

**WHERE NEXT
for the
N.U.M.?**

ACTION PROGRAMME FOR MINERS

**For a New
Minority
Movement**

**workers
power**

25p/10p strikers

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Introduction

The miners strike poses most sharply the question of where now for the NUM? The treacherous right wing want to push the miners along the road of collaboration and conciliation with the NCB. They are prepared to split the union in order to get their way. The overwhelming majority of the 'left' leaders have not had the stomach for an open fight with them. They prefer to hold on to office and not rock the boat.

The TUC and Labour Party are exerting enormous pressure to persuade the NUM to turn its back on its traditions of industrial militancy and come to terms with Thatcherism. Again the NUM's left leaders have backed away from an open fight against these traitors and steered clear of appealing directly to their rank and file to halt the betrayals.

Yet the strike has also created a whole new layer of militant miners, an active minority of class struggle fighters. In every area and most branches they have been the most consistent picketers and organisers. Every time the leadership has wavered they've been the ones calling for the NUM to stand its ground.

Now it is time to organise these militants into a **National Miners' Minority Movement**. It must organise against the blatant treachery of the right and the backsliding and conciliation of the lefts. It must organise to transform the NUM into a class struggle union that fights and wins.

Since the formation of the NUM the left has generally organised itself as an electoral machine geared to securing posts for left officials. We must break with that tradition. We need a movement that mobilises the rank and file as more than election fodder. It must be able to hold all officials to account and act independently to initiate struggle and change. That is precisely what the left machines that elected Arthur Scargill and Henry Richardson have not been.

However simply **organising** the minority does not solve the matter for the militants. The strike has shown enormous weaknesses in the structure and traditions of the NUM. It has shown that the NUM cannot fight in splendid isolation and leave the rest of the labour movement in the hands of traitors. It has shown that the attacks on the miners and all other workers need **political answers** if we are to win the struggles ahead.

A rank and file miners movement must have a programme for transforming the structures and policies of the NUM. The Unofficial Reform Committee before World War One produced *'The Miners Next Step'* as its platform against bureaucracy and class collaboration. The National Miners Minority

Movement of the 1920s was committed to a programme of class struggle against the coal owners. We must revive that tradition of political struggle among the rank and file of the NUM.

The pamphlet we produce here is our programme for transforming the NUM. We thank all those miners from South Wales, Leicester, Notts, the Midlands Yorkshire and Kent who have been involved in the discussions that made its production possible. We welcome all future discussion that would enable us to improve and develop it.

Workers Power, January 1985

Nationalisation

The history of the NCB is a history of run-down and closures carried out for the benefit of the capitalist class and at the expense of the miners, their families and their communities.

In 1947 the Labour Government carried out the historic demand of the MFGB and nationalised the pits. Unlike the days of the Sankey Commission in 1920 the coal owners and the rest of the capitalist class put up little or no resistance. Why not? Basically the coal owners had bled the industry dry of profits and had failed to invest in modern machinery. Their profits were sinking. The rest of the capitalist class could not afford to let the coal industry just fold-up. Massive investment was needed and only the state - which via taxes could draw on the resources of the whole capitalist class and the working class too - could do it. But they made sure, and the Labour Government made sure for them, that this was no act of expropriation. This was not the handing over of the mines to the people - let alone to the miners.

Coal nationalisation meant the passage of ownership from one section of private capitalists into the hands of the capitalist class as a whole. The coal owners themselves were prepared to drop their resistance to nationalisation in exchange for substantial compensation which they are still coming to this day. £3,000 million was doled out in compensation to the old coal owners. The Labour Government paid them £164,665,000 in government stocks which gave them annuities up to the year 2000. A further £78,457,000 was handed out in royalties to various land owners. From its inception the NCB was saddled with paying this compensation debt back. To this day the NCB continues to pay out more in interest payments on borrowed money than its recorded working loss. Even though the mines were nationalised the sweat and blood of the miners were still to profit the old coal owners as well as the capitalist class that needed coal.

The leadership of the NUM lacked any understanding of this or what it meant. Their heads were full of the idea that the mines now belonged to "the nation" and that coal production could be planned for the common good. From this flowed a positive attitude towards collaboration with the NCB and the Government.

From the birth of the NUM it was locked into a machinery of collaboration and consultation within the nationalised industry. The NUM welcomed the nationalisation as "the first step towards the ideals for which we have striven". It urged its members to cooperate with the management, declaring

at its 1946 Bridlington conference.

"That, in view of the early nationalisation of the coal mining industry, it be an instruction to the National Coal Board, as soon as the Bill is passed and becomes law, to organise Area meetings in all areas of the Union, to which should be invited both the workmen and the management in order to bring before them their joint responsibility under the new ownership, and to seek their full cooperation in safety, efficiency and production, and to stress the need for a new industrial morality to secure friendly discipline in the industry".

In this spirit the NUM released its officials to become NCB divisional Labour Directors and campaigned for Saturday working. It actively collaborated with the new employer in creating a machinery of consultation and participation with management at pit, area and national level.

