's is totally reformist.

What was needed in the strike above all was a revolutionary party. A revolutionary party rejects the fake divide between politics and economics. It refuses to accept that the state can be reformed and capitalism made better. It tries to show the general class conflict lodged in every sectional economic struggle. Its tactics aim at generalising those struggles to both involve other sections of workers and openly challenge the priorities of capitalism. Above all it seeks to win leadership of the working class - openly and honestly declaring its aims and rejecting the manoeuvres and deceptions that are commonplace amongst the careerists who run the Labour Party.

The revolutionary party seeks to win leadership of the workers for two reasons. First, unless it has won this leadership the overthrow of capitalism is impossible. The party cannot overthrow the bosses without the working class and nor can the working class overthrow capitalism without the leadership of the party. But secondly, the party, by fighting for leadership, fights to preserve the gains of every partial struggle waged by the working class. Without revolutionary politics lessons will be forgotten, militancy dissipated and the militants themselves lost to the cause. Every defeat brings with it the danger of demoralisation. People regret their struggle. They forget about the police, the judges, the media and so on. They sink back into everyday routine. Only revolutionary leadership can prevent this demoralisation setting in. The party can teach militants the lessons of defeats and prepare for new struggles and victories. It can act as the memory of the working class. It alone can preserve and develop the militant spirit created in each struggle.

In the mines demoralisation is a real threat. The class fighters of the strike will become cynical or apathetic if the lessons of the defeat are not learnt and steps taken to prepare for a new fight. The revolutionary party does not exist. But **Red Miner** exists to build it. The **Red Miner** is the voice of real revolutionary politics inside the NUM. It is a paper that will arm militants for future struggles. At the moment the forces of the **Red Miner** in the NUM are small. The forces of **Workers Power**, the revolutionary group that produces **Red Miner**, in Britain as a whole are small. But that is no excuse for apathy. Revolutionary politics are desperately needed. We fight for them. By joining us in the fight militant miners can help us prepare for the day when the defeat of 1984/85 can be avenged and capitalism destroyed.

ISSUES IN THE UNION



THIS INACTION IS OFFICIAL

Until we break the chain of officialdom in the union, we will never start the mass movement of the rank and file needed for the battles ahead.

In area after area the officials have turned away from a fightback. Already many strikes have been stamped on or kept isolated by Area and Branch officials, telling members to go back to work, while they sit with management over cups of tea, keeping tight hold of the offensive that is needed.

After the Doncaster hit list had been announced, Jack Taylor had this to say when he came out of a meeting with the NCB: "They have been honest and open today, and there has been no departure from the Review Procedure. I wish we did not have any job losses, but that is one of the consequences of not succeeding in the dispute."

This is after the Area executive had effectively demobilised the growing fight over victimisations at South Kirby. Since then Taylor has made it quite clear that he will not be fighting for a campaign of industrial action over the closure of Cortonwood, Brookhouse, Darfield Main, etc.

Until the militants organise and take the fight on, the officials will retreat in the fight with management. Branch officials sitting in their cosy union offices have demoralised the rank and file by not campaigning to turn the tide of retreat. Instead, they explain their softly-softly approach by claiming that the membership will accept everything management does. In place of this, pit top meetings and weekly branch meetings should be held and leaflets regularly produced.

Many officials will be quite happy to see some of the proposed rule changes go through, as they make them less rather than more accountable. Election of the President for life and the two-thirds majority in the ballot needed to remove an official will featherbed all officials, whether they be 'left' or 'right'.

We elected Taylor and co, we elected the branch officials who sat back through the strike and we have elected good

militants - yet we still have no way of controlling them. We need elected leaders - however, we also need to make them accountable to mass meetings of the rank and file. All officials should be elected by a simple majority, subject to regular re-election and recall by a simple majority of those they represent.

COAL BOARD PUTS THE BOOT IN

Anthony Williams, who was cleared of the killing of the scab taxi driver David Wilkie, was sacked by the N.C.B. for gross misconduct. They alleged that he was involved in plans to disrupt a road convoy. This is another example of the N.C.B.'s intransigence towards its employees.

But Anthony's work mates have stood up to the N.C.B. and today they walked out in support of his case. Needless to say the walkout was not organised by the South Wales leadership. It came once again from the rank and file of the union, who unlike their leaders, are determined that the N.C.B. will not get away with these savage attacks on our industry, and in particular our membership.

WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES

WHICH WAY FORWARD ?

The Red Miner offers a prize to the first reader who finds 5 women active in the strike who can name the date of the National Women Against Pit Closures (NWAPC) conference. Top prize goes to the person who has seen the draft proposals for the conference.

Believe it or not, that great national body to which most of our groups are affiliates, is to hold a national conference. But don't build your hopes up - if the last conference is anything to go by you don't stand much chance of getting there.

The last conference in November, was held in Chesterfield and comprised a massive 40-odd delegates. It declared the establishment of a national womens organisation (despite the fact that most women had been fighting nationally for months) and elected a committee of 17 women to represent the tens of thousands of miners wives and girlfriends who had been radicalised by the strike. For the backstage organisers the conference was successful (its easy to maintain control when there are only 17 delegates and you've got 4 unelected members on top!) But we judge the conference by different standards and let you draw the conclusions - What has the conference or the NWAPC done since November to deepen and extend the mass and active character of the support groups? There's another prize for anybody who can give a good answer to that!

Lets be blunt - The NWAPC is not exactly the most democratic organisation going- Who elected Betty Heathfield and Ann Scargill or the other "ex-officio" members? Nor is it designed to encourage or involve rank and file women in decision making. Heaven forbid!

Since it was set up women from local groups have argued for NWAPC to open

itself up to greater participation of wives from local groups. Hatfield Main women and women from the Midlands sent a resolution saying that there should be a delegate from every group plus observers I don't think that even got on the agenda paper! And here we are 7 months later still discussing the same thing.

Most worrying is that the last conference didn't allow for any wide ranging debate on the fundamental political questions - on the terms of the settlement; how to deal with the scabs; in fact the conference narrowed the horizons of the thousands of women in struggle

THIS TIME WE MUST TACKLE THE QUESTIONS HEAD ON - if we don't, the future of national wives movement is grim.

If you haven't already got the draft proposals for the conference get a set from your area delegate. These are some of the points we raise for discussion in the Red Miner - we invite you to add to the discussion in the August issue of the bulletin.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Whether we win or lose this one at NUM conference (and we hope we win) we must fight for proper associate membership. Not a pat on the back but an active right to association for the women as groups. The womens draft proposals don't go far enough on this one. They say it would mean "possibly observers at annual conference". No possibly about it - we should campaign for observer status at every level of the union. How else is an active fight against pit closures and NCB attack to be waged but with the full participation of the wives groups.

SCABS

The draft proposals suggest we delay the question of membership for wives from the working areas for a year. We can't keep avoiding political questions. The womens organisations have as much right to a say on this as anybody.

The scabs should have been kicked out months ago not left to organise their scabby union inside the NUM. Just as we would pose the question for scabby miners (not super scabs) are you with the union or out on your ear with the scabs? So we say to miners wives from the scab areas - do you stand for the aims of the NWAPC and committ yourself to the fight against closures or, are you still on the side of the NCB and the Tories? If your answer to the first question is yes, then your case will be discussed at the local wives group and they will decide -and have the right to throw you out later if need be.

WHAT POLITICS ?

One of the most important questions to be discussed at the conference is the statement of aims of the organisation. The committment is to the fight against pit closures but we've got to spell out how we are going to fight. We have to firm up the conference statement to say that each time a pit goes into dispute, each time another attack is levelled by the NCB the women will be there. We will ORGANISE support; raise the question of strike action amongst every trade union we have visited in the strike, we will visit the work-places we collected at; put picket lines on with the miners; organise the women in the canteens and COSA and in every place we can.

But we can limit our fight just to issues around the pits. Working class women are being hammered on every front. What is NWAPC doing on questions such as the Child benefit attacks - the August conference is the place to launch such campaigns. (Whoops, nearly gave the competition away!)

AUXILLIARY OF THE NUM

There's a body of opinion in the national womens organisation that would like to see us moulded into

an auxilliary of the official NUM leadership and formed into a polite campaigning body limited to struggles which don't alienate "the braoder layers in society" (vicar and businessmen) this is the Communist Party. Bea Campbell, one of their leading journalists spent the strike writing articles attacking the 'macho' violence of the men's movement (i.e. the Labour Movement)

If that's the opinion that wins through at the conference then the NWAPC has had it. Just like the suggested petition to the Queen last August, these people want to unite all women of all classes in a broad movement.

