

Fight to Win!

(continued from page 2)

This is the historic mission of the working class and of the organizations of the working class. There can be no more class peace and collaboration between the UMWA and the capitalists. The UMWA must become a union which in practice fights against the capitalists.

The trade union bureaucrats are being completely exposed as class traitors and the call has gone up among the rank and file for Miller's resignation. There are already enough miners' signatures to begin the recall process. Miller himself ran on a platform of union democracy and promises to all of reform. But his actual practice in office proved that he does not represent the interests of the miners.

But it is not just a question of Miller as an individual. Merely electing some new 'rebel' candidate will not solve all of the problems of the miners. The privileges that accompany the positions of leadership in the union are the material basis for the bribery of these leaders. The bourgeoisie wants to make sure that whoever gets into these offices is under their thumb and will not fight for the genuine interests of the working class.

Unless the leadership of the unions and the working class as

a whole is guided by a revolutionary plan for the road of struggle ahead, the day to day struggles will eventually be turned aside from the long term struggle for socialism. This is why the leadership of our unions must be revolutionary communist leadership — because communists fight for both the short term demands of the working class and also fight to end the very source of workers' oppression, capitalism.

Only with revolutionary leadership can the working class be confident that their leaders will not be bought off, like Miller, with crumbs from the capitalists.

In the coalfields today, there are some who call themselves communists, but who in actuality are misleading the miners. These people are from the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and operate through their Right to Strike Committee. This organization is known throughout the coalfields as the organization which sends roving pickets to shut down mines when even the miners in those mines do not know what they are being closed for. These senseless tactics of striking for striking's sake have caused distrust among miners and have sown anti-communism.

The miners under genuine communist leadership will expose and isolate these forces and

drive them from our ranks.

In order to rebuild the UMWA along these class lines, the MLOC advances this program:

- Maintain full union protection for all miners from the first day of work
- No length of membership requirements needed for election to offices or as delegates
- Elect the negotiating committee for contracts from the district conferences and remove the power of the International President to appoint these
- Ensure that delegates to the International and District conventions represent the entire rank-and-file membership, young, old, pensioners, women and all nationalities
- Organize the unorganized! Every miner a UMWA miner! Adequate organizing resources must be provided
- Organizers must be elected from among the rank and file
- Three month limit on resolving grievances
- Abolish the Arbitration Review Board
- Salaries for union officials no more than the highest paid miner!
- Fight for communist leadership in the UMWA. Remove the clause in the constitution restricting communist membership in the union ★

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Special Supplement On the Coal Strike

March 15, 1978



Five Point Program for Victory in the Coalfields

Fight to Win!

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Five Point Program for Victory in the Coalfields **Fight to Win!**



In the coalfields, the lines have been drawn and the struggle is sharpening. The stakes are high. On one side are the capitalists and their agents, like Miller. On the other side stand the miners and the entire working class movement.

This strike is the most significant struggle in the working class movement for many years. It is not just an ordinary strike. Its importance goes far beyond the immediate demands which are being fought for. The real significance goes to the miners' standing up to the attacks from the capitalist class and the treachery of the trade union bureaucrats.

The capitalist class knows that its rule over the working class is safeguarded as long as the workers are under the control of the reformist trade union leadership. However, when the workers reject the treachery of the trade union bureaucrats the hold of the capitalist class on the working class begins to slip. The main agent of the capitalists in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), Arnold Miller, has completely lost his ability to turn aside the miners. Even his Miners for Unity could not mobilize the rank and file behind him or his contract. He is completely disgraced, therefore he is no longer a useful tool for the capitalists.

Not only have the miners rejected the reformist policies of Miller, they have picked up the gun in order to win this battle, thereby dispelling illusions of the peaceful coexistence of the working class and the capitalists.

It is for these reasons that not only the coal operators but the entire capitalist class, the bourgeoisie, must crush this strike. To allow the miners to continue this militant strike until their demands are met would be a lesson to the entire working class that the bourgeoisie does not want learned.

As well, the capitalists want the strike ended to ensure the coal supply which they badly need.