From the start, the NUM also failed to create a genuine national union on the bones of the old federation. The old District Unions were left their own rule books, distinct structures and officers. Arthur Horner admitted this himself:

"If I have a complaint against this scheme, it is because it is such an emasculated scheme. Why is it emasculated? It is emasculated because we have to take into account not only the general interests of the men which would drive me to one allout Mineworkers Union involving the liquidation of the District Unions. But we have to be realists and take into account the vested interests of the District Unions, and the state of the emasculated form of that scheme represents what we believe to be is the maximum concession that we can give in order to get even this step forward in the march toward one Mineworkers Union."

To this day the Districts have their own rule books and procedures. The executive itself is a federal body comprised of area officials. The autonomy of the areas and independent powers of the area officials bore bitter fruit when Nottingham broke ranks and accepted the area incentive schemes (AIS). It made the scabbing of Toon, Chadburn, Jones and Bell all that much easier.

Nationalisation has served the bosses and not the miners. In 1948 there were 716,520 miners on the NCB's books. 72% of those jobs have gone. In the hands of Labour, no less than in the hands of the Tories, capitalist nationalisation has meant, primarily, the "rationalisation" of the coal industry. The capitalist class got the coal it needed at the least possible cost by the introduction of more advanced technology and the closure of "surplus" capacity.

The NCB and the government had it their own way until the late 1960's. When the first major round of closures was announced in the late 1950's the NUM leaders pinned their hopes on the return of a Labour Government to protect jobs and expand the industry. Labour repaid the NUM's support with the Coal Plan of 1965 which was to close 1/2 of the South Welsh pits and 2/3 of those in Durham. This legacy of defeats and retreats had a dire

effect on the morale and confidence of the NUM rank and file. This can be seen in the strike figures of the industry. On average between 1947 and 1955 there were annually 778 strike days per 1,000 employees. Between 1956 and 1967 that figure had dropped dramatically to 225 per 1,000 miners. In 1968 it stood at 125!

The wage cutting and unifying effects of the 1966 National Power Loading Agreement and growing disillusionment with relying on Labour, served to revive trade union militancy in the NUM's ranks. There were major unofficial strikes in both 1969 and 1970. In 1972 and 1974 the NUM fought and won two national strikes against Heath's Tory Government. Once again it was to be a Labour Government that would rob the miners of the fruits of their victories.

Out of the Coal Industry examination in the autumn of 1974 came the much vaunted "Plan for Coal" agreed jointly by the Government, the NCB and the NUM. In the same spirit that welcomed nationalisation and retreated before the bosses attacks the NUM leaders agreed to a production incentive scheme in return for the expansion of the industry. That incentive scheme was to eventually take the form of NCB and Labour Government (via Fuel Minister Tony Benn) proposals for area incentive schemes. The aim was to set area against area and pit against pit in a bid to break the cohesion and unity of the NUM. One by one the area leaderships accepted the bait.

The federal structure of the NUM allowed this piecemeal betrayal despite the defeat of the proposals in a national ballot. Once again participation and collaboration with the government and NCB had seriously undermined the fighting strength of the NUM. Today's split in the NUM's ranks is a testimony to the softness of that deal.

The 1984/5 strike has nevertheless underlined the enormous strength of the miners. No wonder they are Thatcher's number one "enemy within". However it has also revealed the weaknesses of the NUM, as they have been created by the leaders of the NUM - left as well as right. Now is the time for militantsto organise - in cause of winning the strike and in the cause of strengthening the union after the strike - to finish off the work of breaking the NUM from collaboration and conciliation, to turn the union into a weapon of consistent class struggle. And now is the time to carry to completion the work of the militant miners who've organised and fought in the past to create a thoroughly democratic and genuinely national union for all mineworkers.

Workers' Control

The record of collaboration must be ended for ever. At every single level this means the NUM winning complete independence from management. It means organising the union so as to challenge the management's 'right to manage' effectively and consistently.

MacGregor and Thatcher have been right when they have said that they were fighting the NUM in order to defend management's right to manage the industry. And what do they mean by this right that they claim for their class ? They mean the right to run the industry in the interests of the bosses and bankers and at the expense of the miners. They need to reassert that right at the present moment because they are about to launch the most savage attack yet on jobs and conditions in the coal industry.

The application of computer and microchip technology to mining in the shape of the Mine Operating System (MINOS) will give them the practical ability to completely transform the whole industry. The job cutting potential of MINOS and its component sub-systems is staggering in its scale. On the basis of official Mining Department figures the Working Environment Research Group at Bradford University calculated a potential loss of 83% of coalmining jobs. This is not some far off threat, the NCB already has the technology to produce its projected coal output for 1987/88 from just 93 mines plus the Selby complex with a total workforce of 93,000.

These massive cuts in manpower will be achieved by a combination of improved technology and greatly increased direct management control of every stage of coal production. Thus, for example, electronic sensors on guided shearers will both increase the efficiency of the machine itself and almost eliminate unexpected breakdowns. Information relating to the operation of the shearer will be fed continuously to a computer which will alert management to any developing defects, allowing them to be corrected before they cause a stoppage. In this way the number of fitters and fitters can be greatly reduced. The target is to cut a face team from 16 men to 2 ! Similar developments will be introduced in other areas, for example, coal clearance and preparation. Indeed, the NCB have already introduced individual parts of the complete MINOS system in different pits, they have already tested and refined their use.

Management supervision will not stop at the computer in the colliery office. Every pit will also be connected to the national Compower computer. This will mean that management at national level will be able to monitor and compare not only the outputs of different pits but even the output per hour of individual shifts in different pits. Every face will be com-

pared with the most productive and that will become the standard for defining what is 'economic' and what is not.