Instead we say that our brothers in the labour movement and in the working class (not the Queen and all middle class women) are our real allies in the fights to come.

We must make our positions clear at the August conference. If Women Against Pit Closures is to grow, is to be a fighting organisation of working class women it needs to have clear foundations on which to fight.

OUT NOW!

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WOMENS' LIBERATION
AND SOCIALISM "**

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power** PAMPHLET
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WHERE BOSSES MURDER WORKERS

Over 1,000 of your fellow mine-workers were killed last year in underground accidents. The foremen and skilled workers earn four times as much as you do, even though you work on the face. Your earnings are just enough to keep you and your family alive. Last year you took part for the first time in a legal strike - but the police attacked the strikers' meeting and gunned down seven of your workmates. Union members protesting at the conditions in a strike this April were dismissed and forcibly removed to remote parts of the country.

A nightmare of a future post-Thatcher Britain? No, the reality of South Africa today. These are the conditions endured by black mineworkers. The system of Apartheid in South Africa ensures that skilled jobs are kept for white workers. These workers are enormously privileged, can afford houses in pleasant suburbs and even keep servants!

But 90% of the workforce in coal and goldmines is black. These workers are not allowed to train for the skilled jobs. They are not even equal citizens of South Africa. The white minority which controls government, industry, police and army has decided that black Africans have to belong to one of the so-called "Homelands". The rest of the country - 76% of it - is supposed to "belong" almost entirely to the whites who make up just 15% of the population!

If you are a black African working in the white areas you must be able to show proof that you are allowed to be there, doing a particular job. Quite often you won't be given the right to settle with your family near the white areas - you will have to leave them in the Homeland, hundreds of miles away. This applies to most black mineworkers. They have to live in hostel accommodation near the mine - in a compound run by the mineowners.

But despite these enormous obstacles, black miners have been organising in both coal and gold mines for better wages, conditions and union rights. Black workers cannot join the white trade union, but have formed their own, the National Union of Mineworkers. It is now 90,000 strong and has grown at the rate of 4,000 a month in the last year! This still leaves 80% unorganised however.

Last year's strike did win advances - a 16% wage increase - but the terrible repression and victimisation shows the enormous task ahead. Despite the hardships, NUM(SA) members collected for the British miners hardship fund! Money, and messages of support were brought back by North Staffs striking miner Roy Jones at the end of a solidarity visit.

How can we repay this magnificent international solidarity? How can we carry through our determination to help fellow workers in struggle? The mineworkers in South Africa are - even more than their counterparts in Britain - the key force in overturning the bosses' reactionary rule. Coal is the only fuel - and gold is the major export! What can we do to hasten the downfall of Apartheid?

First, we must stop the emigration of British miners to take up skilled posts in South Africa. These posts are only vacant because black miners are not allowed to train for them. Any white worker who emigrates is going to help prop up the racist system. We are not surprised that some scabs went out to South Africa - just what you'd expect from a scab. But unfortunately, some strikers were also recruited by Goldfields and GENCOR mining companies. For those who weren't involved in the strike and didn't learn about solidarity, for those now faced by intense hardship, the offers of a life of security in sunny South Africa may be tempting.

Whenever the poisonous advertising appears in local or national papers, or leaflets, the NUM branches must make sure the propaganda gets an answer, and that no members take up the offer. The wives groups too, can help explain the truth about South Africa.



Second, the NUM can strengthen the links with the NUM(SA) and give practical aid and finance to help build that union. At present there is a disagreement between those active in solidarity work. For the most part, those who run Anti-Apartheid, along with the Labour leadership and the Communist Party, think that there should be no rank and file direct links between trade unions here and the independent black unions like the NUM. They say this is as bad as having sporting links, or links with the white unions.

This writer thinks that is nonsense. Sporting links prop up the racist regime. They allow the racists to pretend that the Apartheid system isn't so nasty after all. Links with the white unions are of course quite wrong. Those bodies just fight for a privileged minority to keep its privileges. But direct links with a real workers union - that's different. At least the NUM can send finance and invite representatives of the South African NUM here to tour the areas and explain their situation.

Then the branches can discuss the best way to help.