More coal must be mined relatively soon or else key sections of the economy will shut down. In the long run, the bourgeoisie wants stability in the coalfields, to insure increased coal production to meet its plan of energy self sufficiency.

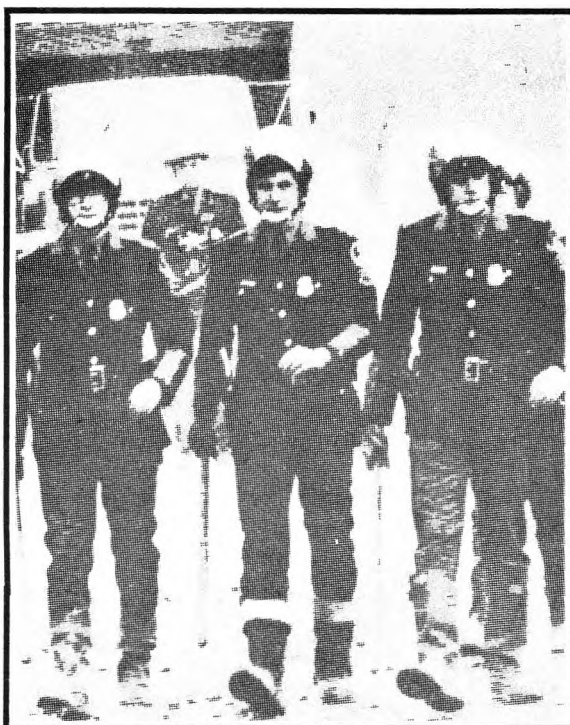
The bourgeoisie has now pulled out another one of its weapons to use against the miners: the Taft Hartley Act. Carter has said quite clearly that this will be used to protect scabs and coal transport.

The bourgeoisie recognizes full well that the majority of striking miners will pay little heed to this injunction. So as a part of the injunction it is actively pushing for separate negotiations between various locals and companies. Herein lies the real plan of the bourgeoisie for breaking the strike. Carter admitted that many miners would refuse to go back to work, but he is not particularly concerned with getting all the miners back at once. He stated that a miner would not be in violation of the injunction if an individual miner did not go back to work, but only if a miner prevented others from returning. The capitalists have admitted that if coal production is increased by 10%, the danger of a shortage would be removed. The bourgeoisie is counting on being able to slowly but surely undercut the power of this strike — its unity.

They want to start up scab operations, force certain locals into separate negotiations and protect the flow of western coal. The non-UMWA coal operations in this country make up 50% of the coal mined. So even the protection of these operations would mean a strong blow to the strike.

The capitalists hope that by carrying out this three pronged plan, the remaining strikers will be effectively isolated. This would then allow them to promote the idea that it is really only a few radical miners who are trying to prolong the strike against the wishes of the vast majority.

This would allow for the bourgeoisie to wait the strikers out until these miners were forced to give in, or to open the way to seize those remaining mines which were still closed down by the strike and forceably crush any



The state has stepped in both with court measures and with armed force, to protect the interests of private capital. Here, Virginia state troopers, decked out in full riot gear, escort scab coal through a UMWA picket line in Norton, Virginia.

resistance. Some bureaucrats like George Meany are calling for this take over. Illusions about what a seizure will mean have been promoted among the miners by some of the UMWA leadership. In 1944 when the mines were seized, miners were granted their health and safety benefits. But was this because the state is a friend of the miners or even a neutral outsider? Not hardly. The state was forced to grant that concession to the miners in order to put an end to their militant struggle.

The state acts as the representative of the collective good of the entire capitalist class. The state enters into struggles between the workers and individual capitalists when the capitalists are not able to force a settlement.

In addition, at certain times, a section of the bourgeoisie may act in opposition to the good of the entire class. In the coal strike for example, there are many capitalists who are suffering some losses because of the strike for the sake of the coal barons. The government at these times will step in and act in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole.

The very fact that the state is preparing to protect scab operations by all means necessary points out very clearly that it is not a friend of the miners, or even neutral.