Such a degree of supervision over the workforce is a vicious threat to effective trade unionism in the mines. Not only will management have sole access to the information and use it to set face against face and pit against pit but the sophistication of the machinery will make many miners' skills unnecessary. The possibility of employing unskilled and un-unionised workers in the pits is now a reality.

It is this monopoly of information and control that the union must break. The technology itself could be the greatest asset to miners, making possible shorter hours and safer working conditions for an expanded workforce but not if it is under the control of the likes of MacGregor or any other agent of the bosses and bankers. **The fight for workers' control is the key to effective trade unionism in the mines !**

There have been many in the NUM, and Peter Heathfield is one of them, who have argued for workers' control as a form of joint partnership between managers and workers to be achieved through an increased level of trade union representation on Management Boards. All such schemes boil down to no more than taking co-responsibility for the industry and would tie union representatives into the business of administering the industry in tandem with, and on the terms of, the bosses.

The Ryder participation scheme in British Leyland — enthusiastically sold by the Labour Government and accepted by the Communist Party — did precisely this. It served to nearly destroy the shop steward system in the bargain. We must reject all such proposals for the coal industry. In the name of 'Industrial Democracy' they blind the members to the irreconcilably opposed 'economic' interests of the miners and those who manage the industry for the bosses.

Arthur Scargill has recognised some of the dangers inherent in all these proposals ... "I submit that we do not need workers' participation to play our part as a trade union inside the National Coal Board or any other industry in Britain." However, his solution has always been to leave management to manage while the trade union organises to moderate and improve their decisions, "Provided the trade union is prepared to exercise its strength, we can convince management to change its views or, at the very least, modify them in many fields."

Against participation schemes and current trade union practice we must organise the NUM to fight for workers' control throughout the industry. It means that, while taking no responsibility at all for the running of the industry, the union must fight to be able to enforce a veto over any

management decision that runs counter to the members' interests. The fight for workers' control is the fight to destroy management's 'Right to Manage'.

Arthur Scargill and others will say that workers' control is impossible under capitalism and can mean nothing other than participation. We say that the fight to assert workers' control is part of the struggle to destroy the power of the capitalist class and its management agents. It cannot be won as a permanent and stable long term condition in single pits, or in the industry as a whole. Management will fight the battle as a life or death struggle. They may try to divert it through participation schemes. Either the struggle will spread throughout the industry, to all organised workers as part of a generalised offensive against the bosses or it will be rolled back by the bosses.

The fight for workers' control is a declaration of permanent war against the bosses -- and it must be fought as such !

We must fight to ensure that, under NUM control, the new technologies work for the miners and not for the bosses. We must organise to veto every management decision that the NUM members consider is contrary to their interests. Under workers' control the new technologies can be used to:

- ⊗ dramatically cut shift time and the length of the working week
- ⊗ hire new workers as a result of the cut in the working week
- ⊗ improve health and safety - electronic sensors monitoring face temperature and methane levels could have saved lives at the Cardowan colliery in 1982, for example. In the bosses hands they will only be used to increase the rate of exploitation of the miners.

Every lodge/branch must so organise itself as to be able to impose its control over speeds, hours, hiring, conditions and the utilisation of new technology. Area councils and panels must coordinate and support that fight. Nationally, the NUM must give a lead. But this means making a radical break with the practices of the past.

It means pulling out of the NCB's consultative machinery. Right down to colliery level these consultative committees undermine the fighting independence of the union. With their sub-committees they tie the NUM into joint decision making with NACODS and BACM - invariably on the NCB's terms. On all questions concerning the livelihood and welfare of its members the NUM should organise to face management as an independent and opposing force. On all other matters it should take no co-responsibility with management.

Those who defend involvement in the present consultative machinery invariably do so on the grounds that it is from within such committees that

the union obtains information from management. Of course the union needs the maximum information but, as the secret hit lists showed, management cannot be trusted to reveal their true plans in the polite confines of the consultative committees. It uses the consultative machinery to hoodwink the workers into thinking that they are kept informed and are consulted on future plans.

The fight for workers' control requires that we break open the world of business secrecy within which the NCB manages. The defence of jobs and conditions requires that we know all their plans and intentions.

It means opening the books of management. Their books and computer data banks must be opened to direct NUM observation and inspection. The NUM itself must appoint its own experts to examine the accounts of the NCB at every level. It must appoint experts to examine computer-stored information and to calculate the impact of future plans on the members. Such information is essential to arm the union to make the new technologies benefit the workers. We demand the right to send workers' inspectors into all meetings – not to cooperate under promises of secrecy but in order to report back openly to the workforce.

It means ending participation at every level. All national plans drawn up jointly by the Government, the NUM and the NCB have either been directly framed on the employers' terms or have worked out that way if the union has not proved itself strong enough, and independent enough, to defend its members. George Brown's Coal Plan of 1965 was dramatically revised down in the interests of the bosses. So too was the Plan for Coal.

The union should withdraw its endorsement of the Plan for Coal, recognise that there is no common interest between the NCB and the NUM and organise to resist and veto management's plans.

