

# workers power

25p/10p strikers

Fortnightly paper of the Workers Power group

## STRIKE WITH THE MINERS, AND

# BREAK THROUGH TO VICTORY

**IAN MACGREGOR HAS now officially admitted what most miners have known for months. He told a meeting of NCB directors last week that he is out to starve the miners into submission and break the power of the NUM. He wants the strike to run and run in the hope that this will eventually demoralise the strikers.**

The Government are right behind him in this scheme. They are paying him £1,800 a week to sit out the strike and to decimate the coal industry.

Thatcher is personally authorising his every provocative act against the miners. His speeches are checked by her. His sacking of a total of 43 miners in Kent and Derbyshire for occupying their pits has her assent. Together they are working full-time to ensure that the miners are defeated.

**We need to help the miners to break out of isolation, win action from all workers and bring about a speedy and total victory for the NUM.**

The leaders of the Labour movement have shown themselves to have feet of clay. The TUC has not organised one single action in support of the miners. The regional TUC's have only gone so far as calling one day actions or demonstrations.

The Guardian reported, "TUC leaders yesterday expressed their concern that the strike could still be in full flow when this Autumn's TUC and Labour Party conferences are held. They fear that unless the strike is over it could cause embarrassment and divisions at the conferences." (28.6.84)

In plain words the scabs and traitors, the Murrays, Grahams and the Sirs, at the top of our movement do not want to be "embarrassed" by being asked to support workers defending their jobs! They are terrified of facing pressure from miners and their own rank and file to do something to win this strike. The leaders of the Labour movement must not be allowed to get away with their policy of deliberately isolating the miners, or limiting their support to patchy blacking and cash.

Stopping steel is the NUM's priority target. So far, steel production has only fallen, overall, by 8%. In

1972 and 1974, no steel was produced during the two strikes. The use of scab coal and coke is widespread. ISTC members are unloading imported scab coal at BSC wharves throughout the country.

Back-stabber Sirs is deliberately lying about the level of production needed to maintain furnaces. He claimed that Scunthorpe was down to 25% of its normal production and needed 50% to avoid damage. The *New Statesman* exposed this claim, "That morning the *Daily Telegraph* had printed the previous week's output figures for the plant which showed production running at 60% Overnight Sirs amended his figures to say that to remain at safe working levels Scunthorpe needed to produce at least 80% of normal levels." (29.6.84)

Sirs is lying because he wants to do the bosses' dirty work for them. He is getting away with all of this because the workforce is weak and demoralised.

It has not recovered from the defeat it suffered at the hands of the Tories, helped by Sirs' sabotage, in 1980

To get through to these workers, miners will have to do two things. **Firstly, they must go around Bill Sirs.** They must appeal directly to the steelworkers themselves. Rank and file miners must get into the plants, aided by steel militants, to explain their case to mass meetings. Sirs has proved that he is a liar. He can be trusted only to misinform and mislead his members.

**Secondly, we must answer the fears of the steelworkers that their jobs will go if they support the miners.** It is no good Peter Heathfield saying to the steelworkers, "There are bound to be casualties in any dispute of this magnitude." This will not reassure steelworkers. Nor is it any good simply saying that the NUM refused to move steel in 1980, as Arthur Scargill has. Not moving steel in the pits does not

have anything like the same implication for production as not moving coal into the steel plants. The steelworkers know this and an appeal on these moral grounds, though justified, will not win action.

**The steelworkers need to be faced squarely with the fact that their jobs are threatened not by the miners but by the Tories.** The government has made clear that in two years either Ravenscraig or Llanwern will close. Is that the miners' fault? Will there be much chance of striking to save the plants if the miners are defeated now? Not at all. A defeat for the miners will embolden the bosses.

The steel bosses are already wielding the knife. At the Staveley and Stanton steel works, 550 jobs are to go. Is this because of the miners? According to a company spokesman it is due to a "shortfall in orders" — the jobs, like those in the pits that MacGregor

is trying to close, are, in capitalist terms, "uneconomic".

**For this reason the miners must make opposition to steel redundancies and closures part of their own demands and, on this basis, win the steelworkers to strike action. Joint action on this scale will soon have the Tories on the run.**

A joint strike can and must spread the action even further. Railworkers are currently involved in blacking action. This is vital but the blacking is not being totally implemented. Railworkers doing the blacking are often isolated and in danger of being victimised. At least 35,000 jobs on the railways are threatened by BR's long term rationalisation plans. As with steel, if the miners lose then the rail jobs will disappear all the more quickly. By building on the blacking action the NUR and ASLEF militants must force their supposed left-leaders to strike with the miners. The best form of blockade is a strike — and a strike now can save rail jobs as well. The railworkers' resolve not to move coal will be strengthened by the decision of Didcot power workers not to touch scab coal if it is brought into the power station. Rank and file miners must launch a renewed propaganda offensive aimed at the power workers.

Mass strike action by the unions of the Triple Alliance should be the immediate goal of all militants in the mines, steelworks and on the railways. Such action is the best way of drawing ever broader sections of workers into a common fight against the Tories. It can create the force to make the leaders of the movement, the TUC, call a general strike.

A general strike would bring about a speedy victory for the miners. We could smash the Tory offensive and defend our jobs, living standards and services. What is more, by staying out until the Tories' anti-union laws are smashed, we would protect our unions from attacks, like those on the NGA, and the ones threatened on the NUM, from the thieves who call themselves judges.

**FORWARD TO VICTORY!  
BLACK ALL STEEL!  
THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE MUST STRIKE!  
FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!**

## Break with Kinnock's scabbing

"By their deeds shall ye know them" is a good motto for miners in judging the Labour Party leadership. The Judas Kinnock, for one, stabbed the miners at Orgreave in the back when they were up against the police — condemning "picket line violence". Earlier in the strike, along with Stan Orme, he was trying to stitch up a rotten deal with the NCB.

Throughout the dispute he has, following the advice of his 'publicity managers', carefully distanced himself from the struggle — rarely if ever attending miners demonstrations, pickets or speaking on major platform meetings.

Now the Kinnockites are avoiding wholehearted support for the miners by insisting the issue is about "energy policy". Kinnock moved a resolution to this effect at the NEC on June 28th. James Mortimer, the Party secretary, was explicit that the Labour Party, "were not supporting the miners because they were

fighting to save jobs but because it is in the public interest!"

This mealy-mouthed 'support' has a purpose. Kinnock is prepared to sacrifice miners jobs. Labour, with Benn as Energy Minister, chopped thousands in the 1970s. The fact that Kinnock is grasping at MacGregor's offer to "expand the industry" demonstrates they would do the same again. The expansion being talked about is on the basis of there being fewer jobs.

The leading lights of the left are not challenging this cowardice and treachery. Many miners were well pleased with Benn's call that "trade unionists in a whole range of industries and services should plan to take industrial action". Once again, though, his actions fell short of his platform fireworks. Two days after making this speech he withdrew his resolution at Labour's NEC committing the Labour Party to a campaign of demonstrations in support of the

miners. He did this so as not to embarrass Kinnock with a clear call for action in support of the miners.

Activists in the Labour Party who support the miners must make sure of two things. First, maximum solidarity — financial and physical — must be won at every level of the Party, including the calling of demonstrations and rallies. Second, at the Labour Party Conference a torrent of resolutions and amendments demanding active support from the Party and its leadership for the strike, and condemning Kinnock's spineless record in it, must be put.

Further, those leaders of the Labour Left, like Skinner and Benn, who have been active in their solidarity with the miners must openly challenge and break with the Kinnockites' treachery. No more compromises with Kinnock, no more Bishop Stortford truces. If Kinnock will not support the miners he must be challenged for the leadership by those committed to do so.

Socialist Worker

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ORGREAVE  
INTO  
SALTLEY**

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**FILE COPY**

"This means that we can save the GLC and Metropolitan Counties. There is no longer any doubt about that".

That was GLC leader Ken Livingstone's response to the news that the House of Lords had delivered a 48 vote rebuff to the Government's Interim Provisions Bill. The Bill allows for the cancellation of the GLC elections in May 1985. This move by Thatcher is designed to prevent the election being used as a propaganda platform against another Bill - to be introduced in November - designed to abolish the GLC and Metropolitan Counties.

The truth, however, is that the Tory Cabinet will not be deterred by their failure to tempt a hundred or so dusty peers away from the Lord's Test match, Henley Regatta or Wimbledon, to troop into the Government lobby. Patrick Jenkin has already said that the elections will not be allowed to take place, let alone make them re-consider the GLC's future, as Livingstone would like to think. Any compromise in the weeks ahead will merely entail the present set of GLC councillors being allowed to extend their term of office for a few more months.

This, of course, would be a set-back for the Government. Firstly, because the GLC may be able to hand out millions of pounds of next year's budget before they're abolished. Secondly, because it would enable the GLC to be involved in any protracted fight alongside other Labour Councils over rate-capping next year.