Therefore it is very important both to expose the myth of neutrality and to oppose the seizure of the mines by the bourgeois state. Already several locals have come out in strong

opposition to this tactic of the bourgeoisie.

The reason that Carter did not immediately seize the mines is because it would unify rather than fragment the union. It would settle the strike on a national level rather than a local individual level.

This plan to break the union up into many fragmented pieces serves the long term interests of the bourgeoisie very well. Separate negotiations during this strike would set a precedent for future negotiations. Rather than one national contract and one national strike, when all mines would be closed, there would be many staggered contracts and strikes. This would effectively mean the beginning of the end for the UMWA as a national union.

As long as the UMWA was firmly in the hands of bureaucratic agents of the bourgeoisie, the capitalists hoped they could strap the miners with a measure like the ENA, as they have done in steel. They therefore preferred to deal with the union as a whole. Now that the miners have shown that they are determined not to submit to such a measure, the capitalists must break the miners up into smaller negotiating units.

In the face of this plan by the bourgeoisie and the treachery of the trade union bureaucrats, the miners will not give in. But in order to actually win the strike a clear plan is needed. The MLOC has taken up this task and advances a five-point plan for the struggle of the coal miners.

(continued on next page)

Highlights of the Current Proposed Contract

The proposed contract strips miners of rights they had under prior contracts. Here are some of its main clauses:

- No strike clause
- Leaders of wildcat strikes are subject to discipline including firing
- While miners are supposed to have the right to honor picket lines, many job classifications do not. Engineers, pumpers, hoist attendants, firemen and riverdock employees under this last contract proposal have a "duty not to suspend work" and can all be fired for honoring picket lines.

- Forced overtime is allowed. Miners may be forced to work six-day weeks and disciplined for refusing the sixth day. In addition, the traditional ban on Sunday work is revoked.
- Pensions are grossly unequal. Miners who retired prior to 1974 receive much lower pensions than those who have retired since.
- The Health Benefit Funds are being replaced by individual company by company insurance plans. This will force many health clinics in the coalfields to close as they were supported by retainers from the Health Funds.

- Miners must now pay a portion of their health benefits (used to be free). This will range from \$325 to \$700 a year.
- Miners may be fined for missing two days of work in a row unless it is for a "proven illness." Missing work twice in a month or three times in two months can lead to discipline.
- Widows of miners who died under 55 years of age lose all rights to medical benefits under this contract. Widows of miners who die past age 55 lose rights to medical benefits if they earn \$200 or more a month.



Miners have stood firm for over three long months. They have rejected a sell out contract and defied a Taft Hartley injunction. Here miners vote NO on proposed contract and burn copies of contract in protest.

Five Point Program

This program is a guide to win the immediate demands of the miners which are being ignored by both the trade union bureaucrats and the capitalists. But also, with the majority of the rank and file behind this program, the fighting ability of the coal miners will be strengthened for the battles in the future. Ahead of the miners is the struggle to rebuild the UMWA along class lines and to fight for the complete emancipation of the working class from the rule of the bourgeoisie.

The five-point program which we advance is

1 Our Terms or No Settlement!

Contracts that the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association (BCOA) have proposed and which the trade union bureaucrats have accepted would put miners in a worse fighting position today than before the strike. An acceptable contract must improve the economic and political position of the workers.

The contract must

- Ensure that safe working conditions are maintained in all sections of the mines at all times. Elected union safety committees must maintain the power to shut down unsafe mines, with company-paid down time. Miners must retain the right to refuse to work any job which they individually determine to be unsafe.
- Provide full health coverage

from the date of hire, to be paid for by the companies, and not tied to production.

■ Restore and equalize pension benefits, with a cost of living clause for pensioners. Black lung compensation must be separate from pension benefits.

■ Cost of living clauses must be included in the wage settlement! Abide by the UMWA convention's rejection of incentives.

■ Provide for the right to strike over national and local issues.

These are the just demands of the miners which must be in a contract. Otherwise there can be no settlement and no coal mined.