The fight for workers' control is not a new system for running the NCB under capitalism. It is a resolute, every day fight to defend the interests of the present workforce and their children's prospects of a job. But, at the same time, it poses an alternative way of running both the industry and society in general. One where technological change reduces the hours and improves the conditions for all. In short, it must become a fight against capitalism itself. The fight for workers' control will help to educate, organise and politicise the whole workforce. It means that after this strike the majority of the members will not sink back into indifference towards union affairs. It will necessitate leaders at all levels of the union who are first and foremost fighters and not office boys and negotiators. It will help to isolate and crush the right wing who thrive on bureaucracy, on collaboration with management and on apathy among the membership. The fight for workers control must be a fight to transform the NUM organisationally as well so as to be able to meet this task.

Transform the NUM

The 1984/85 strike has shown once again that there are immense reserves of fighting ability among rank and file members who have hitherto been little involved in the union. The task of creating a national union that is ready to fight at a moment's notice must begin from below. We must work for change in every pit.

In the first place this must mean fundamental changes in workplace organisation. At present lodges/branches are usually run by committees which distribute tasks and functions between them. They offer ample opportunities for feather-bedded officers to stay above ground except for the occasional fleeting visit underground. Such a system does not sufficiently represent the working miners. **We need a shop steward system in the mines.**

The Unofficial Reform Committee in South Wales after the first World War and the National Miners Minority Movement that succeeded it both fought for the wholesale transformation of the lodge/branch committee structure. Every division of a district was to have its own elected union representative. These representatives were to form the basis of representative union committees democratically responsible to the working units in the pits. In that way lodge/branch committees could be organised to effectively represent every grade and district in the pit. We must take up their struggle once again.

Present systems of work unit representation are woefully inadequate. In some areas charge hands (or captains in South Wales) are elected by the men themselves. But they are not represented within the union structure in any meaningful way. In some areas (like Notts, for example) charge hands are still appointed by management on the seniority principle. The charge hand system is no alternative to a developed shop stewards system. Neither is the system which operates in some branches/lodges whereby the elected committee men divide responsibilities for shifts and faces between them. **Every face, every district, every shift, every grade should elect shop stewards to represent them.**

The stewards must be elected by the men. They must be elected as union officers. The lodge/branch committee should be formed as a committee of stewards co-ordinating their vigilance against the management. They will exercise their control over those whose facility times enables them to fight for the workers or become distanced from them.

Branch/lodge meetings must be re-invigorated to draw in all miners. Closures and dispersment have made it all the more difficult for NUM members to make it to weekend branch/lodge meetings. **The committees must organise**

to convene branch/lodge meetings in NCB time so that they can genuinely involve the mass of the membership. Each branch committee must maintain a regular pit newspaper to explain branch policies, inform and educate the members and organise debate on all questions of concern to the members.

The mass meeting is a vital element in workers democracy. Decision on behalf of the lodge/branch should be taken by a show of hands after a free and open debate. Only in this way can workers decide to take action in the full knowledge of who else is prepared to act and what the balance of forces are. In that way it is superior to the traditional ballot which should be discarded.

National strike calls shall be endorsed or rejected at mass meetings where hands can be counted and votes recorded as part of a national total. This should replace the system of ballot voting required under Rule 43. There must be no return to work after a strike unless it has majority support at mass meetings in the branch, region or entire membership affected by the strike call.

All officials should be elected by a show of hands at branch meetings. This should apply to national, area and branch officials. They should be subject to immediate recall on the show of hands of a majority of those who once elected them. The recent change to Rule 18 makes compulsory re-election for officials every five years. This should be extended to all officials, not just those who were elected after August 1983. It should be amended to give the members who elected them the right of recall.

All officials should earn no more than the wages of a face worker. They should be barred from taking all other forms of employment (not just from becoming MPs or paid government officials). We want no more company directors like Joe Gormley on the NUM's payroll.

The National Executive should be elected at the annual conference. Every branch must have delegates at conference in proportion to their pit membership size. There should be no automatic places for the areas on the leadership. This should also apply to COSA and the Power Group which should have no rights to exist as separate areas within the NUM. All regional and branch organisation should operate with a system of common rules. No area should have the right to refuse to implement national NUM policy.

No secret talks, no secret deals. All negotiations between NUM officials and the NCB must be conducted in the full sight of the membership. Gormley used to meet Ezra and Ted Heath for private chats and deals. MacGahey, Heathfield and Scargill have conducted negotiations with the NCB in secret to the detriment of the momentum and confidence of the strike. They left

the members in the dark as to prospects and direction of the dispute. All talks must be open.

The major advances secured by the MFGB and the NUM have been the work of unofficial rank and file organisation across collieries, areas and coalfields. That is the tradition of the unofficial Reform Committee in South Wales, the Miners Minority Movement of the 1920s and the Barnsley forum movement of the late 1960s.

On the other hand open scabs and even fascists have sought to organise in the union with intent to brake it. Spencer was quite rightly hounded out of the MFGB in 1926, so too should every scab organiser today. The 1984 Spencerites must not be allowed to use the union's resources to build their own scab outfit. That is why we are for driving them out of the union before they can do further damage in our ranks.

All NUM officers who have scabbed on the 1984/5 strike and all those who have openly assisted the organised scabs of the National Working Miners Committee should be expelled from the union. They must be debarred from future membership. The NCB must not be allowed to employ them in line with the NUM's closed shop policy.

