

# workers power

25p/10p strikers Paper of the Workers Power group

## WITH THE MINERS TILL TOTAL VICTORY!

FILE COPY



A VICTORY for the miners will be the greatest victory for the whole working class for ten years. The best way to get this victory is by taking action alongside the miners. They have led the way in taking-on the Tories. If the rest of us follow them into battle we can turn the tables on Thatcher.

The miners are striking to defend jobs. Since 1981 pit after pit has closed. Thousands of jobs have been lost. This attack on jobs is not only affecting miners. If MacGregor's plans to cut coal production go ahead jobs will go in steel, rail, the docks and in haulage. British Rail, for example, carries two million tonnes of coal a week. As pits close so too will the railways that transport the

coal they produced. The same applies to the other areas of the transport industry.

It is not only the jobs that are directly connected with coal that are on the line. The Tories have tried their damndest ever since 1979 to cut public expenditure. They have destroyed many jobs in the public sector. They want to destroy many more. Their plan to privatise London Transport, British Telecom and their plans to abolish the metropolitan councils will result in more sackings. Some 65,000 jobs in local government, teaching and the services will result from the Tories proposed 10% cut in grants to local councils. The squeeze they are putting on Liverpool shows they

mean to see through these attacks.

If the Tories are allowed to defeat the miners it will strengthen their ability to carry out these plans. They will feel confident at beating a strong section of workers. Other weaker sections of the trade unions in the public sector will feel less confident that they can take on the Tories.

There is every reason to believe that the Tories can be beaten. The solidarity from other workers, backing the miners, has shown the reserves of strength that the labour movement has. The demonstrations against attacks on local councils have shown that public sector workers will fight. In London public



Rick Matthews (FL)

"Regular mass meetings and mass pickets are invaluable in getting more men involved. We've not only got to stop the movement of coal, we've got to send out delegations to other workplaces to raise money and call for solidarity on our picket lines. The lead must come from the local strike committees. The Scottish area strike committee made up of the executive and fulltime officials have given little lead so far."

Jim Tiemey, West Fife and Perth Central Strike Committee (personal capacity)

In the flying picket squads and on the mass pickets young miners have been in the front ranks. Their militancy must find a place in the leadership of the strike. The existing branch committees are all too often dominated by the older, less militant, more routinist miners. The area committees are over-dominated by full-time officials. If this is true of a militant area like Scotland how much more will it be so in weak, or non-striking areas won to the strike. The best areas should set an example by electing as soon as possible, pit and area strike committees.

transport was closed down by a solid strike. In Birmingham eight and a half thousand workers marched on the 'Day of Democracy', and many more struck. Dinner ladies who have been fighting the Tories in Birmingham for months are solid in their strike action. In Liverpool a near general strike of public sector workers in the city demonstrated the hostility that workers feel towards the Tories.

Links between the miners strike and these other struggles can and must be co-ordinated. A united fightback is what is needed. A united fightback is what we must bend every nerve and muscle to achieving.

The Tories are terrified of the unity that the miners' strike is inspiring. It jeopardises their union-bashing plans. They were successful in humbling the NGA and de-unionising GCHQ. They want more such victories. In the "new industries" and public sector they want to have tame house-unions or no unions at all. The miners strike can deal a blow to these schemes.

This explains why the Tories have given the go-ahead to the police and judges. They cannot afford to allow the miners to break the anti-union laws. To do so would cancel out their victory over the NGA. Their first line of attack has been a huge police operation to neutralise the flying pickets. If this eventually fails the injunctions that MacGregor has already got from the courts against Yorkshire NUM will be re-activated. Arrests, imprisonment and police harassment on a massive scale not just in Nottinghamshire but everywhere there are pickets will follow. The *Sunday Times* reflected the desire amongst the bosses that this course should be followed if the pickets continued. The Tories, it argued, "will have to turn to the very labour laws it placed on the statute book to curtail such secondary picketing." (1.4.84)

To pave the way for this legal offensive MacGregor has declared the strike, "political". He hopes to invoke the "who rules Britain" theme, and terrify union leaders everywhere into not supporting the miners. This challenge should be met head-on by the miners and militants throughout industry.