2 One National Contract or No Coal Mined!

The UMWA is one union. We must fight for one national contract with equal benefits for all coal miners. The union's strength is in the combined power of 270,000 coal miners, East and West, acting as one mighty force. All attempts by the bourgeoisie and the trade union bureaucrats to split up this unity must be condemned and opposed.

■ There can be no separate settlements! No districts or locals pulling away to negotiate separately!

■ We must stop the mining of all coal. This means that our union brothers and sisters in the west must join this strike.

■ Professional strike breakers must be stopped at all costs!

■ Non union mines must be shut down. Today we close them, tomorrow we organize them!

■ No troops in the fields to protect scab operations or the transport of coal!

■ Drop the injunction, repeal the Taft-Hartley Act!

■ No federal seizure of the mines or of the UMWA!

3 Class Against Class in the Coal Fields!

Miners have the right to stop the mining of all coal, by whatever means necessary. We are quite clear that this will mean some bloody battles ahead. Carter and all the capitalists he represents are prepared to use whatever force is needed to protect scabs and the production and transportation of coal. So far in this strike two miners have been murdered by company gun thugs. The bourgeoisie is prepared to kill many more of us if need be.

The goal is to stop all coal production. This means that most likely there will be direct confrontation with not only scabs and gun thugs, but with local, state and federal troopers. Miners must avoid all unnecessary confrontation with troopers, for that will just mean unnecessary injury to our class. However, in order to win this strike, we must prepare to carry out our task of stopping coal production. We will not back down on this.

In this situation it is not only



Workers in other industries and unions have come to the aid of the coal miners. Strikers in Acme, West Virginia are shown above unloading food and clothing sent by Detroit auto workers.

necessary to carry out armed struggle, but it is absolutely correct.

Strike committees must be elected from among the rank and file, which will take the initiative and authority to organize mass demonstrations and actions against non union production and against the presence of the armed forces of the state.

4 Support for the Strike

Miners are striking against some of the largest and most powerful corporations in the world, such as US Steel, Sohio and Continental Oil. While the miners are holding their own in the frontline of struggle in the coalfields, it is the duty of the entire working class to lend its material and political support.

Workers must pass resolutions in their trade unions supporting the miners. As the capitalists grow more desperate, they will have their servants, the police and the national guard, attack more and more miners in an attempt to suppress the resistance. Most UMWA districts have already started legal defense funds. Money must be collected to defend the victims of bourgeois repression.

The miners' demands should be publicized in trade union papers. This is especially true for steelworkers. US Steel, which still has huge stockpiles of coal, has been the major hold-out among the ranks of the BCOA. Workers there, along with workers at Bethlehem, Inland and other steel mills, must demand that their union call for a strike to support a just settlement in the coal strike.

The same steel companies are among the major coal operators. It is US Steel who has refused to sign a contract with the miners because they know that steelworkers would then take up the same demands. The miners are fighting for the whole working class. Steelworkers must join their strike to support their demands.

The bourgeois press would have us believe that workers are angry at the miners because of layoffs and power cutbacks. This is far from the truth. When 350 workers at the Noranda

Aluminum plant in Missouri were laid off due to energy cutbacks, they said that they were more than happy to stay home "until our brothers in the mines get back to work." Members of a United Auto Workers local in Detroit filled three rooms of their union hall with food and clothes to send to the miners. The UAW International committed \$2 million to the strike. On two separate occasions, striking farmers have donated large amounts of food, including 1200 hogs, to striking miners.

This is just the beginning. As the working class unites behind the miners, still greater victories lie ahead.

5 The Road Ahead in the UMWA

The fighting unity of the rank and file miners in the UMWA is an excellent situation in the workers' movement. Workers in all industries look to these class brothers and sisters as a source of inspiration.

However, at the same time, the situation in the UMWA is not good. 50% of the nation's coal is now mined by scab operations and the union is steadily losing more all the time.

The very real danger of the fragmentation of the union through separate contracts would further weaken the UMWA.