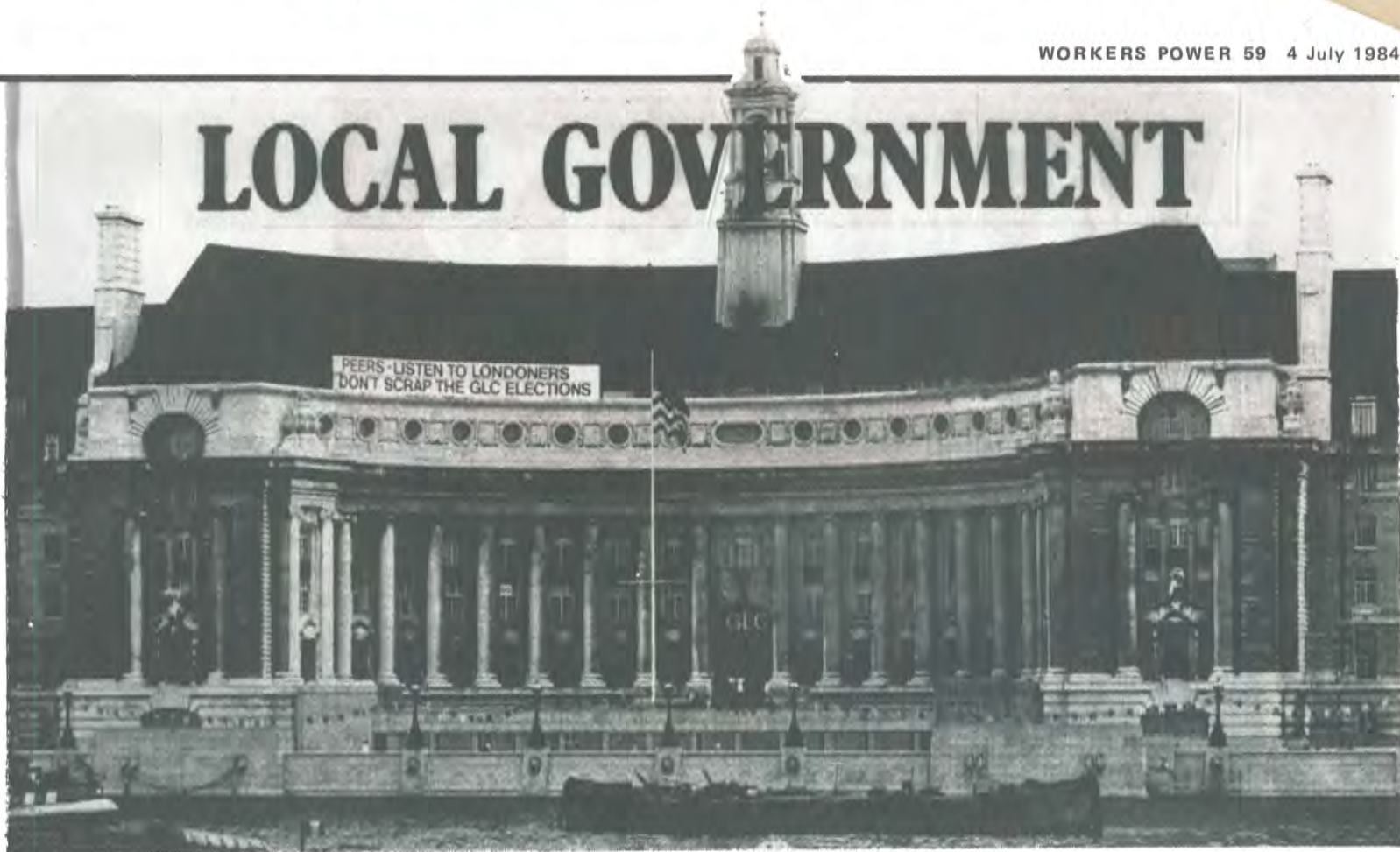
But instead of focussing on the limited nature of the Lords' vote, Livingstone, by his comment, only serves to bolster the illusion that this unelected block of reaction can be a friend of the working class. Citizen Ken conveniently forgets that Labour is committed to abolition of the House of Lords. It is partly with this in mind that many Tory peers thought twice about turning out to vote against elections.

Livingstone had banked everything in the campaign to save the GLC on exploiting the divisions within the Tory ranks. Certainly, three ex-Tory ministers and 36 Tory MPs refused to vote for the Bill in the Commons. But to rely upon this bringing success is fatal for three reasons.

First, the huge Thatcherite majority in the Commons will guarantee triumph for the Bill. Secondly, actual opposition to the GLC's abolition is much slighter than opposition to the paving Bill. And thirdly, Thatcher doesn't give a damn for democratic sentiments when it comes to pursuing the interests of her class. The great urban centres where the working class has the chance of an electoral majority can return irritating Labour-controlled councils which can potentially delay or obstruct Thatcher's plans for massive cuts in services. So, she reasons, they must go.

Exactly the same thinking lies behind the Tories rate-capping legislation, which will dictate to Labour councils how much they can spend and how much they can raise through rates. At present, Liverpool City Council are on the front line of this attack. Having taken over from a Liberal administration last year - and therefore deprived of the years of "creative accounting" to build up reserves as in some London Boroughs and Sheffield - Liverpool were faced with the choice of cutting 5,000 jobs or a 200% rate rise. So far, the Council, in which the Militant group has a large sway, have refused.

Originally, Derek Hatton, deputy leader and Militant supporter pledged no cuts, no job losses and no rate rises, and an illegal budget. On this basis the Liverpool working class rallied to a 20,000 strong demonstration at the end of March and ensured a huge 47% vote for Labour in the May 2nd local elections. This produced a new



Bernie Malone

## Unions must lead council fightback

17 seat majority - enough for Hatton's stated aims to be no longer thwarted by right-wing Labour councillors voting with the Liberals.

It is in the period since these May elections that all the weaknesses in Labour's strategy for fighting the Tories has been revealed. Bolstered by their lordships' revolt, the GLC are to spend another £3 million on more publicity and are considering a quasi-referendum on the issue of abolition. Some Labour Councillors will stand for re-election on condition that pro-abolition Tories stand against them.

In fact this bunch will consider everything except mobilising the force which will bring victory. The working class only figures in their 'strategy' as so many signatures on a petition. The only weapon that can force the Tories to change their minds, strike action by council workers supported by strikes throughout the public sector and particularly by private sector workers, is seen as damaging to the useless alliances which these wheeler dealers have been building.

Yet the potential for such action was demonstrated on the 28th and 29th March when first the London Transport workers then other council workers struck in their tens of thousands against the Tories' plans, and more recently on the 7th and 27th June, in support of the miners.

Most traitorous has been the Labour leadership. Kinnock, Cunningham and Straw have urged that no action outside the law be considered no matter what attacks the Tories mount. But the leaders of most Labour councils have not been much better in practice. Here indeed Livingstone and Sheffield's Blunkett have played their part, in discouraging Liverpool's City Councillors from "going out on a limb", and instead "keeping the powder dry" until next year when rate-capping is introduced.

At the end of June the GLC deputy leader and leaders of three London borough councils published a policy statement to this effect. Agreed by the Greater London Labour Parties Executive, it is to go before the early July Labour local government conference in Sheffield. Allegedly this would give 20-30 councils the opportunity to fight together. In fact it postpones the real possibility of massive strike action now in London, Liverpool and other major cities at a time when the state has its hands full with the miners strike, in favour of the pie-in-the-sky fightback proposed annually by Labour's municipal cretins.

Even Liverpool Council, however, have contributed to their own isolation. They have spent the last month and a half talking to Jenkin, searching for a fruitless compromise which would still entail big job losses and a 37% rate rise! Meanwhile, the Tories hoped the miners' strike would have been derailed. Even now Hatton and the rest have set the next budget day for July 11th - over two months since Liverpool workers gave them a clear mandate!

The Council have demobilised their support as a result, they even discouraged big demonstrations against Jenkin's visit to Liverpool. They have erred by putting the search for unity with scabs like Kinnock, Straw and Cunningham before spreading the campaign. Now they hope to pick up momentum before July 11th.

Militant will claim that mobilisations of workers in defence of the budget are correct tactics. As a measure we would, of course, seek to extend and deepen the commitment to strike action amongst particularly private sector workers who can hit at bosses' profits. But it is Militant's strategy that is flawed. They were elected as Labour candidates - not 'Marxists' - on a programme of municipalist reform.

To hope to generate from the council chamber the necessary class-wide response from within the trade union and shop steward committees over a matter of months is well nigh impossible. Genuine revolutionaries prioritise building their party within the rank and file strongholds. For Militant the winning of positions in the local state came as a result of capturing the decayed Labour Party constituency machine. Thus, their rise was not paralleled by a rise in the political consciousness or activity of Liverpool workers.

The real aim of Marxists is to break up the form of local council rule, as with Parliament itself. Neither are suited as organs of real workers democracy or class struggle. The Militant do no stand before Liverpool as honest revolutionaries. Instead they contribute toward the deception that socialism can be delivered from the council chamber as long as back-up support from workers can be turned on and off like a tap when it is convenient to our 'Marxist' councillors.

A real fightback can and must begin now. An illegal budget must be pushed through on July 11th. In Sheffield the other councils must pledge support for a fight this year. Council workers must pledge themselves, as the NALGO conference did, to non co-operation with any commissioners should they be sent in. Above all else, Liverpool workers must stay loyal to the defence of jobs and services through their own organisations up to and including a city-wide council of action. Loyalty to the council must be highly conditional on their preparedness to fight. Labour councillors staying in office "to fight another day" can never be a higher good than the political and organisational strengthening of independent rank and file organisation. ■  
by Dave Jenkins

## LIVINGSTONE: How much of an ogre?

Review of Citizen Ken  
John Carvel Chatto 1984  
Price: £2.95 (pb)

BACK IN MAY 1981 the Tory GLC manifesto warned that "The Marxist threat to London is no figment of the imagination". This sinister "Marxist threat" was of course none other than the GLC Labour group which swept to power that month and proceeded to elect Ken Livingstone as Labour Leader. As the *Sun* put it, the stage was now cleared for "full-steam-ahead red-blooded Socialism for London".

But even Livingstone and the GLC Labour group themselves had their own version of this perspective. The 'Victory' issue of *London Labour Labour Briefing* claimed that the Labour landslide was a victory for a "radical socialist programme" which would be put into effect forthwith.

Livingstone occupies a peculiar position in political mythology - variously darling of the Labour left and bogeyman of the Tories. The *Tory Sun* even accorded him the honour of being the "most odious man in Britain". But even a cursory reading of *Citizen Ken* couldn't fail to reassure the reader that 'Red Ken' is just not as red as he is made out to be.

Livingstone skillfully contrives to project two images at once. On the one side, a co-editor of *Labour Herald* in which he has attacked the notion that Labour 1983 manifesto was radical. Or more recently in *Labour Briefing* where he expresses the view that the depth of Britain's crisis demands sweeping control measures taken against capital.

On the other side, there is the Citizen Ken who graciously bows to the Queen, who is well received by SDP, Liberals and lords alike in



Citizen Ken acknowledges his Queen

the campaign to save the GLC.

Will the real Ken Livingstone stand up? In fact, Carvel's book provides all one needs to show that there is more of the 'Citizen' than the 'Red' in Livingstone.

Livingstone joined the Labour Party in 1968 at a time when left-wingers were leaving it in droves for one of the various 'Trotskyist' groups. Consequently, with Labour activists so thin on the ground, the Labour electoral machine offered good prospects for those nurturing career ambitions. "I joined thinking that there would be a really good chance in about ten years time of getting on the local council if I worked really hard". Livingstone didn't have to wait that long. In May 1971 he was elected to Lambeth Borough Council. By 1973 he was on the GLC.

At this time Livingstone was not regarded as being particularly left-wing. Ted Knight remembers him as "basically a Wilson supporter, probably with some influence from people like Crosland". Livingstone's left credentials came when he took part in a revolt against spending cuts pushed through the ruling Labour administration in 1975.

Livingstone has throughout his political career remained firmly wedded to left-reformism. The limitations of this position were clearly revealed in the battle over 'Fares Fair', after the Tory Borough of Bromley secured a court ruling declaring it illegal. Livingstone's response to this setback was to take the case to the Law Lords. This touching display of faith in the beneficence of the Tory ruling class got a predictable and brutal response. At no time in the 'Fares Fair' campaign did Livingstone begin to organise London Transport workers in a fightback against the bosses' courts - perhaps he remembered their anger over his own opposition to their earlier pay claim. Livingstone could not even be

moved to support the illegal 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' campaign set up by other 'left' GLC members. As Carvel says, "Under pressure, he (Livingstone) moved towards a compromise with political reality." In other words, Livingstone 'Could Fight, Wouldn't Fight'. Tory readers of Carvel's book will be relieved to find other evidence of this compromise such as the claim that "positive elements with British capital" are expected to play a major role in Livingstone's socialist vision.