To MacGregor's charge we should reply that the strike is a response to the Tory Party's attack on the working class. These attacks - on our jobs, our union rights, our incomes - are political. They are the politics of the bosses. To defend ourselves we are quite happy to fight and strike for the simple political end of smashing up the Tories' plans. Because it is not only miners who are affected by these plans and the Tory anti-union laws, we precisely need to rally the whole working class. We need to force the leaders of the labour movement - the TUC - to call for a general strike to stop the pit closures, stop the attack on the public sector and smash the anti-union laws.

The argument for this course of action must be raised now in the miners' strike, in the support committees, the unions solidarisng with the miners and amongst the public sector workers. Winning the argument for a TUC-called general strike in these quarters can build up the sort of pressure that can make our leaders act.

Lionel Murray, Alastair Graham and Terry Duffy, however, cannot be trusted to give their support to a general strike. They will work hard - as they did during the NGA dispute - to sell our rights to the Tories. The best way to counter their likely treachery is to organise amongst the rank and file. In every town every struggle should be linked to the miners' strike by strike support co-ordinating committees. All workers should act now in defence of their own jobs, in pursuit of their own claims. Solidarity with the miners must be complete. No coal should move anywhere in the country. Mass and flying pickets should be supported by every trade unionist, in defiance of the bosses' law.

By these means a united offensive against the Tories can be built. As it grows in strength so the Tories will grow weaker. They can be beaten. They must be beaten. The Tories' offensive could be repulsed, their government left in tatters. This is a goal worth fighting for. Once again our rallying cry must be - INTO BATTLE ALONGSIDE THE MINERS, AGAINST THE TORIES!



# FOR A NATIONAL STRIKE - NOT A BOSSES' BALLOT!



John Sturrock (Network)

**THE MINERS' STRIKES** of 1972 and 1974 marked a turning point in the class struggles of the 1970s. So too will the outcome of the 1984 miners strike determine the terrain of struggle for the coming years.

The 1972 miners' strike showed exactly what the rank and file can do if it is organised under militant leadership. The NUM's executive was dominated by the Right. Bosses' man Gormley stood at its head. Yet NUM militants gave a lead which engineers, dockers and building workers were able to follow. In 1974 the NUM put the boot into Heath's government. For over six years the bosses did not dare launch another Heath-scale direct assault against the working class.

Unfortunately the victories of Saltley Gate, Pentonville and the strike-forced 1974 election were frittered away and decisively reversed under the Wilson-Callaghan governments. The NUM was locked into the productivity dealing that has opened up such broad divisions in its ranks. Tens of thousands of militants in other industries who had led the struggles of the early 1970s were either incorporated or demoralised at Labour's hands. In this way Labour prepared the way for Thatcher's attacks of the 1980s.

The Tories bided their time before attacking the miners. They prepared themselves well. In 1981 they wisely backed off from a fight with the miners and used the breathing space they had gained to install MacGregor and roll up their sleeves for a fight.

An increased tempo of closures in Scotland and Wales and a management clamp-down in every coalfield revealed weaknesses in the traditionally militant areas. The same was true of the left-dominated executive of the NUM. Threatened pits like Lewis Merthyr in South Wales and Kinneil in Scotland were left to fight without all out national backing. As a result they closed. The left's call for strike action was defeated in three separate ballots.

The ballots showed clearly that major divisions had opened up between the coalfields. While Yorkshire, Scotland, Wales and Kent recorded majorities for strike action in each of the 1982 and 1983 ballots, the Midland coalfields voted overwhelmingly against action. The fruits of the productivity deal were there for all to see.

In 1972, 54% of Nottingham miners voted for strike action. In January 1982 only 30% voted for strike action. In March 1983 that figure had slumped to 19%. In Leicester 13% voted to strike in October 1982 and 18% in March 1983. The old Spencerite traditions of the Nottingham coalfield were being given new life with the eager backing of the right in the NUM, the NCB management and the Tories.

The seriousness of MacGregor's attack, and the record of ballot failure, has led the NUM left to adopt an "alternative strategy" for mobilising to resist closure. Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield, Jack Taylor, Mick McGahey, Jack Collins and Emlyn Williams are all aware of the butchery that MacGregor and Thatcher have in store for the miners.