The inability of the union effectively to take up the just grievances of the miners in a reasonable period of time has forced miners to resort more and more to wildcat strikes as their method of resolution. All these problems point to the need to overhaul the structure and orientation of the UMWA.

The UMWA must become a union which is effective in waging the day-to-day struggles of miners, one that carries out aggressive organizing, wins grievances and protects the well-being of the miners. As well, the UMWA must become a union which clearly recognizes that this alone is not enough. It must become a union which actually fights for the end of the capitalist system, the real source of the misery and deprivation of the miners and of the working class as a whole.

(continued on page 4)

Contract Attacks Retired Workers

Retired miners and their families built the UMWA. They waged bitter struggles in the 1920's, 30's and 40's battling gun thugs and federal troops. In order to unionize the mines they lived in tent colonies after being evicted from company housing, and faced starvation. They worked many years in dangerous mines and many are now crippled with black lung or other disabilities. Both contract proposals were a slap in the face to retired miners and would make survival itself a battle.

Under the last proposed contract miners who retired before 1974 would receive \$275 per month in pensions, as much as \$200 less than pensioners who have retired since that time. Widows who earn \$200 or more a month would be completely cut off from health benefits. Widows of miners who died before reaching age 55 would also be cut off from health benefits. All pensioners would have to make "co-payments" on medical benefits that used to

be free.

Why are older workers treated in such a way? This proposed contract is just one part of a continuing assault on retired workers. Capitalists have a use for workers as long as the worker's ability to produce is high. The more work they can get out of a worker, the higher the profits. Once the productive ability of a worker begins to decline, the worker is discarded by the capitalists, just as an outdated machine is scrapped. The meager pensions that are given to retired workers are the result of hard-fought battles by the workers.

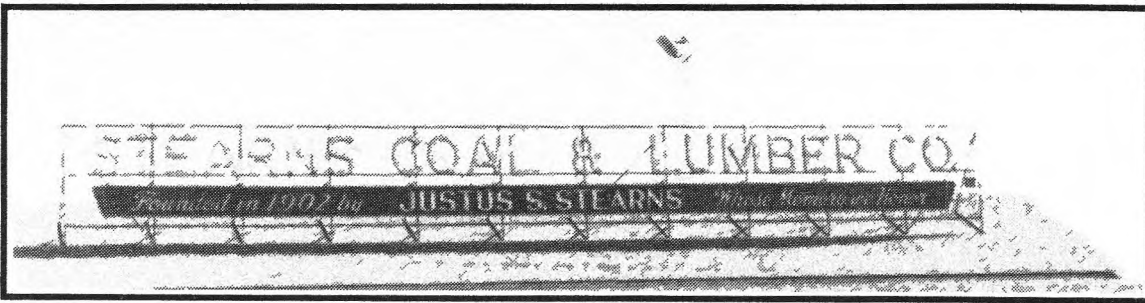
Trade union bureaucrats like Arnold Miller act as servants of the capitalists, they try to stifle our fight for better pensions. Miller was reelected on promises to equalize the pensions and now he says weakly "that's the best we could get."

Miller and other bureaucrats can't do better than this because they are unwilling to fight for and organize the rank and file miners to win. Miller went into

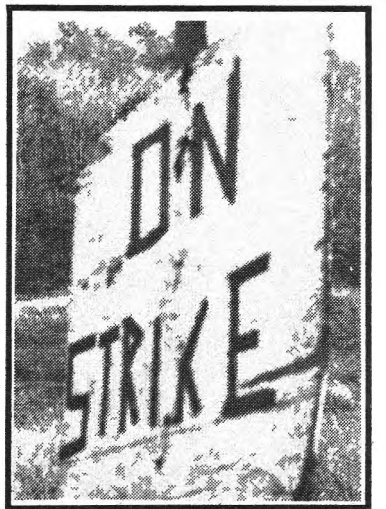
negotiations with the capitalists willing to give up one demand after another. He is more interested in protecting his own career, salary and fringe benefits than the rights of miners. He may even hope someday to get a position in the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), like Brennan was able to, or in the government like Woodcock of the United Auto Workers.