But compromise is the very stuff of Livingstone's left reformism. In his own words, it is impossible "to achieve social change other than through the Labour Party." In practice this means getting a Labour government elected at whatever cost. Most recently this has necessitated the dropping of his own opposition to the Labour right, and acceptance of Kinnock's Leadership, all in the interests of 'party unity' and electoral viability. Like all left reformist critics, however, having declared a truce with the right, and underlined their right to lead, Livingstone allows himself the luxury of criticisms over Party policy.

Carvel's book at least helps dispel the myth - created and nurtured by centrists of Socialist League stripe - that Livingstone's politics are evolving in a Marxist or revolutionary direction. Shorn of rhetoric, Citizen Ken remains a municipal wheeler-dealer, devotee of good and worthy causes and a Labour careerist. ■

Jon Lewis

# YORKS WIVES FLY TO NOTTS

LAST WEDNESDAY NIGHT over 120 women from wives' support groups throughout Yorkshire, the Midlands and Nottingham converged on Calverton pit in Nottinghamshire. They fought a determined battle to try and stop scabs going into work, and gave support to the Calverton wives who have been on the picket lines nearly every day since the strike began.

Lynne from Hatfield Main who organised the picket, described to us what happened.

"We'd heard that the pickets at Calverton and the wives' group were having a hard time. When we found out that there was a night shift being picketed by the wives we thought that this was an ideal opportunity for us. Because lots of us have got kids it's much easier for us to go picketing at night.

We decided at our support group, Hatfield Main, that we would organise a picket, and then we thought why not spread the word and get more there. First we got in touch with the Doncaster wives co-ordinating group.

Then I phoned around the other groups we knew. We got a great response. People said yes straight away - some just said, "we'll see you there!" Some had already heard - news travels fast between us.

## WHY DID WE ORGANISE THE PICKET?

It's important to have women on picket lines, we need to show that women who support the strike are determined, and that we back the women at Calverton.

We drove down there in minibuses and cars. Some of the pickets from our pit came with us and drove the minibuses. We met like little convoys down the back lanes to Calverton. When we arrived we took the cops by surprise. There were only about 12 of them on the gates! It didn't take them long to get reinforcements, though. We were the first ones there, but after a few minutes more and more women kept turning up. We cheered as women from Keresley turned up and then more women, this time from Ollerton.

## UP AGAINST THE POLICE

We were pretty well organised in the beginning. We stood right by the main entrance to the pit. When the cops told us to stand further down the road we started singing, "we shall not be



"DON'T TREAT THEM ANY DIFFERENT, HIT THEM LIKE THEY WERE MEN"

moved" and linked up arms. They were really sly and had to sneak round the back of us and surround us. When they saw we wouldn't move they started shoving and pushing us over the road. In the end they had us penned in, completely surrounded and over the other side of the road. They kept us penned in there for the rest of the night, even when we wanted to go in the end.

The cops showed no remorse. We overheard the inspector at the beginning telling his men "don't treat them any different, hit them like they were men!". They were really brutal, especially to some of the older women.

I wasn't really surprised by what the cops did. I was expecting it. But I don't think some of the women were. They know about police brutality and what's going on but when you know you can get your head kicked in it's very different.

Towards the end we thought we'd all had it. We were completely surrounded by cops. They wouldn't let us go, more reinforcements were coming and the meat wagon was waiting for us. One woman got knocked to the floor and a cop was just about to boot her one. I went over to see what was going on and then I got smacked in the jaw. I got pulled out by one of our lot. In the end 10 women got arrested and one ended up in hospital.

We've seen it all tonight, we've been there and experienced it, we felt how the men must feel, what they must go through every day picketing. Everybody admitted afterwards that they were frightened, but when you see the scabs going in your anger keeps you going.

We'll be back, there's no stopping us now! If we can organise that picket in a day, we can get something 3 times as big with more time.

## THE NATIONAL SUPPORT CONFERENCE

There's lots more we must raise. We hope we can discuss stuff like this at the national conference of wives support group which Hatfield is backing. We also have to discuss the question of wives' fines being paid in Yorkshire. All those from Yorkshire who got arrested last night don't know if their fines will be paid because the Yorkshire Executive decided not to pay them anymore.

(Since the picket I have phoned around and Heathfield has pledged his support and told us not to worry about legal costs and the NUM will sort it out - Lynne).

We've got in touch with all the Doncaster wives groups to send a letter of protest to the Executive, and we're going to lobby the delegate conference next month.

This picket was a real boost to the Calverton women. We told them we were coming but they got a real surprise on the night - they said they were only expecting 6 of us and more than a hundred turned up. One of the lads who came with us said afterwards - "You women are worth your weight in gold. I'm really proud of each one of you." □

## Miners Support Committees

MINERS SUPPORT COMMITTEES have been set up in many towns. At the London rally on June 27th Arthur Scargill called for more to be set up in order to win solidarity action with the miners. He is right to issue such a call, but to turn it into practice the existing support committees need to change gear.

Most of the committees have so far confined themselves to the tasks of fund-raising, putting up pickets and arranging rallies. These are vital tasks. We in no way underestimate their importance to the strike. However, much more needs to be done and needs to be done urgently.

The support committees need to be overhauled. They need to start directing their energies towards winning action. The Sheffield Support Committee is a good illustration of the problems that need to be overcome. The committee was established by the Trades Council and delegacies were confined to the ranks of the Trades Council.

It meets only monthly and discusses little more than money collections and food distribution. It issued a call for a mass picket at Orgreave, but did not lift a finger to publicise its own call, or organise to implement it. On June 18th it did nothing to help the miners against the police.

So as to prevent this inertia being repeated, support committees must be built on a delegate basis. They must not be left as self-selected sub-committees of a Trades Council. Trades Councils must organise and sponsor committees open to delegates from every workplace organisation, union branch and Labour Party ward.

They must meet at least weekly and more often during any major battles with the police in their locality. They must turn to the factories. Well produced leaflets explaining the miners' case must be distributed in their thousands. Factory gate meetings must be organised at every plant. Miners' speakers, particularly those with experience of the police brutality, must address such meetings and appeal for active support from the factory workers on the picket line.

Other sections of workers either taking action over their own demands (the various strikes against privatisation for example) or those like railworkers or, hopefully, steelworkers taking action in support of the miners should be drawn into the committees. Regular demos, meetings in working class estates, big rallies should be organised. A major effort must be made to win support from unemployed workers and youth. They should be brought to the picket lines in their thousands. Most important, when there is mass picketing in their area, the support committee must issue the call and work overtime to implement the call for mass strike action to back the pickets.

Unless the support committees turn in this direction then they run the danger of becoming isolated and routinised fund-raisers. The help they will give to the strikers will be needlessly limited. Won to the proposals we have outlined, they will not merely help the strike, they will help win it. ■

## Build the National Miners' Wives Conference

WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUPS have been formed in all the coalfields and are still springing up. The women are determined to be centrally involved in picketing, building solidarity and organising basic support and welfare. The account of the Calverton picket by Lynne, on this page shows how the strike has been such a political eye-opener for many women.

Not deterred by the considerable hardship they face, women have increased their activity. A group has recently been set up in Longton, Staffordshire by wives of strikers at Florence pit, where there isn't even a strike committee. They set it up with help from the Camp Hill Ladies Support Group from Warwickshire and are pledged to maintaining these links and extending them to other groups locally.

A demonstration in Dover last week, called by Kent women, included women from Yorkshire, Coventry, Nottingham, Cynheidre and Hatfield. Abertillery women have organised a rally for the 27th July with Arthur Scargill speaking, and hope this will help to build up local support.

Communication between the groups is now improving with coordinating meetings for representatives of local groups being held regularly in Doncaster, Chesterfield, Nottingham and elsewhere. This type of link up is essential if the groups are to be able to organise effective

picketing, win support and solidarity action from other workers and obtain maximum facilities and funding from the NUM.

We need to build a national link up so that we can win this strike and continue the fight for women's rights after the strike. This would allow each group to gain support, information and ideas from the others, and also to organise collective action.

A national conference of miners' wives groups is presently being organised by Betty Heathfield and the Chesterfield women, and this is supported by Hatfield Main and Keresley women. To be effective there should be a preliminary meeting straight away of representatives from as many groups as possible to decide on an agenda, sort out details and ensure that all groups are contacted. Speakers should be sent round to other groups for support and so on. The conference itself should be seen as an arena for discussing and organising action, picketing, demonstrations, winning support and raising questions important to the women such as childcare, unemployment and health cuts.

It would be a waste if it were simply a rally where everyone hears how good the groups are, but didn't take them forward in any way. It must be the launching pad for a militant national organisation of working class women in the mining areas!

Build the National Miners' Wives Conference!



Hatfield women on the march for the miners

# DEFEND THE PICKET LINE

**THE BATTLE OF Orgreave** culminated, on June 18th, in an orgy of police violence. Dressed like gladiators, the police launched repeated assaults on the unarmed picket line. The fact that the coke run was able to take place meant that a decisive victory was denied to the miners. The halting of the coke run in the following week was, as every picket knows, something BSC had long planned as a means of replenishing stocks.

Nevertheless it would be stupid to call Orgreave a police victory. Their violent tactics were unable to rout the pickets. Their enormous advantages, in terms of weapons, animals and organisation did not cause panic or retreat in the ranks of the pickets. Quite the reverse happened. Instead of passively watching police snatch squads lift picketers, miners fought hand to hand with those squads. Every arrest they made and every inch of territory they took cost the police dear. Cavalry charges were countered with very effective barricades. A new and inspiring militancy was displayed by miners to deal with the bloody handiwork of Thatcher's thugs.

In the weeks ahead there will be more situations like Orgreave. The turn to a blockade of the steel industry will be met with more police repression. If we are to achieve real victories and stop the scab lorries keeping plants supplied we must learn the lessons of Orgreave and build on the new picket militancy and courage that was shown there.

Before June 18th we argued that supportive strike action was necessary to make sure that the pickets really were *mass*. We also insisted that such strike action was necessary to start hitting other sections of industry, hitting the bosses' profits and causing splits and panic in their ranks. During the struggle at Orgreave we put out leaflets around key Sheffield factories arguing for such strike action. We called for a city-wide general strike. We were alone in calling for such action. The Yorkshire NUM leadership made no appeal to the Sheffield labour movement to act.

To its shame the Sheffield labour movement - in particular the strong Communist-Party led engineering factories - stood on the sidelines of the battle. It allowed the miners to face the police ferocity alone. This must never happen again!