They know all too well that the Tories will not be content with anything less than their own heads on a platter. We do not doubt their good faith in wanting to take on Thatcher and beat her. What we do say, however, is that their strategy is seriously inadequate for this task.

The left officials have chosen to lead from behind the scenes. Their preferred strategy has been to give the green light to coalfield militants to set up a rolling strike. They

hoped by this to bring out individual coalfields in resistance to the closures.

Most militants will defend this at present. Given that the majority of the NEC were let down by the rank and file in three ballots, it seems obvious to most NUM militants that something other than the national strike ballot campaign had to be tried this time. This is understandable given that most militants feel badly let down by the members and leaders of the 'backward areas'.

Scargill and his allies are the subject of a constant filthy slander campaign in the press. The right-wing-dominated TUC has cold shouldered the NUM left leadership. The NUM right is more than willing to join forces with MacGregor, the media, the police and the devil himself if it can discredit the NUM left. No wonder then that the militant left in the NUM feels it has been put in a difficult position.

It was MacGregor and not Arthur Scargill who picked the time for this fight. The closure of Cortonwood was a deliberate and calculated provocation. The overtime ban would have had to run until autumn this year if it was to give the NCB or the CEBG any serious problems. MacGregor is an old man with few years ahead of him to finish the job. He was encouraged by the TUC's miserable collapse over GCHQ and the NGA and by the NUM right's complaints against the overtime ban.

He chose to put into operation the very hit list that he and the NCB had always said did not exist. He knew he could rely on the complete backing of the Tory government. Thatcher's government is becoming daily more unpopular. It badly needs a Falklands-type victory against the unions in order to break the rising tide of opposition.

MacGregor's onslaught rallied the militant areas. Influenced by the defeats and letdowns of the last few years Scotland and Wales hesitated a little at first. But the militants were able to get two-thirds of union out on strike. Delegations, mass pickets and flying pickets were dispatched to the Midlands coalfields. This was a correct and very important breach in the traditional federal rules and practices of the NUM. It allowed militants to directly address rank and file miners in the backward areas.

It succeeded in winning over the North East and North Derbyshire. It forced temporary stoppages in Lancashire and the Midlands. Yet there has been a police invasion of Nottinghamshire. There has been outright incitement to scab by right wing officials such as Ray Chadburn and Jack Jones. All this has meant that Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire remain black spots in the strike.

Behind their wall of police protection the right wing on the Executive have been able to mount an anti-strike campaign under the guise of fighting for a ballot. What they want is a traditional long drawn out balloting period in which their own members can continue to scab on the striking miners.

Meanwhile Fleet Street's hired head-fixers will pour out a constant stream of slander and disinformation. Their aim will be to undermine the confidence of middle-of-the-road miners and isolate the militants. The opinion pollsters will try to set up a bandwagon by announcing certain defeat well in advance. The right wing will use the time and the media to campaign against the strike.

They are being backed by Neil Kinnock. Instead of using his position to publicly support the miners, he is privately urging a secret ballot. He is more worried about the effects the miners' strike is having on the Labour Party's respectable image than defeating the Tories. His secret bloc with the right wing should be exposed to all miners. His urgings should be rejected.

If the right wing get their way every miner will vote separately from his mates and collective decision-making, in a secret ballot. All of the pressures of the media and the family will be on him.

Miners must have no truck with such a ballot campaign. The right wing are using it

to divide and derail the strike.

Many workers will argue that the secret ballot is the most democratic method of arriving at decisions. It is true that our forebearers - the Chartists - fought for a secret ballot over a hundred years ago. They did so for parliamentary elections because public voting meant that the industrialists and farmers could dictate to their employees how to vote. The secret ballot protected workers from tyranny and the sack.

However, when workers want to make a collective decision as to whether or not to take strike action the secret ballot is a rotten method. Strike action means enormous sacrifices for all. At the time of taking a decision to strike workers need to know how determined their fellow workers are, what the arguments for and against are, and how many workers are prepared for a fight.

**A mass meeting of all the workers affected is the most effective, efficient and democratic way of taking a decision to strike. Since no boss is present individual secrecy is not needed. Workers need not fear intimidation or the sack; the open show of hands best express the solidarity that is needed. This is working class democracy in action.**

You hear the arguments, you can speak for or against and, once the decision is taken it is carried out collectively. It is no surprise the Tories are trying to outlaw this democracy in favour of the individual secret ballot. They would prefer the ballot to be postal so that every last shred of solidarity is lost. The motto of this sort of 'democracy' is "divided you fall".