THE RED MINER EDITORIAL TEAM INVITES LETTERS AND COMMENT FOR THE NEXT ISSUE. WE NEED MORE INFORMATION FROM THE DIFFERENT AREAS. WE WANT TO SEE MORE DISCUSSION AND DEBATE OF THE POLITICAL ISSUES RAISED IN THIS BULLETIN. PLEASE ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE RED MINER BULLETIN, 138, Crookesmoor Road, Sheffield 6.

railworkers next in firing line

Miners and railwayworkers alike repeatedly warned during the great strike, that once the Tories had done with the N.U.M., the railways would be next for the chop. How true that has proven to be. The Railway Board wants tens of thousands of jobs to go.

First in line are the workshops. Already Horwich and Shildon have gone. Next on the chopping board are Glasgow and Swindon. After them Derby, Doncaster, and others will come under attack.

Then there is Driver Only Operation (D.O.O.). This would entail thousands of guards jobs going on freight and passenger. The B.R.B. are looking to introduce this, on an area by area basis, in the very near future.

And within 6 weeks of the end of the miners strike B.R. had moved to make 11 railworkers redundant at Coalville, the depot that stood firm throughout the strike, on the blacking of coal.

Of course the N.U.R. has policy to resist all these attacks. But the B.R.B. are trying to soften the unions up. They have given the N.U.R. and A.S.L.E.F. an ultimatum to pay them £200,000 (over industrial action against victimisation of those blacking coal), or be sued, or reach an agreement on D.O.O.. They have also torn up the closed shop agreement.

Clearly much needs to be done to galvanise the rank and file for all out strike action to defeat the B.R.B. and their tactics of divide and rule. Yet one looks in vain for the leadership necessary to do this. Despite the fighting talk from Knapp and Buckton, (though not very much), they never turn their words into deeds. In fact it looks as if our supposedly "left wing" executive in the N.U.R. is about to do a U turn at this year's annual conference. Reversing our opposition to Tebbit's law requiring ballots for industrial action.

The will to fight certainly exists amongst a good part of the workforce. This was demonstrated by a recent strike in Scotland against the closure of Glasgow workshops, when not a single train ran throughout Scotland.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the Broad Left on the railways will prove itself capable of becoming a real force for action in the industry. It did nothing as an organised body during the entire period of the strike.

This is not surprising as it is under the control of "Militant". As the recent Broad Left conference revealed yet again, Militant have neither the willingness nor the programme to weld together the militant minority.

Yet this is an urgent task. Workers Power argues for the same kind of rank and file movement on the railways, as it does in the pits. This is what we fight for within the Broad Left. What is more we recognise the need, to maintain, and greatly expand, those links paved between miners, and railworkers, during the great strike. This would provide a firm foundation, for linking together militants in different industries, overcoming the divisions in our ranks which were so apparent in the last year.

With major battles undoubtedly lying ahead for railworkers in the near future. The opportunity will present itself of unity in struggle between railworkers and miners.

Steve Morley Toton N.U.R.
(personal capacity)

hospital workers fight back!



Since the 16th of April, 47 domestics at Scarsdale Hospital, and 50 domestics at the Royal Hospital in Chesterfield have been striking. For as one striker put it, "against privatisation in general, for jobs, and for the health as we know it".

They've been forced into striking by the determination of the Health Authority to privatise. Even though the workforce had agreed to cuts in jobs and hours, to keep the "con-trickers" out. Another example of if you give the bosses an inch they want to take a mile.

But of course the local Health Authority are only carrying out the Tories plans to privatise the Health Service. They know how much money can be made out of the Health Service by the drug companies, and private contractors. And lets not forget, every hospital closure is another tax cut for Maggie's mates in big buiseness.

Unfortunately, just as in the miners strike, the leadership of our movement is leaving the Chesterfield strikers, and others like them, such as at Barking, -now 15 months into their strike, -to fight alone. One striking N.U.P.E. member told Red Miner that "The women are virtually left on their own, apart from N.U.P.E.'s commitment to make it official and pay strike pay. We don't get a lot more from the leadership".

However despite the lack of official support for the strike, the women in Chesterfield are not giving in, and are determined to stick it out and save their jobs.

They have been encouraged-in their fight, by the response they have had from rank and file trade unionists. The same striker told us "we've had very good financial response from other unions which we've written to, and, we're also getting support on the picket lines from, N.U.M., G. & M., N.G.A., A.U.E.W., and others.