These bureaucrats are willing to turn their backs on the working class in a minute if the price is right. The leadership of our unions can no longer be in the hands of these agents of the capitalists. They must be driven out and replaced with class-conscious leadership, communist leadership. This is the only way to ensure that the rights of pensioners and all workers are fought for in a consistent and militant way.

**Equalize Pensions!
Restore Full Medical Benefits!**



Stearns Strike: Victory



We don't win strikes by sitting on our hands, relying on legal maneuverings and obeying laws written by and for the capitalists
We rely on the rank-and-file workers and take the offensive

On July 17, 1976 the Stearns miners struck for a United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) contract. In the 20 months since then the strikers, their families, and supporters have battled the Blue Diamond Company and its servants — the courts, police and hired gun thugs.

This strike is the cutting edge of the struggle to organize the unorganized in the coalfields. This drive is the only organizing drive in the coalfields because Miller has actively sabotaged the union's capabilities. He has fired organizers, reduced the organizing budget, sent spies into the fields and made assignments on the basis of personal allegiance rather than the needs of the miners.

The company has refused to sign a UMWA contract and negotiations were broken off long ago. After the strikers kept up a militant picket line for six months, the company imported gun thugs in January of 1977 to break the strike. Gun battles raged three to four times a week for months. In October the company tried to import scabs but this was blocked by the strikers. One hundred State Police then attacked the strikers and members of the Women's Club, arresting 100 and injuring many.

Courts and Police Servants of the Capitalists

In late February the Blue Diamond Company filed a \$14 million lawsuit against the UMWA for its efforts to organize the Stearns mine. The suit alleges that violence and secondary boycott activities of the union violated state and federal law causing the company to lose business. The same company won \$2.5 million in a similar suit arising from an unsuccessful attempt to organize the dangerous Scotia Mine in the 1960's.

The Stearns strike is a continuing example of how the capitalists use their courts to attack workers in this country. In addition to the lawsuit, Kentucky state courts have forced the union to post a \$100,000 bond in order to picket, and then restricted the picket line to six miners.

Of the 100 strikers and Women's Club members who have been arrested, 70 are presently on six months probation. Over 25 strikers still face felony charges for defending themselves against gun thug attacks. Yet not one company official, gun thug or state cop has been charged with a single crime by the courts. State Police constantly harass the strikers and 30 gun thugs still patrol the Stearns Mine. We should not expect justice from the capitalists' courts.

Miller's Sell Out

The strategy of the international union for this strike is totally defensive. It has relied on legal maneuverings and negotiations. Miller has actively blocked attempts by the UMWA rank and file to aid the Stearns miners. In December, a caravan of 400 rank-and-file miners travelled to Stearns to confront the scabs, gun thugs and State Police. Miller's response was to investigate and threaten to discipline the organizers of the caravan. Miller has sent organizers loyal to him to Stearns with orders to keep "the lid on" things. Miller has also failed to link the Stearns strike to the national strike.

We must oppose any deals between Miller and the Blue Diamond Company in which Miller agrees to cut off strike funds to the Stearns strikers in exchange for Blue Diamond dropping its lawsuit. This is a real threat because this suit combined with others filed by companies like US Steel threaten to bankrupt the union. The union bureaucrats, instead of relying on the militance of the rank and file to force the companies to drop these lawsuits, will often seek the legal way out. Of course, this means playing by the rules written by and for the capitalists.

A Program for Victory

We don't win strikes by sitting on our hands, relying on legal maneuverings and obeying laws written by and for capitalists. We must rely on the rank-and-file workers and take the offensive.

The Stearns miners are standing firm but the struggle is stalemated. We advance this program to win this strike.