No wonder then that militants do not want to see the right wing's kind of ballot break up the strike. One militant expressed this view very clearly in an interview with a socialist paper, "A Ballot is a non-starter for us. We have had too many already. After the last failed we lost five pits. Either we fight now or its the end of the pits."

The problem with the left's strategy, however, is that it has simply said, 'no ballot' without counterposing to it the rank and file workers' democracy that could win over the waverers and persuade the most backward that a majority are prepared to fight. Given the NUM's rule book this has effectively meant that the left have no means of organising a national strike. In addition, their refusal to call an emergency NEC has allowed the right to parade in the mantle of 'democracy'.

The NUM left is now suggesting that the solidarity action of other sections of workers can win the miners strike without Nottinghamshire and Leicester. Alternatively they suggest that solidarity will eventually shame the woolly backs into action. This avoids the problem.

True, most strikers can see through Ottey, Vincent and Chadburn. They know that when they say 'ballot' they mean "no national strike". The problem remains, however, that the miners in the backward areas don't see things that way. Neither do thousands of rank and file railway workers, dockers and steelworkers who are being asked to risk lay offs or the sack in support of the miners.

A national strike is crucial if all coal production is to be halted and all coal movement stopped. Scabbing in the coalfields risks undermining the potential of rallying other workers to black coal movement.

It is good that six union leaders have pledged their support to the miners. But already the two-faced Bill Sirs of the ISTC has said his "members won't sacrifice their jobs for the miners." When the judges let rip with their injunctions and sequestration orders Moss Evans and Jimmy Knapp will doubtless try to beat a retreat - unless their members have been mobilised to hold the line by the militants.

Official support will break like a dry twig unless the rank and file is organised for active solidarity. But it will be more difficult to organise that solidarity whilst the miners' strike is not national and has not been seen to be sanctioned by the members.



John Sturrock (Report)

**The NEC must come off the fence. The left must use its majority to commit it to fighting for an all out national miners strike.** The longer the delay the more the right can set the working areas against any kind of action. They can attempt to organise back-to-work movements in weaker areas which only took strike action on condition that there would be a ballot.

Some of the right leaders hypocritically claim that they are for strike action. Even Ottey has said he is in favour of a strike. No time must be lost in calling their bluff. An emergency NEC must be convened at once and committed there and then to a national miners strike. This will force the right to come out into the open and reveal their true colours.

The National Executive is perfectly within its rights to call for national action "in pursuance of any of the the objects of the union". The very survival of the union is at stake. The NEC should call on all miners to strike against pit closures and for the wage claim. No more picket lines must be crossed. The maximum solidarity from other workers must be organised.

A call for a national strike must constitutionally be put to the test of a ballot. As the strike has hardened so the mood in Wales, Yorkshire, Scotland and Kent has become more solid. All around the country there are pickets who initially voted against action. No wonder Kent miners who we interview on the back page feel they have little to fear from a ballot in their area. But how do we deal with the backward areas?

**The NEC must organise for pit head meetings to be held in every colliery in every coalfield. They must hear speakers from the areas that are immediately under MacGregor's axe.** They should hear from workers taking action in support of the miners. All NEC members, and the National President in particular, should address mass rallies - most vitally in the Midlands - to urge maximum support for the NEC's call. Special bulletins, issues of "The Miner", posters, should all be used to put the argument for a national strike.

**At pithead meetings a show of hands should precede the constitutionally prescribed ballot. These should be organised in the shortest time possible. Days, not weeks. Only in this way can we keep the media's nose out of workers' business. Only in this way can we act quickly to derail the right wing's plan for a long drawn out ballot which would give the bosses' press a field day.**

In 1972 and 1974 militants have shown that they are not afraid of breaking with hidebound 'custom and practice'. They must reject the traditions established by the NUM right. They must pressure Scargill to force the right to accept workers' democracy as the only way to win an all-out strike. This means calling a national strike if a simple majority (and not the 55% required by the rule-book) vote to strike.