The new Rule 51 could prove a double edged sword.

It was proposed as a measure to discipline scabs but never used against them in the strike. Scargill has even said he did not intend to use it. In the hands of the officials, this rule, with its bar on bringing the union into disrepute and discussing union affairs with outsiders, can be used against militants who justifiably criticise their own officers or, legitimately, discuss that criticism with other workers or with socialist organisations 'outside' the NUM ranks. Instead of Rule 51 we need:

- * To discipline scabs with a rule that explicitly outlaws scabbing and organising with the bosses to destroy the union's fighting strength. Such a clear and unambiguous rule would defend the right of militants to organise, and empower the union to expel the scabs in a dispute.
- * To expel all fascists from the NUM. The union must not allow this poisonous breed any platform for its racist and divisive campaigns.
- * To defend the right of black miners to caucus independently within the NUM so as to formulate and fight for their demands and interests.
- * To defend the right of gay miners to caucus independently within the branch, area and national organisations of the NUM.

Policies

A democratic union is of no use unless it is tied to militant class struggle policies. In order to finally root out the cancer of federalism and regional separatism the union must fight for a pay claim and conditions of work that that can unite the whole membership. This means:

* Rip up the AIS, no more productivity dealing of any kind whatsoever. For a national wage for all miners equivalent to the highest bonus obtained in the industry. In Yorkshire, bonuses range from £16 to £103. Some Notts pits earn considerably more than Wales, Scotland and Durham. If the NCB are not going to divide pit against pit and area against area then the incentive schemes must be scrapped now. If the militants had waged a war to stop Gormley and the right ignoring the national ballot rejection of the incentive scheme rather than looking to the courts for help, then the NCB would not have had the successes they have had in scab-herding in the Midlands.

* No more overtime working. For a full national wage with no bonus strings This would end the need of miners to supplement their earnings with overtime working. The abolition of overtime working by the NUM would force the NCB to employ more men and in that way, help thousands leave the dole queues.

* Defend miners wages against inflation. For wages to rise automatically to compensate 1% for each % increase in the cost of living. That cost of living shall be calculated not on the basis of the government's figures but of a workers cost of living index which shall be worked out by committees of rank and file miners and their wives in the mining communities.

* No loss of earnings for any miners who move jobs, between pits or within a pit because of redeployment or injury. Miners so moved must be guaranteed the earnings of the job they were doing before injury or redeployment.

* Retirement for all miners at 50 on guaranteed full pay. This will help maintain the health of those who have worked underground and create jobs for the young and fit.

* Safety must always come before productivity. There must be elected union safety inspectors on every shift. Proper toilet, washing and eating facilities underground are necessary. Union safety inspectors must exercise control over oils, chemicals and noise levels.

* No more job losses. No collieries to close except with the agreement of the NUM. All jobs vacated by workers leaving the industry to be immediately filled.

* Workers control of the disposal and distribution of the new technology

and investment plans. Already in North Derbyshire MINOS has halved the number of men deployed in conveying systems. The NCB has shed one worker on every face in the last year. MINOS is being concentrated in the central coalfields preparatory to further closures and an assault on jobs in Wales, Scotland, the North-East and Kent. If the new computer controlled mechanisms are not to further divide the regions the union must assert its control over the deployment of the technologies against the management.

Women

Even the bosses press marvelled at the role of women within the strike. In their usual patronising way they expected that miners wives would 'know their place', and that miners were just old fashioned male chauvinists who would not let their wives get involved. They were proved wrong..

In all major miners struggles women have played a vital role in maintaining the strike. The organisations created by the wives in the 1984/5 strike must be maintained as permanent bodies with the official backing of the NUM. In their turn they must reach out to other women workers in order to become the core of a mass working class womens movement.

- * The wives organisation should have observer rights at NUM branches and conferences. The NUM should assist by providing creche facilities so that wives may attend meetings.
- * They should have automatic rights to representation on strike committees during industrial action.
- * They must be given funds - with no strings - to maintain their organisation.
- * We are for the repeal of the protective legislation that prevents women working in the mines **on the condition** that the union is strong enough to exercise control over management and improve safety and health standards as a result. The machinery and conditions can exist for women to work in the mines and rear children. This was not the case when the initial legislation passed constituted a protective gain for the working class. Neither were the miners well enough organised to defend women miners. Any attempt to conscript women miners to break or undermine the NUM must be resisted. The only guarantee of women's safety and health lies in maintaining a union strong enough to protect and improve the conditions of all mineworkers. We are for the undoing of the NUM/NCB agreements of the 1960s which served to force women out of surface jobs.

- * The NUM must reorganise itself so as to ensure the maximum involvement of women mineworkers. This means holding union meetings in work time, providing creches to allow women to attend meetings and conferences.

Women must have the right to caucus at all levels of the union so as to formulate and fight for their demands and interests. A democratic women's section must be formed. One miner told the union "if we are fighting for jobs lets make them worth having". Let that be so for women miners too!

The NUM must commit itself to actively supporting the struggles of working women and all those women fighting to defend and extend women's rights against the bosses' state.