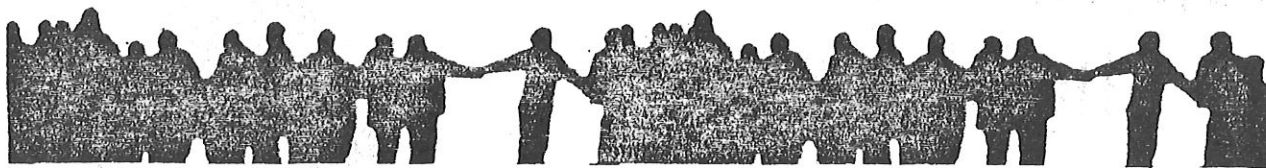
Many of the women domestics on strike now, were also active during the miners strike. Through their N.U.P.E. branch, and the Chesterfield Womens Support Group. They organised collections, built local solidarity, and joined striking miners on the North Derbyshire picket lines.

Now the favour needs to be returned. Red Miner urges all its readers to raise support, and cash for the strikers, in Union Branches, and Womens Support Groups. Invite a speaker to your next meeting and organise a delegation to visit the strikers on the picket line.

If we're going to turn the talk about building a Working Class Womens Movement into a reality, then it's going to be done around struggles like this.

Donations and letters of support to;
Mr M. Naughton
N.U.P.E. Hardship Fund
c/o Labour Club
113 Saltergate
chesterfield

WORKERS HISTORY



THE MINERS' MINORITY MOVEMENT (Part 2)

In the last issue we detailed the early development of the Miners' Minority Movement (MMM), particularly in South Wales. In this article we will follow this development and trace events leading up to the labour movement's encouraging success of Red Friday in July 1925.

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Following a brief upturn in the prospects of the coal industry (after the collapse of the post-war boom in 1920), the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) successfully sought a national agreement with the coal owners in the Spring of 1924. No sooner had this agreement been signed than it became outdated owing to a slump in coal exports, caused by the withdrawal of the French occupation from the Ruhr.

The bosses' difficulties were compounded by the return of the Gold Standard in the Spring of 1925. They gave notice to end the agreement in July of that year and with it abolish the national minimum addition to the standard wage. For miners this meant a reduction of between 13% to 47% in wages.

It was in this situation that the MMM aimed at preparing the rank and file for the anticipated national showdown with the mine owners. They advanced a strategy to push the MFGB into taking an offensive stance towards the bosses by committing it to fight on the policy of the 'living wage'. This involved a new standard of wages with percentage additions to meet the rise in the cost of living. They argued that the control of all wage negotiations should be in the hands of the rank and file. To this end the MMM was active in establishing wide-spread rank and file-based local branches of the movement throughout the coal-fields.

This revolutionary approach of the MMM became more evident during 1925 as they countered the bosses' arguments about

the need for 'profitable' pits. They refused to be intimidated by the narrow constraints of the profit system under capitalism and argued for action with other workers in other industries to overthrow private ownership in mining - if not by nationalisation then by the overthrow of capitalism as a whole in Britain. As Arthur Horner, a leading figure in the MMM, wrote in the Movement paper 'The Mineworker' in February 1925:

"The whole of the trade unions bordering on struggles in their industries should be approached with a view to placing their programme side by side with ours. The General Council of the TUC should become General Staff in a definitely working class struggle for the means to a decent life. If capitalism cannot give it, then capitalism must be overthrown."

It was Arthur Horner, alongside Noah Ablett S.O. Davies and Arthur Cook who were the key figures in launching the MMM in South Wales. Horner, born the son of a railway supervisor in Merthyr Tydfil in 1894, became an activist in the union and was eventually dismissed and blacklisted by the coal owners. His victimisation was due in no small way to his opposition to the war. Along with other Welshmen, he evaded conscription to the British Army by leaving for Ireland. Once there, he joined the Irish Citizen Army. On his return, Horner was arrested, court-martialled and given a six-month, followed by a two-year sentence for 'incorrigible misconduct'. Yet it was his struggle in the service of workers' interests that gained him his reputation, and despite the fact that he was still in prison in 1919, he was elected as one of the check-weighers at Mardy Colliery. The following year Horner joined the Communist Party. He later became President of the MMM and its principal spokesperson.