In South Wales, Scotland and South Yorkshire picketing must be backed up by strike action. If it is not we will never have enough people to put the police to flight.

Orgreave also showed the need for far more organisation on the picket line. The miners' courage was there for all to see. This courage must be linked to the building of disciplined defence groups that can protect the picket line and give it a greater chance of breaking through the police lines.

It is obvious to every miner who fought at Orgreave that new picketing tactics are urgently required. The police have developed a whole range of *new* tactics, *new* formations, *new* riot gear, all aimed at rendering the old-style mass picket ineffective. When Tony Clements, the ex-paratrooper who says he is "delighted" to be in charge of the police at Orgreave, talked on TV of accepting the miners' right to have a "shove", he expressed the weaknesses of that tactic. It is tolerated because against the new police methods it will not work.

Arthur Scargill has said that the main task of the pickets like that at Orgreave, is to make sure that every coke lorry costs the government a fortune. This is a dangerous line of thinking. The government is prepared to spend huge sums of money to break the strike. They will go on spending money. To turn the tide on the police and prevent further injuries and arrests urgent measures of defence must be taken.

Even before Orgreave, miners in South Yorkshire were pushing for some defensive steps to be taken. On May 15th the Yorkshire Area Strike Committee "noted" proposals from Doncaster miners, for the issuing of protective helmets for pickets. Pickets from the Doncaster pits of Hatfield, Armthorpe and Goldthorpe told us that the proposal for the issuing of helmets was a positive response to the police's use of truncheons. It was proposed, in a report shown to us by the pickets, that helmets be issued to pits supplying the largest number of pickets and they should form teams to stop the police from picking off individuals wearing protective helmets.

The report to the committee argued, correctly, that: "a body of pickets equipped in such a fashion would lift the morale of our men no end." Apart from being a very sensible move, this report shows that rank and file miners understand the need for organised defence. In our view the report to the Yorks Strike Committee should be acted upon immediately.

On its own though, the measure will not be enough. The teams talked about in the report will still need training for the purposes of defence. Picket captains - selected from amongst the most trusted and well-respected militants - should be attached to each team. The teams should be made up from the youngest and fittest miners and should enlist the help and support of local unemployed youth.

Instead of unco-ordinated stone throwing, a

sensible attitude to methods of defence should be adopted. Here the American Trotskyists who led the Minneapolis truck drivers strikes in the 1930s can teach the miners a thing or two. As a Trotskyist involved explained about their pickets: "At first the pickets went out barehanded, but they came back with broken heads and injuries of various kinds. Then they equipped themselves with shillalals for the next trips. A shillalah, as any Irishman can tell you, is a blackthorn stick you lean on in case you suddenly go lame. Of course it is handy for other purposes too."

Along with protective headgear organised defence can begin to win us outright picket line victories. But only on the condition that we do not simply see the problem as a technical one. It is not. It is political. It will meet with furious resistance from the milk and water "socialists" of the Kinnock, Benn and Communist Party breed. They will call on their supporters in the NUM - people like Jack Taylor, Emyln Williams and Mick McGahey - to oppose moves in this direction.

Also, even the best organised defence teams need mass support. If a handful do get through the police lines, they will need thousands to march through the path they have cleared. The question of linking the building and organising of the picket line, to supportive mass strike action is paramount. If we can win such action then there is no reason on earth why the pickets cannot be victorious. ■

by Mark Hoskisson

Orgreave: Police violence and workers' resistance



## NO SCABS IN THE N.U.M.

THE NUM SPECIAL conference will discuss proposals to establish a national disciplinary panel and a national appeals committee. Not one moment too soon! The NUM has been crippled from birth by its federal structures. Until now there has been no national disciplinary structure worth speaking of. At last the machinery will exist to discipline the scabs in the NUM ranks.

Rank and file miners must keep a tight grip on this machinery. In their hands it will represent a significant advance. In the hands of unaccountable bureaucrats it could well be used against independent rank and file initiatives.

The rule change still leaves certain burning questions unanswered. What is the conference going to do about the scabs who daily cross the picket lines and yet still keep their NUM cards and protection? What is the conference going to do to the scabs who have got themselves elected as delegates and branch officials behind police lines and on NCB property in Nottinghamshire? What should we do to arch scabs like Jones and Toon who have tried every trick to knife this strike in the back and yet still sit on the union's highest bodies? Militants will take heart from a change of rule. But we need to act against these scabs here and now.

The conference should make it clear what it thinks of the scab officials, delegates and officers. They should not be recognised, they should not be admitted to any conference or committee of this union. The whole scabby bunch of them should be told so now! The NUM is locked in

mortal battle with the NCB. Yet these scabs still cooperate and work with the NCB. In many areas they maintain standard consultation procedures with the NCB. None of these men should hold a post in the NUM..

Thousands of scabs crawl daily into work. The conference should send them a clear message, either they get out of work by a fixed day very soon or they will be out of the union on the next! An elaborate disciplinary procedure is no substitute for the harsh medicine these scabs need. Let them contemplate going underground without union cards and union protection. Let them contemplate what their wages and conditions would be if it had not been for the NUM. Those still with some loyalties to the union might waver and come over to the strike. As for the rest, we don't need the outright scabs or their chosen "representatives". There must be no way these scabs can determine or vote on the outcome of the dispute.

The scabs will flood the law courts wingeing to their friendly judges. They will talk of setting up independent unions. It is far better for the NUM to cut this cancer out of its own ranks now than to let it fester and grow inside it. The miners have taken on scab unions before and won. There must be no fudging now.

- Kick the scabs out of the union
- No recognition for scab officials
- For a National not a Federal Union of Mineworkers

## Fighting scabs

THE 1984 MINERS' strike has seen large-scale scabbing by miners in Nottinghamshire. Many of the pits in this area were once controlled by a company union, the Spencer union.

The scabbing today has led to much talk amongst miners of the dangers of a revival of Spencerism. The danger is a real one. Thatcher and MacGregor would dearly like to have docile unions that will do their bidding in the coalfields. For militants, both within and outside the scab areas, the history of the fight against Spencerism holds many vital lessons.

In 1926 during the great miners' strike, the coal owners set out to break the national miners' federation. Before the return to work a breakaway "non political" union was established in Nottinghamshire. Calling itself the "industrial union" it was founded by George Spencer MP, with financial backing from Havelock Wilson - President of the National Union of Seamen subsequently expelled from the TUC. A similar organisation was built in South Wales. There it had its initial base at the Taff Merthyr pit amongst scabs who were taken on during the lockout.

The Spencerite "industrial unions" were based on exactly the lines Thatcher and MacGregor are trying to inspire today. The main Welsh Spencerite, Gregory, expressed their aims perfectly: "Our main principle is that we do not believe in strikes...The main plank of our programme is co-

operation with the employers."

The scab unions grew rapidly after the miners were defeated in their heroic seven month struggle. In the year up to June 1927 membership of the Nottinghamshire Miners Association (NMA) fell 50%. By 1937 it had slumped to 8,500 out of 43,600 employed miners in the county. At the beginning of 1927 the South Welsh Miners Federation had 136,250 members. That number fell to 72,981 by December 1927 and 59,858 by late 1928. The scab South Welsh "industrial union" was claiming 35,000 members and 81 branches in mid 1927.

The scab unions worked hand in hand with the bosses. They accepted a massive deterioration in wages and conditions. In January 1937 wages in Spencer-dominated Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire were 3½ pence per ton less than in Yorkshire. Profits were exactly 3½ pence per ton higher.

The Spencerite union was forced on the Nottinghamshire miners by the coal owners. In March 1928 a ballot found 32,000 in favour of the NMA and only 2,500 in favour of the Spencer union. The overwhelming majority of Nottinghamshire miners rejected Spencerism.

However the coal owners refused to recognise the NMA. They prevented collectors of union dues coming near colliery premises. A report by the national union officials found that coal owners

# SWP: doom & gloom mongers

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY last week announced that the miners' strike had reached a new stage. The increased violence of the police and the threatened use of the anti-union laws, said *Socialist Worker*, meant new tasks faced socialists in the strike.

For the miners the SWP recommended more mass picketing. For other workers they call for solidarity action. Indeed they go further than they have, hitherto, calling for delegations to the mass pickets and preparation for "all out industrial action if the Prior and Tebbit laws are used against the rail or transport unions." (SW 23.6.84) These new calls from the SWP amount to too little too late.

Their repeated calls for mass pickets ignore the vital question of *how* to make them mass. Mass strike action is what made Saltley in 1972 so big a picket. Similar strike action is needed today, now at Orgreave, Llanwern, Ravenscraig and elsewhere if the numbers of pickets are to be swelled and, more importantly other sections of industry are to be hit where it hurts - in their pockets.

The SWP totally downplay the need for such action. They do not call for it in support of the miners *now*. They only raise it as a possibility for the future in support of rail or transport workers. This is typical of their essentially sectional attitude to the dispute. They raise mass picketing *by miners* as a magic key to victory. They have nothing to say about how the miners' strike can be linked to the needs and interests of other workers. Their struggles are for another day. This is no caricature of their position. It is a very accurate description of their approach to the strike.

For ten weeks turning collections into levies was the only generalising call the SWP would make. When even Scargill showed himself two steps ahead of these "revolutionary leaders" by calling on the railworkers to strike alongside the miners on their own claim, the SWP hurriedly followed suit. But it did not take long for Scargill to outstrip the SWP once again.

Despite his reliance on the ASLEF and NUR leaders to deliver the action, Scargill has made clear the NUM demand for solidarity blacking - action of coal and iron-ore. The SWP reported a resolution to this effect at the ASLEF conference

(SW 16.6.84) but failed to match Scargill in this call preferring again to emphasise the need for miners' mass picketing to enforce blacking. Only with the effective rail blacking of iron ore after 25th June on Llanwern did *Socialist Worker* raise the call!

Wherever there has been a need to *give a lead* around politically generalising demands, the SWP has fallen down. As we've said before they are victims of their economic method. They are happy to confine their calls to stepping up the level of militancy within the *existing* level of sectional struggle (ie. mass picketing) even though the logic of the miners' dispute has pushed beyond this stage, each time leaving the strategists of the SWP caught out by a spontaneous initiative of the rank and file or a new tactic by Scargill.

Worse, the SWP have counterposed a totally abstract notion of "mass action" to any attempts at serious organisation. They correctly criticise the *bureaucratic* attitude to picketing exemplified by the Heathfield/Taylor wing of the broad left. However, instead of explaining the need for defence organisations, democratic control of the strike, the election of trusted leaders with whom certain secrets (such as picket targets) can be left, the SWP call for open house: "Workers organisations can never be like professional armies, trained to jump into action the moment the officers give the command. Instead they rely upon the momentum of struggle." (SW 23.6.84).