Oppression

Capitalism makes life a misery for millions of people. Not only does it cruelly exploit workers in the mines, factories and offices. It condemns millions of people to suffer the prejudices - against black people, against young people, against gay people - that it has nurtured over many years. Capitalism encourages workers to hate blacks or gays for one simple reason. It can divide the working class by these means. Divided along these lines we are weaker, less able to wage a united fightback against capitalism's attacks. We must combat all forms of oppression and fight to rid the NUM and the labour movement as a whole of all the poisonous prejudices that today weaken it.

The NUM has shown itself willing and able to lead a fight against oppression. At the 1984 Labour Party conference, the NUM, unlike, most other unions, supported the formation of black sections in the Party. It recognised the need to give a voice, hitherto denied, to black people. In the strike itself the NUM has been made stronger by the massive involvement of young miners. It must go on to fight for full trade union and political rights for all young workers.

The NUM has also welcomed support it has received from groups such as "Gay Men and Lesbians Support the Miners". It has found real allies in people who are branded by capitalism simply because of their sexual preferences. Mining communities, like Dulais, have welcomed visits from gays, and miners have addressed meetings of gays. All of this marks tremendous progress in the NUM. It must be built upon.

Against racism the NUM must fight for:

- * The repeal of all racist legislation including all immigration laws, the Nationality Act and the Police Bill.

- * Opposition to the brutal campaigns of racist deportations being waged by the Tories.

* The right of black people to organise their own defence organisations, supported by the labour movement, against police and fascist attacks.

* For full equality of black people at work and in the unions - equal pay, positive discrimination under union control to open up job/apprenticeship opportunities to black people. Black people must have the right to form caucus/sections in the unions and Labour Party to fight for these measures.

Against the oppression of youth the NUM must campaign actively for:

* The extension of study/training facilities to all youth - financed by the government, controlled by the unions.

* For democratic youth sections in the unions which should in no way restrict the full participation of youths in the union as a whole.

* For equal pay and equal rights at work for all young workers.

* For the provision of confidential contraception and medical facilities for youth. The age of consent (16) should be abolished. The state has no right to interfere with the sexual activities of young people.

Against the repression of gays the NUM must pledge support for the following policies and fight for them throughout the labour movement:

* No discrimination in jobs, housing, child custody etc, on the grounds of sexual orientation.

* Abolish the age of consent ; (currently 21 for gay men - lesbians are not even recognised in law, even though they are cruelly persecuted by capitalism)

* Defend gays against the constant police harassment they face in their communities, clubs and pubs. For gay self-defence, supported by the labour movement, against police attacks and "queer bashers".

* For a massive educational campaign in the NUM to explain gayness and eliminate the age old prejudices that exist.

Internationalism

Nationalism divides workers of different countries, It helps the bosses get away with wars and slaughter in the name of the "national interest", but in fact only to line the pockets of the rich. Miners have no shared "national interest" with Margaret Thatcher or Ian MacGregor or any other member of the boss class. We have a thousand things in common with a German, French American or African worker. We are exploited by the same breed of parasites.

Through their economic summits, through NATO, the UN and such like the bosses build up international links. Take the steel industry. Through the Common Market the bosses of Europe met and planned the sacking of thousands of steelworkers in Belgium, France and Britain. The working class needs to counter this international attack with real workers' international unity.

The NUM should maintain the strongest links with those who have given support, especially with the rank and file workers. To make this effective the NUM should rid itself of all nationalist policies, such as its endorsement of import controls, and the call to get Britain out of the Common Market. Of course, in a strike you need to stop imports dead. But as well as the support of British dockers and seamen you also need the support of Polish miners and Dutch, Belgian, French, Irish dockers and seamen. Import controls in the hands of the bosses could never save miners jobs. The call for controls from the NUM weakens the union's internationalism. Stripped of radical rhetoric it is a call for unity with British bosses in order to export unemployment. It is a call to save our jobs by sacking French workers. This will never save our jobs and will weaken us for future struggles in which we will need the support of workers' from other countries.

As for the call to withdraw from the Common Market, it is a fantasy that this can help workers. It is a diversion from the reality that in or out of the EEC the British bosses, not us, control our economy. In or out of the EEC Thatcher will still attack us. To suggest otherwise - as the call to withdraw does, implying Britain would be a better place out of the EEC - is to peddle a dangerous, nationalist illusion.

The NUM must become a more active internationalist fighting force, helping other miners in struggle (in South Africa, for example). Miners have seen and felt the brutal armoury of the British state which was perfected and has been used for so long in Northern Ireland. The NUM must come out openly for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from the Six Counties and the open recognition of the Irish people's right to national unity. Likewise it must fight to force the bosses to withdraw the troops guarding their profits in every foreign base, including the Falklands.

The NUM must defend the historic gain of the overthrow of capitalism in the USSR and other states ruled by Stalinist bureaucracies. It must actively oppose imperialism's war drive against the Warsaw Pact. However it must also support all working class struggles against bureaucratic oppression and privilege in those countries. There must be no more support for stooge state unions against independent working class organisations. Scargill was wrong to have support Jaruzelski against the Polish workers. The Polish regime repaid that support by scabbing on the miners strike.

Internationalism is not an optional extra but is the heart and soul of the

class struggle. Thatcher tries to smear the NUM with taking money from 'enemy' powers. The miners should say, "The workers of every country are our allies. We welcome their assistance. Our 'enemy' is Thatcher and her class in Britain and the whole world."