The anti-capitalist stand of the MMM was very much in line with the National Minority Movement's aims and objectives expressed at its inaugural conference

in August 1924:

"... to organise the working masses of Great Britain for the overthrow of capitalism, the emancipation of the workers from the oppressors and exploiters, and the establishment of a socialist Commonwealth; to carry on a wide agitation and propaganda for the principles of the revolutionary class struggle ... and against the present tendency towards social peace and class collaboration and the delusion of the peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism."

The MMM's propaganda and agitation during this period pulled no punches when it came to putting forward a political perspective that was equal to the task of taking on the bosses' system. When it nominated A.J. Cook for the secretaryship of the SWMF it campaigned on an openly marxist programme, and this did not go unheeded by the mass of the membership. Cook won the post by 50,123 votes to 49,617 in 1924. It was a major victory for the movement.

It was in fact A.J. Cook to whom many people justifiably compared Arthur Scargill in terms of his background and experience. Cook, like Scargill, was a dynamic and selfless fighter for the cause of the miners. Throughout 1924 and 1925 he toured the coalfields, urging miners to stand firm and prepare for the struggle. His oratory inspired the membership.

Although Cook's election, similar to Scargill's, was secured by a network of militants, unlike today the Minority Movement that fought for Cook retained its own distinct organisation. The militants who carried Scargill to power lacked the same degree of conscious and independent organisation across the coalfields. Today, as is all too apparent, it is still lacking. Yet such organisation in the National Rank and File Movement is being fought for even now by a new layer of militants who have sharpened their political teeth in the Great Strike.

The effectiveness of the MMM propaganda and agitation was shown by a unanimous decision of the South Wales miners Federation (SWMF) conference early in April 1925 to adopt the essentials of the MMM proposals and also by the later adoption of similar programmes by the great majority of constituent unions of the MFGB itself.

Needless to say, in practice the Executive Committee of the MFGB continued negotiations with the mineowners, implicitly accepting the arguments about the economic position of the industry. The MMM therefore stepped up their campaign to build rank and file committees to force the MFGB into taking on the owners.

So-called unity conferences were held in a number of towns, especially throughout South Wales to establish Unity Committees consisting of representatives from various unions. Successful conferences were convened at Pontypridd, Pontypool, Port Talbot, Caerphilly, Swansea, Llanelli and Newport. Where Trades Councils existed, as in Pontypridd, a Council of Action was established which involved railway and transport workers as well as miners. Later, in Llanelli and Swansea areas, a Council of Action was set up to coordinate action between miners, rail, steel, tinsplate and general workers.

By the end of July 1925, when the 1924 agreement terminated, the Communist Party (CP) and the MMM were confident that they could successfully lead an unofficial General Strike in support of the miners if the TUC did not endorse official action.

Plans were laid to organise demonstrations of miners to rail and steel centres and the docks if the TUC failed to act. The CP and the MMM envisaged that unofficial action of this sort would form the basis of a revolutionary struggle and saw the fight not as one for wages but for power.

In the event, faced with this kind of preparation, the Government gave way and conceded a subsidy for the industry. That day, July 31st 1925 was to become known as Red Friday.

Victory that it was, Red Friday in fact represented a high point in MMM influence on the class struggle. Although the Movement had no illusions as to the nature of the compromise by the Government - ie. using it as a delaying tactic - unfortunately, between July 1925 and May 1926 the CP and the MMM enacted an about turn on their programme of action for this crucial fight with the bosses.

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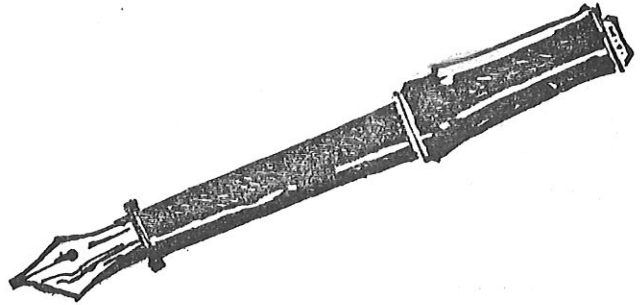
The NEXT ISSUE will be looking at this turn around in policy - the reasons behind it and its effect on the class struggle.