So a correct criticism of bureaucracy leads to a denial of organisation and the substituting of "the momentum of struggle" - spontaneity - for revolutionary leadership. Miners facing the level of police violence meted out at Orgreave will not thank the SWP for telling them to go into battle disorganised. Nor is this just a matter of the picket line.

*Socialist Worker* has carried many reports of police intimidation in the communities themselves - at Blidworth recently for example. Yet nothing is said on how to counter it. The revolutionary party is supposed to be the "party of good memory" for workers, recalling past experience and outlining the lessons for today. But the SWP is the party of wilful amnesia. It is obviously too much to expect the SWP to recall the example of the 1926 miners' strike where, to give just one example, at Methil in East Fife, 700 miners were organised in companies under ex-army NCO's, trained to use pick handles. As a result of this action, patrolling their own villages, the mining communities had no further trouble from the police.

The development of the strike eventually forced the SWP, after three months, to put forward a position on "violence". The article that appeared by Alan Gibbons (SW 2.6.84) was a smug justification of their *abstention* on the vital question of picket defence and an attack on some of the bravest and most militant pickets. In the absence of training, protective measures and disciplined operations against the police, many individual pickets or small groups of mates, have taken matters into their own hands at Orgreave and elsewhere by setting on scabs or having a go at the police. Alan Gibbons attacks these men arguing that they "really dissipate their energies and weaken their overall power." He goes on: "But the most important effect of individual violence is that it necessarily divides strikers between those who 'want to have a bash' and those who don't. It destroys the collective power of the workers."

To counterpose "mass action" to the violence of the few is ridiculous, wrong and flows from the SWP's obsession that numbers alone on the picket line will solve all the problems.

The real tasks of the moment (as we explain in our article on Orgreave) is to combine mass action with organised and well directed defensive actions and attempts to penetrate police lines. The organisations which carry out such actions will necessarily involve the youngest and fittest miners, not everyone who pickets. Not everyone will be or can be on the front line or in the pickets' answer to the snatch squads. This doesn't "divide strikers" but is a division of labour. This much is common sense. Every picket realises it. The SWP however, because they have no alternative to the "momentum of the struggle" choose to ignore it and peddle the belief that more people on the picket line will cause the truncheon wielders to pack up and go home!

It is not only organisation on the picket line that the SWP have been coy about in this strike. They have boycotted their own (old) slogan for a rank and file movement. The paper they once produced, *The Collier*, is long gone. The SWP have put nothing in its place and have not made any effort to co-ordinate rank and file militants beyond their own periphery, into a force that could check, control and if it proves necessary, replace the official leaders. They go no further than a call for elected strike committees.

The SWP lament the absence of a rank and file movement. In their journal *Socialist Review* they correctly observe: "The rank and file militants have fought hard, and they have pushed their leaders to the left, but they are not independently organised as a force capable of acting against their leaders." (June 1984).

Yet the SWP refuses to call for such a force to be organised. Worse, they refuse to use their influence in certain areas to organise the embryo of a national (or even a regional) rank and file organisation within the NUM. *During* the strike-when the rank and file is mobilised and, on occasion, in conflict with certain regional official leaderships- is the time to launch such a movement. The SWP have members or supporters in a number of pits. That could and should be the basis for a rudimentary cross coalfield organisations which could draw in many more militants in the short term. Instead the SWP as in all previous major strikes, refuse to organise the fighting minority, as the basis for a new militant leadership in the unions, in the course of a struggle. They are content to hurl impotent curses at the officials in the hope that this will win a few recruits to the party. The justification for this abstentionism is that there are not enough SWP members in the miners union! Cliff puts it like this (SW 16.6.84): "If we had 500 or 1,000 supporters of our party in the NUM at the beginning of the strike, the whole struggle would have gone quite differently." But there are not, so the strike is almost certainly doomed. This was the dirge played to 50 or more SWP miners in Doncaster recently. Cliff turns everything on its head by these sentiments.

The best way of ensuring that 500 or 1,000 miners join a revolutionary party is during a struggle- not before or after the strike. The best way for revolutionaries to do that is to build a bridge to them and thousands more by outlining the burning immediate tasks for winning the strike, organising a rank and file movement that can fight to fulfil these tasks and control the leadership and if necessary replace any leaders who vacillate, and link these demands and organisations of the strike to the struggle for working class power.

In spurning this method the SWP reveal their real nature - sectarianism. They refuse to use their members to organise even a limited initiative. Indeed, they allow their members to do and say as they please. As long as they join the party the attitude of miner members to the winning of the strike is unimportant. After all deep in their hearts the SWP believe that the strike will be lost (thanks to the "downturn") and their job is not to influence that outcome (they plead impotence) but to simply recruit out of the strike. This cynical sectarian attitude was well expressed by SWP leader Chris Harman, who wrote: "The key thing for us is to focus on the weaknesses of the strike, to locate them and focus on them. This is not to demoralise people, but to say 'What is to be done?' If we do this we can build the reputation of our party, we can build up networks of militants around us, so that if there is a dock strike in November or a civil service strike next year, or whatever, the next struggle is, we will be that much stronger." (*Socialist Review* May 1984)

This method may result in the recruitment of "ones and twos". We do not deny that. What we say, however, is that it is a bankrupt method for building real and lasting revolutionary influence in the working class. That cannot be separated from the outcome of the miners' strike. It is intimately bound up with it. That is why Workers Power, despite the fact that we are smaller than the SWP, do argue for a strategy that can win the strike. We are convinced that by doing this we will win the respect of, and influence among the militants in the strike. The SWP's approach, on the other hand is certain to ensure that it remains as isolated as before, taking in and spewing out members, but not building the party *in* the class. Miners, and those activists around the strike, must make sure they are not inside the SWP to experience this process. ■

by Steve Morley

by Keith Hassell



## Scab unionism in the 1930s

"only allowed men to secure and maintain employment at a colliery who were willing to sign a form agreeing to deductions being made from their wages as a contribution to the Spencer union."

It was this constant intimidation and victimisation by the bosses which led to the decline of the NMA. In South Wales the scab union was kept alive by the coal owners who encouraged the distribution of scab union literature and the collection of dues in the collieries.

There were major struggles against the scab unions in the mid 1930s. While the South Welsh miners eventually destroyed their company unions the Miners Federation never completely destroyed Spencer's organisation in Nottinghamshire. The major battle against scab unionism in South Wales was launched against the Ocean Coal Company. They had a deliberate policy of recruiting and encouraging scab union members. The struggle was co-ordinated and led by a network of Communist Party members producing their own paper - *The South Wales Miner*.

Strikes against the scab union had not proved successful in 1934. The employers broke the strikers by importing scab labour behind massive police lines. In 1935 the South Welsh militants tried another tactic- they occupied the pits so that the scabs could not work. The great wave of "stay down" strikes started at Nine Mile Point and spread to the major scab union pits.

It was backed by strike action elsewhere in the coalfield and the rail workers refusing to transport coal or scabs. The highpoint was when 1,500 miners occupied the Parc and Dave pits near Treorchy for 13 days until the Ocean Company recognised the Miners Federation. That occupation took place despite the fact that the South Welsh Federation E.C. voted to call off the strike wave once the coal owners agreed to talk to the Federation's representatives.

In Nottingham it was left to rank and file miners at the Harworth pit to take the initiative in smashing Spencerism. A number of incidents at the pit led to a strike over union recognition, in November 1936. The last straw was a checkweigh dispute which led to a walk out. Management would not take the men back unless they agreed to join the "Industrial Union". This they refused to do. A ballot the previous month had voted 1,750 to 145 against the Industrial Union.

The strike got the support of miners in all the other coalfields. They recognised that the cancer of Spencerism could easily spread to their areas if the coal owners were given an opportunity. Two special national conferences of the MFGB called for a national strike which was endorsed by a national ballot in April 1937, by seven to one. A national strike was eventually called for May 22nd. But instead of fighting Spencerism to the death, the executive of the MFGB, prompted by the secre-

tary for mines, agreed to a fusion of the two unions as a way of avoiding the strike.

Thrown into headlong retreat the coal owners saw this as their way out. An agreement on fusion was hurriedly reached, but was thrown out by the second special conference because the terms were too favourable to the coal owners. Not daunted the union leadership persisted in their efforts to find a compromise. They got the strike put back one week to negotiate another fusion agreement. This time it was accepted, on better terms, at a third special conference on May 27th. The Nottinghamshire and District Miners Federated Union was formed and affiliated to the MFGB. The national strike was called off and the miners at Harworth returned to work.

The national leaders accepted a rotten compromise with the owners when they agreed to "fuse" with Spencer's scab union. The energy and determination was there to rout his outfit altogether. But the MFGB took Spencer into the new area union as President along with his full time officials. Spencer should have been finished off forever. It was the MFGB bureaucrats who saved him when he was down - and it is rank and file miners who are paying the price to this day. ■

WORKERS POWER interviewed Raoul Wiener Editor of the Peruvian daily newspaper *The Observer* when he was recently in London. The interview was conducted in Spanish and translated for this paper. *The Observer* has been running as a co-operative since the workers on the paper took it over in 1982 following its virtual financial collapse under the private owners.

**WP:** Can you tell us something about the present economic situation in Peru and the political impact it is having?

**RW:** The economic crisis in Peru has been going on for ten years. The previous military government of General Velasco Alvarado introduced a number of nationalisations and a land reform programme but failed to resolve the main problems in the economic structure in Peru. The present government of Belaunde Terry has shown itself incapable of dealing with the economic crisis in Peru. The international crisis of capitalism has had a dramatic effect on Peru adding to the external debt problem of the country.

**WP:** Has the Belaunde Terry government been able to introduce economic policies similar to the monetarist, Chicago type economics of the Chilean junta?

**RW:** There is certainly a similarity of approach between the Terry government and the Pinochet government in relation to the free market economy. Peru also has its "Chicago Boys" who would like to go further in this direction. But the government is constrained by the class struggle and the militancy of the working class and peasants. The government has had to implement these policies indirectly and falteringly. The bourgeoisie has been trying to solve its crisis by cutting the state budget. They have adopted policies which have sought to destroy "uneconomic" state industries - by refusing financial support, by restricting facilities for import allowances thus often stopping spare parts. In the steel industry, for example, the fall in world steel prices led them to lift the customs barriers and steel is imported more cheaply than it can be produced in Peru. Thus they are destroying the state industry.

They have destroyed the national paper plant to import it more cheaply. The scandal is that this state plant was a new one, they had not even finished paying for the loan granted to build it!

#### IMPOVERISHMENT

**WP:** So what has been the impact on the conditions of the workers and peasants in Peru in terms of inflation, wages, employment in the last period?