Law

The Tory government is set on chaining the unions through laws that make them liable for damages for strike action and allow the courts to steal their funds, to intervene in disputes and hamper their rights to keep political funds. The miners have had to learn this fact through bitter experience. So too have Austin Rover workers and NGA. The miners must spearhead a working class offensive to destroy these laws which are a central weapon in the bosses arsenal today.

The Tory trade union laws have been backed by the creation of a national drilled police force which has launched attack after attack on the miners picket lines. Nationally and at a local level the NUM must create its own **workers defence/picket line defence guard**. The fittest and most able young miners must be regularly drilled and trained to defend their union against police and army attack.

In the face of police attacks the strike picket line is hard to defend and maintain. Against scabs and the scab leaders the NUM must adopt the tactic of **colliery occupation**, turning every pithead into a defended fortress against the police and scabs.

The NUM must continue to refuse to recognise the anti-union courts and the 'justice' handed out by the dedicated Tory class warrior who are appointed as judges. But it must also fight to smash these laws. This means mobilising the entire working class into all out action to destroy these laws. **A General Strike to smash the anti-union laws.** The long remembered experience of the 1926 betrayal has led miners to be traditionally suspicious of the General strike slogan and, in particular of demands on the TUC to call such action. But to call on them to do nothing, or to allow them to conduct solidarity action, as the NUM leaders have done, only leaves them free to use the entire machinery of the workers movement, its funds and resources. It leaves them free to capitulate and betray. We need the machinery of the labour movement to work for us and we must fight the TUC chiefs for control over it.

While we call for the TUC to lead we do not wait passively for them to act. We must organise our fellow workers to get them to force their leaders into action, or fight to replace them if they will not, to link up with all workers

in order to force the TUC into action. In this way we can so organise to prevent the TUC selling out the General strike in the way they did in 1926. This means telling workers not to wait for the TUC's strike call. A wave of strikes is the surest way of forcing the leaders to act. It means building councils of workers delegates to co-ordinate the strike at a local and national level. It means creating a national council of action, based on the rank and file, with full negotiating rights.

As 1926 showed the General Strike weapon poses acutely the question of which class will rule in society. Picket lines must be defended, factories occupied and supplies maintained. The TUC leaders now, as then, will run a mile at the sight of such a battle. Our job will be to mobilise the working class to develop the organs of power that can stop them betraying or replacing them immediately they look like doing so. Such organisations and mobilisations can go on to break the power of the capitalists for ever. They can open the road to the revolutionary conquest of political power by a working class organised, armed and led by a revolutionary party willing to see the fight through to the end.

Government

The MFGB was the first union to win seats in Parliament. However, it made a terrible error. Whilst on matters connected with the miners these MPs defended miners' interests, on all other questions they were members of the openly capitalist Liberal Party. In 1909 the MFGB was at last won to 'independent labour' representation and its 16 MPs joined the Parliamentary Labour Party. Since then, the miners' unions have helped build and fund the Labour Party.

In 1945 there were 39 NUM sponsored Labour Parliamentary candidates. Yet, as a party committed to managing the capitalist system and securing, if possible, reforms to the advantage of the working class within that system it has proven a bitter foe of the miners. In fact, miners' devotion to it has allowed that party to carry through a programme of closure and speed-ups on behalf of the bosses that have been resisted less because they have been pushed through by the party that the miners have traditionally looked to as theirs. Even now, Don Concannon, who wanted to offer a Nottinghamshire break away union Labour Party affiliation, and Roy Mason have retained their NUM sponsorship while pursuing vicious anti-working class policies against the workers of Britain and Ireland.

In our view the Labour Party is wedded lock, stock and barrel to the maintenance of the capitalist system. This system **must** intensify the exploitation of the miners if that system is to survive and flourish. No wonder then that

Kinnock denounced the 'violence' of miners who defended themselves. No wonder that Stan Orme worked his own form of overtime to secure a settlement between the NUM and the NCB that would rob the NUM of its victory. They are servants of this system. As such they too will be driven to attack the miners. Let us not forget more pits were closed under the last Labour government than have so far been closed by the Tories. We believe that miners must come to play as big a part in the political battles of the working class as it does in the field of trade union struggle. The crisis of the last ten years poses fundamental questions and with them historic tasks that need to be solved by today's militants.

The Labour Party remains in a deep crisis which started after the sell-outs and betrayals of the second half of the 1970s. These opened the door to the most vicious Tory government of the century. The left of the Labour Party tried to reform the party so that this 'could never happen again'. But they stopped half way, scared by the SDP's defection and the threats of the right-wing MPs. Foot and then Kinnock have assured full power to the MPs and the union leaders. The 'lefts' agreed not to challenge Kinnock and Hattersley over the leadership. That is why Kinnock can use the parliamentary party and the NEC to slander Scargill, to give credence to Thatcher's propaganda against violence and to publicly turn his back on the miners' rallies and picket lines. He is not just a rotten apple; three quarters of the barrel of Labour MPs support him against the miners. He is a true product of the 'parliamentary road to socialism'.

But what of the other quarter, the lefts like Benn and Skinner and their allies in the union movement like Buckton, Knapp and Scargill himself? Do these lefts represent the leaderships we need, as many on the left, including so called revolutionaries, claim? We think not. The lefts, whatever their merits as individual supporters of the miners, suffer a major flaw. They place their interest in the Labour Party (or in the "unity" of the TUC) and therefore their "unity" with its leader, above the interests of particular strikes, and the class struggles generally.