Dear Comrades,

As an NUM member that spent a year on strike fighting for jobs, I would like to bring to your attention the latest moves by the NCB to close certain mining workshops. The NCB say these workshops do not come under the so-called Colliery Review Procedure and the right and the so-called left wing shit bags in our union are so far agreeing with the NCB's every move. The pit that I work at is very near one of the workshops threatened with closure: namely, Carcroft. During the strike the lads from Carcroft didn't just picket their place of work, they joined the rest of us strikers and picketed all over the country (when possible).

Myself and many other NUM members think it is disgusting that our union is turning its back on the men who fought so hard for their jobs and their communities. As a rank and file member I will not turn my back on my comrades who fought alongside me and I will do everything to fight the closure plans the NCB have in mind.

Yours fraternally,
P. K. (Rossington)



Dear Red Miner,

Dear Red Miner

I am an ordinary rank and file miner and always classed myself as a socialist. I had a good idea what was wrong with our society but did a lot of talking and little else about it. I thought if I voted Labour at every election, that was it - someone else will put it right - leave it to someone else. But I have realised that a lot of the people I put my trust in were not interested in socialism or the working class at all - just making a career off our backs. I will never forgive these people for this. What brought this home to me with a jolt was the miners strike.

A lot has been written and talked about the strike and a lot more will be. But it was a good education for anyone who wanted to learn. I say to miners, - do not let the twelve months strike be in vain. There were thousands of us miners, wives, girlfriends and mothers who travelled this country and abroad collecting, speaking and asking for support from all kinds of people and learning all the time. Learning how other people are treated, how other people live - the unemployed, the black communities, the low paid who were looking to the miners to win to try and make the system fairer so everybody could have a better future. I say to all of you - keep together, keep your organisations together. We may have lost this battle but there is one twice as big looming.

But we need new tactics. Hit them quick, hit them hard and lets have socialism once and for all. Lets have a look at some of the points from the strike. One thing we did not have was enough Scargills. I believe he knew how to fight and what was at stake but a lot of our leaders either did not know or did not want to know. Lets face it, a lot of them are good enough to do their jobs in normal times, such as sorting out bonus payments, our compensation claims and odd $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ hours we have had stopped by management, but in a class war like we have just been through, they did not have a clue. It was the same with leaders of other unions and Labour Party leaders. They did not want us to win - it might have spoilt their good lives. They might have had to show which side they were on - ours or the bosses.

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Some miners were - and are - a disgrace to the NUM. If I had my way I should expel them from the union and only let them rejoin on the condition they fought with the union, their fellow workers. There are some I would never accept back. They are rubbish, no principles at all - we do not want them, we do not need them. Some of our officials are in full retreat, they are running backwards so fast it is a disgrace and sickening to see. You have seen them, they are in a lot of branches - on the committee for what they can get out of it for themselves, not what they can put into the union. The strike has shown them for what they are. We must get rid of them now. They sat in the strike centres while we were getting hammered on the picket lines, or we did not see them at all - they went missing, did not want to make any enemies with management or scabs.

So I say to all miners and their families and supporters - lets get united, don't lets quibble about small things, we know what needs to be done, so lets get ready, get organised, get off our knees and do it. We cannot turn our backs - it will not go away. Its either fight now or stay cowed for ever. Lets build a union and a future that we can look on with pride.

From
a North Derbyshire miner.

NATIONAL RANK AND FILE MINERS MOVEMENT

Organised by rank and file miners
from Yorkshire, Warwickshire, Derbyshire,
Nottinghamshire, Kent, Leicestershire,
who are committed to fighting within the N.U.M.
on the following points.

- *Amnesty for all sacked and victimised miners.*
- *Financial assistance until reinstatement.*
- *Continuation of the fight against pit closures and the fight against anti trade union laws.*

Since the last conference the Rank & File Movement have produced a paper which is being distributed round the pits. If you are unable to get a copy or if you want details of the conference, circulating with resolutions or want to send a resolution in. Contact:
A. Robe (0302)
844446
T. Clegg (0302)
845655

CONFERENCE

Open to NUM members and wives only.

SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY STUDENTS UNION
LOWER REFRATORY
WESTERN BANK

Saturday 10TH AUG. 1-6 pm

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-between 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 1984-5 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 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 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, gays or black people.

THE OPPRESSED

We support all struggles by people in countries 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 we demand the immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland.

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, and will again, use 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.

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