**RW:** Since the start of this government the wages and the purchasing power of the working class has been reduced by about 50%. There has also been the creation of what we call the "informal economy". Industries appear with no clear definitions, no clear indications of where the capital comes from. They don't pay taxes, they don't pay the National Insurance tax for the workers. Social security, education and health services are in a situation of complete prostration and collapse. There are illnesses that have been totally eliminated in other parts of the world that have begun to re-appear again in Peru because of the complete bankruptcy of the Health Service - for example typhus epidemics, tropical diseases, tuberculosis.

**WP:** And the impact on the peasants?

**RW:** There is a serious situation in the countryside. There is a huge agrarian debt. This has been accumulating in the only institution which is giving credit to the peasants, the Agrarian Bank of Peru. This is a State Bank.

There have been two big catastrophes, drought in the south and floods in the north. And at the same time, the whole policy of the government has been to strengthen the commercial power in the countryside. They have completely ruined the peasants. The peasants are in a situation where they have no means to continue working the land and to repay their debts. There is a big problem as to how to repay the debt, and at the same time how to get credit in order to cultivate the land. For example, the laws of the agrarian reform (under Velasco - WP) stated that it was not possible to commercialise the land i.e. they cannot sell the land. "The land is for the people who work it" (that was the slogan at the time.)

Now the government's policy is to completely liquidate the agrarian reform. For example it would be possible for the peasant to repay the debt if they put a mortgage on the land. Before it was only possible to put a mortgage on the crops, not the land. Now the situation has changed and it is possible to put a mortgage on the land.

**WP:** So this means the land can go to the banks?

**RW:** Yes. It is possible to commercialise the land again, to sell it or anything. There is also a big offensive against the agricultural co-ops. The policy of the Government at this moment is to try and destroy the co-ops. They have told the peasants that they must take a decision - if they go to the bank, they cannot work the land in a co-op form. **WP:** Obviously these policies have had the effect of rousing the peasants against the government and, at least in the province of Ayacucho, to the development of the rural guerilla movement Sendero Luminoso ("Shining Path"). Can you explain the origins and politics of this group?

**RW:** Sendero Luminoso has been in existence as an organisation since 1970. It came out of a student struggle in Ayacucho against attacks on the budget. It developed influence in the student unions of the province, in the peasant organisations of Ayacucho, and in the teachers union of the region. They characterised the situation in Peru in the 1970s as a revolutionary situation. The nature of the Peruvian state was "Fascist". This was under the military government of Velasco. When Belaunde took

# RECESSION ROCKS PERU

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TODOS DE ACUERDO EN TU

## BARRANTES CANDIDATO

Por unanimidad de los asistentes a la tercera reunión ampliada de Izquierda Unida, Alfonso Barrantes Lingán, alcalde provincial de Lima, será el candidato presidencial en 1985.

Esta propuesta que será ratificada en la próxima convención nacional, don-

de también se definirá quién lo acompañará en las vicepresidencias y los candidatos de Izquierda Unida para senadores.

En cambio, para diputados, se procesará una elección universal y directa de la militancia de izquierda unida, entre los candidatos propuestos por los

partidos políticos que lo conforman.

La reunión, que continuaba al momento de cerrar la presente edición, abordó diversos aspectos orgánicos de IU, referidos al plan de trabajo, tareas orgánicas y de lucha a cumplir en los próximos días.



El refugio de un poeta

*'The Observer' announces Barrantes' selection as Presidential candidate of the United Left for the 1985 elections.*

power they argued that the elections were a facade and the nature of the state remained fascist. They denounced the left parties for collaborating with the parliamentary system, accused them of parliamentary cretinism and of covering up for the fascist state.

**WP:** It is a Maoist organisation?

**RW:** Originally they had been a faction of the Pro-Chinese Communist Party. They support the policies of the "Gang of Four". Their leader is Comrade Gonzalo and they refer to the true continuity of the works of Marx, Lenin, Mao Tse Tung and Comrade Gonzalo!

#### GUERRILLAISM

**WP:** How did their tactics develop in relation to the government? In terms of their move towards underground work and guerilla struggle amongst the peasants?

**RW:** In 1978 in the wake of a general strike against austerity the military announced elections to the Constituent Assembly in Peru. At the same time Sendero Luminoso were organising and intervening in the Ayacucho region. They started preparing cadres and militants in a guerilla faction and started to retreat from the organisations of the masses. Their whole political attitude was completely indifferent and sometimes we can say hostile to the ongoing class struggle in Peru.

**WP:** So they withdrew from the student/teacher organisations?

**RW:** Yes, they withdrew from these organisations and went into clandestine operations. For example some people worked in a specific place and no one knew their political activities or political intentions. Some of them even seemed to be reactionaries. Later they just disappeared from the work place and went to join the Sendero Luminoso. They launched the armed struggle on 18th May 1980. They assaulted a little village called Cuchi in Ayacucho in a place where the elections were taking place. They took the electoral ballot boxes. They started with the tactic of "armed propaganda" in a very small way at first, for example placing some very small bombs or burning some places. Progressively they began to build a guerilla column. At this moment there is information that there are 6 guerilla columns in the Ayacucho province. Their military tactic is to occupy some village temporarily and to deliver political lectures to the population of the village. They speak about Comrade Gonzalo and they make a redistribution of the goods to the people. They recruit the militia and later they abandon the village but they leave the militia integrated amongst the people of the village. They nominate new leaders in the village in a very short time, without discussion.

**WP:** So to which section of the peasantry do they appeal?

**RW:** To the poorest section of the peasants. They



advocate the class struggle amongst the peasants between the poorest and the richest peasants. They have been executing some petty merchants and shopkeepers but these are very poor shopkeepers. If you consider the situation of that village, they are richer than the others but in general they are poor people as well. It is also the same with some better off peasants, these people are also oppressed. This has produced a very precarious basis for sustaining this policy for Sendero Luminoso and therefore they employ authoritarian methods.

**WP:** So what is the composition and level of support for the Sendero Luminoso?

**RW:** There is a dramatic difference between the leadership and the base in social origin. The military leaders of the group were leading academics. For instance there is Maximiliano Duran, a nuclear physicist with an international reputation. There is a philosopher who was deputy in control of the University of Ayacucho, there is a doctor who was a brilliant university student. Many of these leaders made serious academic studies of the peasantry of Peru, its social composition, history, psychology etc. The rank and file of Sendero Luminoso is drawn almost exclusively from the poor peasants, young people, the sons and daughters of peasants. There are many women involved.

#### NO UNITED FRONT POLICY

**WP:** What has been their attitude to the other left and peasant organisations?

**RW:** First of all they do not recognise them. They say that the United Left (the left electoral bloc-WP) is a corrupt organisation. They say that the true function of the United Left is to mislead the masses, to distract them from the only true road of armed struggle and divert them into parliamentary struggle. They have no policy of a united front.

In this situation they have not been creating or organising any mass organisations of the peasants. They call instead for a peasants army. They also apply the tactic of liberating zones. This produces clear conflict with the existing mass organisations of the peasants of which they do not take any account. They do not recognise them. They execute the leaders. This produces confrontation. For instance one leader of a village who belonged to the United Left was killed by Sendero Luminoso. Also other leaders of peasant organisations have fled to Lima because they have been warned that they will be killed.

**WP:** What has been the response of the Government and the military?

**RW:** The military has intervened in force but appears to have had little effect on the Sendero Luminoso. Even the military columns appear untouched and all the main leaders remain at large. There is even evidence that the organisation has been grow-

ing. Now the military have been concentrating on Ayacucho city. They are practically occupying the whole town.

#### THE UNITED LEFT

**WP:** In the municipal elections of November last year Terry's Peoples Action Party went down to a massive defeat while the United Left electoral bloc made major gains. How do you estimate the political situation after the elections?

**RW:** The municipal elections were a clear reflection of the deterioration of the government's position and the growth of the opposition parties. At a national level the Aprista Party (APRA) got 33% while the United Left achieved 31.5% of the vote. The government party achieved only fourth place with 10%. Furthermore the United Left won in Lima, which has a population of 6 million. In some areas like Ayacucho the United Left did not stand, in other areas the left split. So the support for the left could be even greater.

**WP:** What role is the Aprista Party playing at the moment? How does the ruling class and the military view it?

**RW:** At the moment the Aprista Party is the alternative party of the bourgeoisie. It is very important for the bourgeoisie to make positive remarks about the APRA having won the election and to preserve Alan García as leader of the party. The APRA hopes to win the next general election. They must present themselves as a serious moderate opposition. They are trying to develop a dialogue with all sectors - the militarists, the foreign companies, the bourgeoisie. They are developing their anti-communist positions more clearly to gain the confidence of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists. They put themselves forward as the only force to stop the left. They have close connections with the Venezuelan and Spanish Social Democracy. **WP:** Could you explain the origins of the United Left and the major forces within it? In particular the role of Barrantes, the Mayor of Lima and his politics?

**RW:** Its development is linked to the growing radicalisation of the masses since 1978 and the convening of the Constituent Assembly. A programmatic discussion is developing within the United Left. There is a section that considers that Peru at this moment is going through a democratic stage. They try to demonstrate that the left is the most democratic force in Peru. They say the key question is to keep the local councils and the Parliament alive and develop them. Therefore there is a big section of the United Left which has tremendous democratic illusions.

**WP:** Does this include the Peruvian Communist Party?

**RW:** Yes. Although the Peruvian Communist Party does not follow the Euro-Communist line - it is more "orthodox". When they speak of defending democracy they also say "We want more than bourgeois democracy, we want People's Democracy" but in reality they support Barrantes, they keep him as leader. The policy of Barrantes is to defend the bourgeois democratic institutions and develop an understanding with the companies, with the major economic groups and with the military command. He wants a "civilised left" including the Communist Party.

**WP:** So in the municipal elections did the United Left put forward a set of concrete demands which dealt with the problems faced by the workers in Peru? Did they put forward a programme for instance for the nationalisation of the banks under workers' control? Did they take up the question of the attacks on the agrarian reform? Did they call for the cancellation of the debts etc?

**RW:** They never presented that kind of programme. They presented a reformist programme. In Lima they fought around the abstract slogan "Lima for Everybody". They said demagogically "We are going to give one million glasses of milk to all the children." But this is not the same in all the cities. In some cases the United Left has been very militant. The Mayor of Cuzco completely supported the peasant struggle in his municipality. The Mayor of Puno went on hunger strike. In Pulcaipata there was a two week strike. The municipality created its own police force, like a militia, to defend the strike. This is very different to Barrantes.

**WP:** Is Barrantes attacking these people, trying to push them out of the United Left?

**RW:** Yes. Some sections of the United Left reject Barrantes' parliamentarism. They consider it necessary to develop organs of "popular power". One such group is the Revolutionary Marxist Vanguard. During the municipal elections this group developed its own propaganda with more radical slogans, and after the elections it immediately started to encourage the take-over of lands. The councillors of the RMV participated with the workers in the occupations. This provoked further confrontations with Barrantes. In relation to policies for the national elections coming up these confrontations continue and are likely to become more acute. ■

1. The APRA (American Peoples Revolutionary Alliance) is a bourgeois-nationalist party which has traditionally had wide support amongst the masses in Peru. Where it has won elections in the past it has been blocked from power by military coups.