By these means we can overcome the present weaknesses in the strike. Militants can win a solid majority behind them. They can build real links between the militant coalfields and the minority of good militants in the more backward areas. With that backing the miners can go on to out-manoeuvre the mass picket-busting police squads and win real solidarity action from broader and broader sections of workers.

To do so means foiling the right's plans to hold their kind of ballot and once this strike has been won it means overhauling the NUM rule book to get rid of the anti-democratic 55% rule. It means ending the necessity for a secret ballot and creating an NEC that accurately reflects the weight of the coalfields and working miners. ■



# BREAK THE HOLD OF THE SCAB RIGHT WING

From the very beginning of this strike the right wing on the NEC have gone out of their way to inoculate their own areas against the epidemic of industrial action. These 'moderates' - BBC-speak for scabs - have set out to sabotage an all-out fight with MacGregor.

Only three members of the NEC voted against the resolution enabling individual areas to take official action against the closures. The rest of the right wing voted for Scargill's resolution in the full knowledge that they were not under instructions to bring their areas out. They could vote for one way and act another by keeping their areas at work and deliberately undermining the striking areas.

The right wing leaders showed their true colours the minute the flying pickets set out to win Nottingham and Derbyshire for a strike. Chadburn and Vincent hedged their bets at first. They told the militants not to picket and their own men not to cross picket lines! When this did not work they ran for the cover of a regional ballot.

Leicester's Jack Jones, always a trailblazer for the right, was far more blunt. He rejected calls from his own 'moderates' for a local ballot and instructed his members to work as normal. It took a strike of 50 men at Bagworth colliery after the first morning's picketing to convince this 'democrat' to reach for a ballot as a way of stopping strike action.

Having won a vote against action in their own area ballot Chadburn and Jones went on the offensive for a national ballot. Safely tucked in behind police lines, they set out to deliver a 'democratic' stab in the back to miners in South Wales, Scotland, Kent and Yorkshire.

On March 24th Jones declared, "I warned them (NUM HQ - WP) if we are attacked we will defend ourselves. If they (flying pickets - WP) come here they can expect war conditions." This, after a week during which not one arrest had been made on the Leicester picket lines!

By March 27th the right were confident enough to call a secret meeting in a Leicester hotel urging, "Our members, and all those who took a local vote not to strike, to cross picket lines and go back to work." Their initial aim, to panic the national leadership into an emergency meeting and a national ballot was not achieved. But ever since the rebel meeting, the right wing's counter-offensive has cast

John Sturrock (Network)



blacklists posted up in the canteen: not of scabs but of men who refused to cross the picket line.

In Leicestershire, union officials have stood by while militants have been threatened with being sent home because their colleagues refuse to wash with them. In South Derbyshire a militant has been thrown off the branch committee for refusing to scab on the strike.

The key to ousting the likes of Chadburn and Jones lies in organising this minority. It lies in organising a movement of rank and file miners across the regions that can fight to hold all officials to account and oust all those who sell the miners short. It means linking up the rank and file militants to give real support to the minority in the backward areas.

All this requires a break with bureaucratic custom and practice in the NUM. It means organising to fight the right inside the areas they command. The flying pickets show the way here. They refused to respect Chadburn's bureaucratic pact. They

'interfered' in other regions' affairs. A rank and file movement will build on this example and the links it forged. It would fight to break the power of a shadow over miners picketing in the scab areas.

Chadburn and Jones are able to act so brazenly partly because they have been deliberately playing on the hopes and fears of the members in their areas. The NCB have been dangling the carrot of jobs at the Belvoir super pit before Leicestershire miners. This hi-tech pit won't employ many miners but over half the Nottingham and Leicestershire miners have been promised jobs there!

The carrot is backed by the hefty stick of threatened early closure of supposedly exhausted mines. But in the scab areas there is a militant minority whose loyalty to the principles of trade unionism remain unshaken.

In many of the Nottingham pits the militant minority is quite large. In Chadburn's March ballot, despite

the media's frenzied anti-strike campaign, at Cresswell 395 voted for strike and 488 against. At Ollerton - scene of massive police intimidation - 335 voted for strike action and 681 against.

In South Derbyshire and Leicester the minority is much smaller. They have suffered hell at the hands of scabs egged on by NCB management and the local NUM leadership. At Ellistown and at Cadley Hill there are

the right on the executive and the disproportional representation of the areas and sections from which they draw their strength.