Throughout the strike the lefts refused to openly criticise Kinnock by name. They have not tried to rally an opposition to him in the Party and the unions. They have flatly refused to challenge his leadership of the Party. In so doing they weakened the miners' cause. By leaving Kinnock unchallenged they allowed millions of workers to hear, believe and act on his Judas remarks about ballots, violence and compromise.

The lefts certainly represent the pressure of our militancy in the Labour Party. However, their refusal to break ranks with the open traitors lead them inevitably to put the brakes on that pressure. They stop it short of a decisive break with the traitors. This is why even the best 'left' reformist is not what the NUM or the working class as a whole needs.

We believe that only a new revolutionary party will meet the needs of the great battles of the 1980s. But we also recognise that many, indeed most militants still have hopes that the Labour Party can be altered or transformed in some way. We are not sectarians who want to stand aside from these struggles. To miners who are Labour Party members or who, despite the real evidence of its treachery in the strike, still wish to join it in order to change it, we propose a course of action which can both put to the test their own project and build up the political organisations which, if we are right, can be the basis for a new revolutionary workers party.

What should the national union and its branches do to forward this process? First of all, the silence with regard to the Labour leadership's scabbing role in the strike should be ended. Tens of thousands of affiliated union members and constituency members are as full of hatred of Kinnock as are the miners themselves. Only Denis Skinner half-voiced that anger. An open statement by the union would give a lead to the rank and file to censure and remove the traitors. The union should fight to ensure that:

- * No sponsored MP should receive more than the wage of a skilled miner. Any surplus on the MP's salary must go directly to the NUM's fighting fund.

- * Any NUM sponsored MP shall be instantly recallable should they support or act on behalf of policies detrimental to the interests of the working class.

- * On every occasion that the leadership opposes the fight for the interests of the working class and miners - then the NUM sponsored MPs and the 'friends of the miners' shall immediately oppose them by challenging the leadership with an alternative candidate and programme to the official leadership. This is the least we could have expected from Skinner and Benn at the 1984 conference of the Labour Party. The NUM shall have no 'special' relationship with the Labour Party leaders, in power or out.

- * The NUM at every level - from lodge to NEC - must deploy its forces alongside other militant workers' organisations to commit any future Labour Government to measures which set out to solve the capitalist crisis at the cost of the capitalist class.

We should fight to ensure that, it:

- * Immediately nationalises the banks and finance houses with no compensation. It should nationalise all key sections of industry under workers' control and with no compensation for the bosses.

- * Disbands the police and armed forces, making arms available to an armed workers' militia under the control of the trade unions.

- * Repeals the anti-union laws and racist immigration laws.

* Withdraws British troops from Ireland immediately and leaves NATO.

* Expropriates the capitalists and put their one-time property to work in a planned programme of public works, recognising workers' control of the projects.

* Immediately renationalises all sections of industry privatised by the Tories. This is vital in the mines now, with MacGregor and the bosses financial papers openly talking about selling off profitable mines to big business and unprofitable ones to...the miners! We must fight privatisation now. Not because the NCB is "socialist" but as a means of forcing the entire capitalist class to take responsibility for maintaining the jobs of all miners. Labour must promise to renationalise any pits privatised and should declare they will cancel NCB debts, nationalise the industry's major suppliers and distribution agencies and place the industry under workers' control. That will open the way to a coal industry organised and run to meet human need.

If a Labour government were to meet the needs of miners and the rest of the working class it would have to base itself on the strength of and be directly responsible to the organs of struggle created by the working class. It would have to maintain and sustain the workers' defence guards and disband the police and win over the army from its upper-class officers and generals.

We should be clear from the outset that the first step along that path taken by an elected Labour government would meet vicious ruling class "extra parliamentary opposition". Neil Kinnock's beloved legality would prove a broken reed in days.

We do not believe that the Labour Party, even with 200 Denis Skinnery or Tony Benns, would be sufficient to break the power of Britain's capitalist class. That power lies not in Parliament but in the ownership and management of the Banks, Industry and Commerce. Whilst this enormous accumulation of wealth, produced by the working class past and present is in their hands, planning for human need, including 'plans for coal', is an impossibility. This enormous wealth cannot be bought up piecemeal. It can only be seized. But if any Labour Government tried to do so (and it never has!) it would be smashed by the guardian of capitalist wealth, the capitalist state. Miners have seen a large part of it in action, the bureaucracy that administers the starvation of striking workers families; the judges who loot the union funds; the police who arrest and bludgeon unarmed pickets. This state is a powerful guardian. It cannot be broken by elections or parliamentary votes. It cannot be broken by strikes or trade union action alone either. **But it can and must be broken** if we are to win through to total victory for the whole working class. It can be broken by the revolutionary action of millions of workers, politically and militarily armed for the task.

If we want a planned economy with jobs for all but with steadily reducing working time. If we want to obliterate poverty, bad housing, ill health, crime at home and work, to abolish starvation and disease in the 'Third World', then we must be as serious about the offensive political struggle as the defensive trade union one. Indeed we must link up and extend the defensive struggle into a new thrust for working class power and socialism. For this we will need a new programme and a break with the methods of Labour. Let us begin the task now!

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