#### CORRECTION

In the article on Bolivia in WP. 58 it states that "The POR-Masas appears to have both strength and influence in one of the biggest and most militant mines in Bolivia at Huanuni..." This should have read POR-Unificado which is the Bolivian USEC section.

# STALEMATE IN GULF WAR

IRAN AND IRAQ have been at war for almost four years. Both sides have lost hundreds of thousands of troops and civilians in an ugly and brutal war of attrition. Recent developments involving the attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf have brought the war back to the attention of the imperialists as their oil supplies and profits have been threatened.

In 1980 the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion of Iran which was at that time still in turmoil following the successful anti-imperialist revolution which had toppled the US puppet Shah. Hussein hoped to secure a quick victory gaining some of Iran's key oil terminals and making himself chief candidate as imperialism's new gendarme in the Gulf.

Iran's tenacious resistance, with revolutionary guards and volunteers mobilised in massive numbers, checked the Iraqi advance. By 1982 Iran had turned the tide against Iraq and the character of the war changed from being a legitimate one of defence by Iran, to being a thoroughly reactionary war on both sides.

For Ayatollah Khomeini the invasion had provided a focus for uniting the country behind the reactionary Islamic Republic. The continuation of the war after the 1982 Iranian victories was precisely aimed at making sure that this unity was maintained. All who threatened it were cruelly crushed by Khomeini's despotic regime.

Neither Khomeini nor Hussein can afford to lose this war. Too much is at stake for each of them domestically. Even a negotiated settlement would appear as a defeat and destabilise their bonapartist rule. For Saddam Hussein the launching of the war was an attempt to consolidate his position.

His ruling clique needed to solidify the army (many of whose ordinary members are, like the Khomeinists, Shi'ite Muslims) behind it. A prestigious victory would outflank opposition from outside of the family clique around Hussein and enlist popular support for the dictatorship. Defeat would have exactly the opposite effect. It would strengthen the Kurds and democratic opposition to Hussein and prove to his hoped for imperialist allies his instability.

Khomeini has declared his aim to be at war until the "Satanic" (Sunni Moslem) Iraqi regime is toppled and replaced by the rule of Shi'ite Islam. Khomeini fears that he too would face intensified internal rebellions if the war were to end. He has good reason to suspect such developments.

Despite repeated promises that the "final offensive" is about to happen, the 500,000 strong

Iranian army has repeatedly delayed an attack on the well entrenched Iraqi lines. The reason stems from reported divisions between Senior army officers, some mullahs and the Khomeinists over tactics in the war.

An open letter to Khomeini from 300 military officers recently explained the "impossibility" of the Iranian armies launching a "successful final victory" offensive. They argued that Iraq has air and missile superiority and that "...there is nothing we can do except continue to launch human wave offensives, which each time will take us a few kilometers inside Iraqi territory, but each time with heavier human casualties."

These open challenges to the Imam's line reflect growing discontent in the country. The economic burden of the war is enormous - with over 1 million refugees pouring into towns outside the war zone. Parents have staged rebellions against their children being carted off as "volunteers". Most seriously for the regime have been armed rebellions in Baluchistan and Kurdistan. A defeat for Iran would throw the country and the regime into turmoil once again. By prolonging the war Khomeini hopes to stop the cauldron bubbling over.

Iraq has used the opportunity provided by the lull in the land war and the domestic problems facing Iran to introduce its own new tactics. Iraq decided to strike at the source of Iranian revenue - Kharg Island.

This island is the oil terminal for 90% of Iran's exported oil and is pivotal to the economy. With the land offensive costing Iran an estimated 1 billion dollars per month, and with only 8 billion dollars cash reserves, Iraq hoped to cripple the war effort within 6 months of a successful blockade. So far Iraq has attacked a number of tankers using Kharg Island, although oil is still being exported.

Iraq also hoped that attacks on Kharg would provoke an Iranian response directed at Gulf States and imperialist shipping in the Gulf. If this happened Iraq expected that it would bring US and Gulf State intervention into the conflict, thereby breaking the logjam of the war. In early June Saudi Arabia was the first to respond, shooting down an Iranian phantom. However it quickly drew back from any involvement in the war and dismissed the incident as purely territorial defence with no further involvement envisaged.

Tehran has long promised that an Iraqi attack on its oil terminals would be met by the closure of the Straits of Hormuz, but since that would also block off Iranian revenue it would have disastrous consequences for Iran itself. It would jeo-

pardise their fast growing trading relations with Japan. It would risk a conflict with imperialism and the Gulf States that they are not in any shape to defeat. As a result the threat to close the Straits has not been carried out.

On the other hand Iraq has not, to date, managed to bring imperialism, in particular US imperialism, into the war on its side. While US imperialism does want to see Iran defeated it is wary of leaving the area under the dominance of a regime noted for bouts of pro-Sovietism. Reagan's central aim is to create a balance of power in the Gulf by strengthening the military capability of the Gulf Co-operation Council in general and Saudi-Arabia in particular.

Such a force can, Reagan hopes, act as a bulwark against any further anti-imperialist risings or extended Soviet influence in the region. The Saudi attack on the Iranian Phantom fighters, guided by US AWACs, was a whiff of what the US are hoping to achieve.

Back in April of this year Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy was sent to the Arab

States "to discuss pre-positioning of ammunition, fuel and other supplies in Gulf States such as Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, and to propose secret contingency planning for rapid US troop deployments in the area." (Newsweek, 23. 4.84) Not long after this, when the tanker war began, Reagan took it upon himself to send 400 Stinger surface to air missiles, 200 launchers and loaned KC-10 aerial tankers to Saudi Arabia.

For the masses of Iran and Iraq, there is nothing to be gained from either side emerging victorious. There is everything to lose from allowing US imperialism to use the war to shore up its influence in the region.

The Iranian masses must fight to overthrow Khomeini and the Islamic Republic, end the war and march forward to a new socialist revolution. In Iraq the same struggle must be waged against Hussein and the ruling clique. As for imperialist involvement in the area, it can only make life even more miserable for the workers and peasants.

□ Imperialism - get out of the Gulf. No intervention.

□ Down with Khomeini and Hussein

□ For Workers and Peasants Governments in Iran and Iraq.

by Helen Ward



Battle-weary Iranian troops head towards the front line

## LE PEN: FRENCH RACISM'S UGLY FACE

THE ELECTION TO the European parliament in France delivered a crushing rebuff to the politics of the Socialist Party/Communist Party government. The French Communist Party suffered most dramatically, seeing its vote decline by over 2 million - down from 20.6% in the 1979 elections to 11.3% in the EEC poll. The Socialist Party also lost over half a million votes.

In contrast the right-wing parties were triumphant. The United Republican opposition list (Rpr-UDF) polled over 8 million votes, while Jean-Marie Le Pen's fascist National Front (FN) gained 2,183,248 votes (within 26,000 of the PCF's total vote!). And they won 10 seats in the European Parliament.

Le Pen is an ex-paratrooper, a veteran of the Algerian war who was a Parliamentary Deputy for the populist far-right Poujadist movement in 1956. He formed the FN in October 1972 from the fragments of the French fascist movement. His fascist past is not an embarrassment to him. When questioned on a TV programme in April about his attitude to Hitler, he replied that the Nazis came to power on the basis of a strong, democratic and popular mass movement.

To coincide with the election campaign, Le Pen published a book, "The French First", this includes a programme of massive de-nationalisation, legal restrictions on the right to strike, including a ban on strikes in the public sector, repatriation of immigrants; a purge of left-wing judges; a ban on abortion; and the ending of family allowances for foreign families.

Le Pen seems to be gathering most of his support from the same kind of people who made up the Poujadist movement in the 1950s - small shopkeepers, the self-employed, professionals and some sections of the working class. The FN also polled consistently well in areas with large 'Pieds Noirs' populations - ex-settlers from Algeria. Most FN supporters are former Gaullists. An

Le Pen and supporters (Rouge)



IFOP opinion poll reported that 25% of those who voted for Republican candidate Chirac in the 1981 Presidential elections voted for Le Pen in the Euroelections (Le Monde 19.6.84). Indeed, it was an alliance with Chirac's RPR in the council election in the industrial town of Dreu which won the FN their first major victory in September last year.

The growth of the right and the decline of the left's votes are the classic outcome of the Mitterrand government's attack on the working class who swept the socialists to power in 1981. Pursuing the "socialist" management of capital, Mitterrand's policy of austerity, wage freeze, reduced benefits and massive attacks on steel workers' jobs, has come home to roost.

The Communist Party which has sat in the cabinet and voted for every one of these measures despite its verbal opposition, has suffered the greatest defections precisely because they have traditionally organised the most militant sections of French workers. In the beleaguered steel town of Longwy, for instance there was a massive abstention - turnout was 44% - and the right-wing parties took 52% of the vote. In the 1981 Presidential elections 81% had voted - 60%

of them for Mitterrand.

The role of the Socialist Party and Communist Party as government parties attacking the workers and the failure of the major trade union organisations CFDT and CGT connected to them to put up any real fight, has allowed the right wing parties to flourish. The right-wing has championed the protests of the small farmers, lorry drivers and students against Mitterrand's policies. At the same time they have targeted the immigrants in France as "responsible" for the sufferings of French workers. "Two million unemployed, 2 million immigrants", is the slogan of the right.

Again the ground has been made fertile for this poisonous racism by the policies and actions of the two major workers parties. Despite election promises to curb state harassment of blacks, as soon as the economic crisis grew the government turned to attack the immigrants. A new procedure for "regularising" the status of immigrants was implemented to flush out illegal immigrants. In 1983 the arbitrary deportations of the Bonnet Law (passed by the Gaullists) were reintroduced. Even British blacks felt the impact of this growing racism when the Mitter-

rand government turned them back from French holidays if they only had visitors passports. It is little wonder then that the strident racism of Le Pen gets so much support amongst the French electorate.

The situation in France bears many similarities to the growth in support for the National Front experienced under the Labour government between 1976 and 1978. Again a so-called socialist government attacked the working class, dramatically increased unemployment and fostered racism. In the end the beneficiary was not the National Front - our rulers had little need then for a fascist solution to their problems - but Thatcher's Tory Party, sufficiently beefed up in its proposals to curb immigration and step up deportations.

In France Mitterrand and the CP are playing the same role that Callaghan and Healy did in that period in Britain. They are attacking and demoralising the working class organisations and sowing the ground for the victory of a vicious right-wing government under Chirac. Although Chirac has ruled out any alliance with the FN, leading RPR and UDF members are already angling to firm up the racist aspects of their programme.