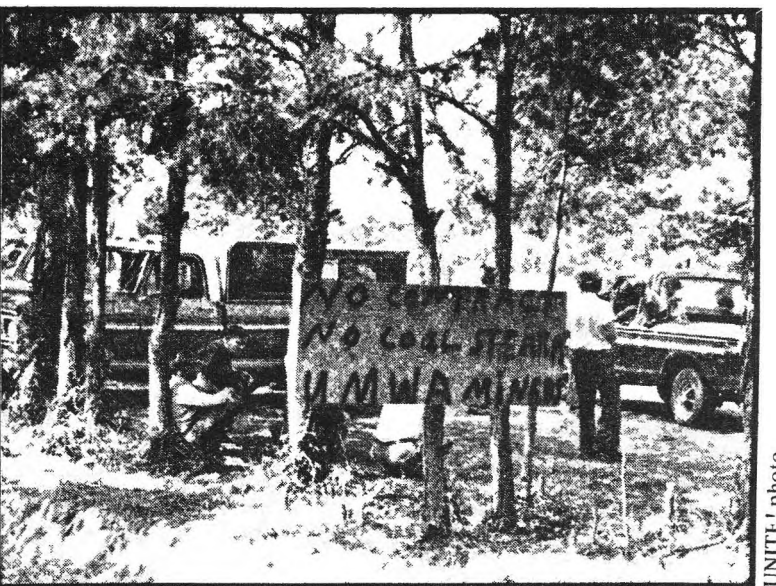
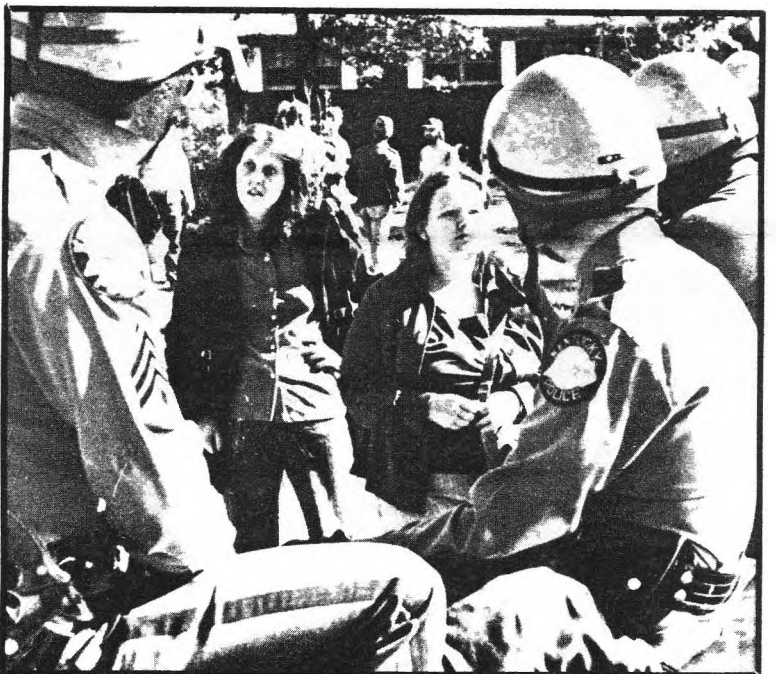
- Scabs must be stopped from working the mine
- UMWA rank and file must organize Blue Diamond's other two mines, Scotia and Leatherwood, to join the strike for a UMWA contract. If this fails, those mines must be closed.

- Build trade union unity. The rank and file of the UMWA and other unions must give political and material support to the Stearns strike. Money is needed and workers must travel to Stearns to help on picket lines.

- Settlement of the Stearns strike must be made a rank-and-file demand in the national contract.

We must continue militant support of the struggles of the Stearns miners, and we must carry this fight to all unorganized mines in the country. Our strength lies in our numbers and organization.

**Victory to the Stearns Miners!
Organize the Unorganized!**



UNITE! photo

Pictured above three important aspects of the Stearns strike. Top: The state has violently attacked the strike — 100 miners and relatives were arrested, many beaten, in October, 1977. Middle: Women have come to the fore as fighters and leaders in the strike — Stearns Miners Women's Club members confront Kentucky state troopers. Bottom: The determination of the strikers has outlasted attacks from the capitalists and neglect from the union bureaucrats — pickets on duty.



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