For French workers and socialists the fight against Le Pen and his FN is intimately bound up with the struggle against the SP/CP attacks on the working class. Unfortunately the major groups on the extreme left show little recognition of this. While the USFI section, the LCR, has taken a correct position of confronting Le Pen's fascists at meetings and demonstrations, they have isolated the fight against racism and racism from the fight against the government's policies.

On the other hand the French group "Lutte Ouvriere" contents itself with making "propaganda" against racism and fascism and has refused to take part in demonstrations and actions against the FN - on the basis that it is following, at the moment, the "democratic path".

What is needed is a real workers' united front against fascism in France. This must not only stand firmly against allowing any "rights" of free speech or demonstration for these fascists but must mobilise workers against all the racist attacks by the French government. It must mobilise rank and file socialists and communists in defence of immigrant communities and their right to self-defence, against immigration controls, and against the austerity measures which breed the condition for fascism to grow. And in Britain, if Le Pen and his fascist National Front cronies attempt to march in Maidstone on July 14th, miners and their families, trade unionists and socialists must ensure they are routed before they take one step.

by a member of Pouvoir Ouvrier

# ORGANISING THE NUM RANK AND FILE

Workers Power talked to Steve Abbott, of Calverton NUM, South Notts. Steve was Calverton branch delegate until a recent scab vote replaced him.

**WP:** Over the last weeks there's been plenty of signs that there is probably a majority on the executive who want some kind of compromise and way out of the dispute. How do you think militants can organise to prevent a sell-out on the part of the executive?

**Steve:** The rank and file activity which has been displayed at picket lines throughout the country especially in Notts is an indication that the bureaucrats within the executive can't sell out and they'll have to follow the line.

**WP:** But isn't there a problem that the militants aren't organised and the executive is. I'm sure there are thousands of good militants who don't want a sell-out but how could they stop a sell-out if the executive decided to accept one?

**Steve:** It's a fallacy to say that the militants and the rank and file are not organised. This is particularly the case in Notts because we've got no official organisation. Although there are semi-bureaucrats within our rank and file organisation - we've got a South Notts strike committee and a North Notts strike committee and a co-ordinating committee. These are essentially rank and file movements and it is this element that is saying we're going to fight.

**WP:** But how can we make sure that we organise across the coalfields and that these militants aren't simply left in their areas with their organisation. What we've been saying throughout the dispute is that its necessary to build a rank and file movement of the militant miners on a national basis.

**Steve:** We've discussed this on the picket lines and various branches of striking miners within the Notts area have said we're going to organise our own club - whether it be a social club or whatever - to keep it together. We want to centralise it from the militant core so that its an area body for a start. Hopefully we can build on the links that we've already created with pickets from other areas - Scotland, South Wales, Derbyshire and Yorkshire you name them, we've met them, we've exchanged addresses. That is the only way it can be created.

**WP:** How can it be pushed forward and made formal?

**Steve:** I don't think its a good idea to make it more formal because the whole essence of rank and file militancy is informality. We've had problems in South Notts, and Notts as a whole, with militants who've been pushed forward and formed some kind of formal organisation like the South Notts Strike Committee, the North Notts Strike Committee and the Notts miners Forum which has always been in existence as a Broad Left organisation. These people now are tending to become bureaucrats in their own right within that organisation. We've got a



John Harris (IFL)

lad in South Notts - no detriment to him as a person - but he's got so carried away with it that he comes in with a brief case and a collar and tie on! I think it would be detrimental to try and formalise it. I think its got to be loose knit but at the same time a cohesively loose knit organisation where we all know each other because we've all been on the line. We're having nought to do with those who've stepped back and done the organising - the bureaucrats. Not many of the lads really like them or really agree with them. They see them as a necessary evil to do the paperwork. The lads who are on the line - and I go on the line everyday - they're fighting and they're saying alright we'll fight together shoulder to shoulder. Any person who wishes to come with us - and you've seen this yourself - are welcomed. There's been no aggravation.

In the early weeks we had one or two lads - who've since gone back - who cribbed about unemployed workers coming on the line. But since then the lads who are out on strike realise that they're fighting for the future of the working class not just themselves and they welcome any worker who comes on the line irrespective of sex, race and religion.

**WP:** But isn't one of the problems of not formalising it that you end up leaving it all to Arthur Scargill and putting all your hopes in Arthur Scargill as the thing that stands between the miners and a rotten compromise?

**Steve:** We don't put all hopes in Arthur Scargill. Although the lads might chant "We'll support you evermore" they realise that its the lads themselves who are fighting. He's only a figurehead who is identified with the rank and file and he's the only one who the rank and file can identify with.

That's why the chants come out. The lads themselves realise there's got to be some kind of loose knit organisation - the looser the better. We don't want to create bureaucrats within bureaucrats, within bureaucrats.

**WP:** I know you don't want to create bureaucrats but don't you need an organisation and shouldn't we be saying to Arthur Scargill that he too should organise his base across the coalfields into the basis of an independent rank and file democratic fighting miners' organisation?

**Steve:** For myself, personally, I think Arthur Scargill believes they've got an organisation in the Broad Left. The failings of the Broad Left have been adequately exposed by the way they've operated within Notts. We've had Henry Richardson, Broad Left candidate elected to office. He is supposedly the figure head of the Broad Left. He's made one or two supposedly controversial statements but they were only statements of fact - that anyone who crosses the picket line is a scab, but what's controversial about that? I'm afraid that Scargill and McGahey - though I greatly respect them both for the work that they've done in this dispute and in the past - are still totally committed to that form of electoral gains being the be-all and end-all. In Notts we had a Broad Left slate for the executive committee. I was elected to that executive committee on that Broad Left slate. I was only bottom of the list. We had a Broad Left executive but you come to the question of how Broad is Broad? We were supposed to have a left executive but when it came to a resolution instructing members not to cross picket lines we were split 8 - 5. Where do you stand on that? They're not left. Richardson and Chadburn weren't there. They were conveniently absent - I think they were seeing a judge, they spend most of their time seeing them. Even members who we'd regarded as left and who had spoken very vociferously for the Left before this dispute blew up were looking to their own electoral opportunities rather than the interests of the militants and the working class as a whole.

**WP:** In the Nottingham pit villages the strikers obviously need funds and backing. Do you want to say anything about the support you need?

**Steve:** We're getting financial and physical support from Trade Unionists. Some are contributing handsomely to our hardship funds so we'll not be starved back to work. Trade unionists are getting on the picket line. We welcome them. The more the merrier, or not that much merrier depending on where you are. If you're at Orgreave it's not very merry at all. When you're isolated such as us in a colliery village it shows the lads they're not on their own, there aren't just a few of us and we're part of a larger Trade Union movement. □

## WORKERS IN ACTION

### Nursery workers take on Islington's 'Left' Council

"The very left-wing leader of the very left-wing Islington council", as the *Daily Telegraph* describes Margaret Hodge, recently advertised in *The Lady* for a private nanny. Presumably the council's nursery workers need not apply. All 150 of them - members of Islington NALGO and NUPE - have been on strike since 16th April for better pay and conditions.

In their support, 1,500 NALGO members have been refusing to co-operate with councillors and, following a recent ballot, 450 members of the social service department are to strike indefinitely alongside them. That this escalation was necessary came as a surprise to few Islington council workers. In the two years since their election victory the council has reneged on agreements with its workers and increased rates rather than confront the Tories as it had boasted it would. The local Labour Party machine, supposedly democratised since the purge of its former SDP mafia, has been unable or unwilling to reverse the path of the council or remove the cynical jokers who lead it.

This underlines the necessity for council workers to organise their own defence of jobs and services. While we should demand that the council meets the needs of the workers, no reliance can be put on Labour councils however "left-wing" they claim to be. In Islington this means full support for the Children's Day Centre workers and the fight for all out strike action to win their full claim. Failure to win this dispute will encourage this Labour lot to buckle under rate-capping and carry out Thatcher's cuts the sooner. ■

### Labour Council locks out librarians

TOWER HAMLETS' LABOUR controlled council has locked out fifty librarians for taking limited industrial action - non-collection of fines on overdue books!

The action had been taken as part of a campaign against the council's plans to close two libraries. One June 11th, the librarians, members of NALGO, received letters suspending them without pay on the grounds that, as far as the council was concerned, they were 'on strike'. A branch meeting of NALGO on the 13th voted overwhelmingly in favour of all-out strike action for the re-instatement of the victimised members and the withdrawal of the suspension letters. This is the first all-out strike in the history of the branch and it has been solidly supported by 1,200 workers across the whole range of council departments.

Local Labour Parties have passed resolutions in support of the strike and have condemned the council's actions. Derek Relph, Vice President of NALGO Tower Hamlets, told WP that the strike had at least forced the council negotiators to adopt a more serious approach in place of their initial abusive attitude. However, if the councillors have changed their attitudes the NALGO team appear to have changed their whole position. Instead of continuing to demand the unconditional withdrawal of the suspension letters and full re-instatement with no loss of pay, they are now only calling for the 'non-recognition' of the letters. Such an alteration is not just the small change of negotiations but a concession of a major principle. The librarians did not go on strike, they were locked out. The council was entirely in the wrong and those victimised must be fully compensated. The council must be forced to concede the point in full.

The absolute minimum demands must be full re-instatement with no loss of pay and the withdrawal of the suspension letters. Anything less leaves open the possibility of other workers being victimised for similar limited actions in the future. Messages of support, donations to Tower Hamlets NALGO c/o Newham NALGO, 7 Chapel St, Stratford, London E15

### Support Kewal strikers

On the 15th May, seventeen workers at a Handsworth textile factory, Birmingham, came out on strike after two packers and a machinist were sacked. Kewal Brothers sacked the three claiming that, "There was no more work for them to do".

The three sacked workers, founder members of the T&GWU at the factory, included the shop steward. All but three of their fellow workers have joined the strike for their reinstatement.

The twenty workers at the factory, all Asians, work a 40 hour week for £60 basic wage. The police have escorted three scabs to work and harassed the strikers. The shop steward has already been arrested twice.

Force the reinstatement of the sacked three.  
Support the pickets at Middlemore Road.  
Send donations to Shaheed Ubham Singh Centre,  
364, Soho Road, Handsworth.

### Black coal at Longbridge

AFTER 15 WEEKS of the miners strike, scab coal is still being moved into and around the British Leyland Longbridge plant. The Communist Party led Works Committee has not lifted a finger to black the coal.

That is not the only sign of the inertia and foot dragging of the Longbridge Works Committee. No miner has been invited to address the shop stewards' committee. Only as we go to press are militants organising to commit the shop stewards' committee to active support for the miners, to a levy of the members and the immediate blacking of all coal. So much for Communist Party leadership!

**workers power**

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