Such a movement would not be new in the history of the Miners Union. Between 1910 and 1912 the Unofficial Reform Committee led a movement to put a stop to the union leaders collaboration with the coal owners. In the 1920s Communist Party miners laid the trail for the foundation of the rank and file Minority Movement.

In the 1930s a minority of Nottingham miners waged a heroic struggle against Spencerism in their coalfield. Between 1969 and 1972 the Yorkshire miners' forums created a rank and file based left movement that initiated the flying and mass pickets.

If Scargill and Taylor are serious about defeating the right they will lend their office and position to the building of such a movement. They should give the lead in organising the rank and file to oust Jones and Chadburn and hold all officials - including themselves - directly to account.

The record to date suggests they will not build such a movement. If they will not give that lead then militants must organise themselves - in each region and between the regions - to do that work.

The campaign to pull out all the miners depends on giving sufficient strength to the militant minority in the backward areas. Meetings between flying pickets and isolated militants must be organised. Meetings of the militants in the backward areas and the election of unofficial strike committees - when necessary - against existing branch committees and regional executives, should be organised. They must be made the springboard for the creation of a new Rank and File Miners Movement which can oust the Right and take control of the running of the dispute directly into the hands of the members. ■

by P. Mason

## WORKERS POWER FUND DRIVE

The Workers Power fund drive for £10 000 to buy new typesetting equipment has made a good start. Since the fund was launched in February we have received £898 including a £48 collection taken at a new members and supporters school held in the Midlands last month.

We must not let up. The current miners strike and the full involvement of our branches in it is making extra demands on our normal expenses. With this issue of Workers Power, our paper is going fortnightly for the duration of the strike. In the heat of struggle we must not forget that the longterm improvement of our paper and the possibility of producing it on a more regular basis depends on our typesetting fund. We would ask all our readers and supporters to dig deep and help us to achieve our target. Send money without delay to: WORKERS POWER, BCM 7750, LONDON, WC1N 3XX.

## WOMEN: 'Get into the front line!'

"WE ARE KENT miners' wives. We are angry that MacGregor having demolished the steel industry should have been appointed to do the same to the mining industry and our communities."

That is only part of the message that Kent women travelled 200 miles to deliver to the wives of non-striking miners in the Midlands. They took to the streets of Coalville with the backing of a small but vocal contingent of miners' wives from Hatfield Main Doncaster, the Kent NUM and Leicester trade unionists.

Of course the press did all it could to ignore the demonstration. Radio Leicester, for example, interviewed five women. All were from Leicestershire. All were against the strike. But this demonstration, followed by a march of 300 miners wives led by Betty Heathfield (the General Secretary's wife) in Chesterfield the following Saturday, shows very clearly that the women of the threatened coalfields are prepared to stand up and fight.

The Kent women were shocked and angered when they saw Midlands miners crossing picket lines. They were incensed when "petti-

coat pickets" at Ollerton captured the headlines in every national daily. That is why they got together themselves and decided to set out for the Midlands to argue their case.

In Doncaster the group of women came together in early 1983 to organise support for South Welsh miners fighting to stop the closure of Tymawr Lewis Merthyr colliery. During this strike they've been meeting regularly, have spoken at meetings to raise money and launched the picket of the NCB's Doncaster headquarters in a bid to stop the predominantly women workforce from going to work. They have also set out to help miners' wives and girlfriends at the nearby Edlington colliery organise themselves.

This energy and commitment gives the lie to every backward trade unionists' claim that women should stay at home and support the strike from there.

If the women had been prevented from actively supporting the strikes the miners' fight would be weakened. Women left in the home would be isolated and open to the torrent of anti-strike muck churned out every day by the media. This could easily turn the women into

active enemies of the strike.

By organising involvement in the struggle, the militant wives are preventing this from happening. As the Hatfield women explained to us: "We're trying to get the women together from the community and involved in the strike. It's so they don't have to ask their husbands what's going on. It's so they know what's going on themselves. If they watch television its a load of cobbles. They won't learn anything from that."

These women are building a powerful base of support for the strike in the mining communities.

The wives' and girlfriends' groups must help carry the arguments for a national strike in the weeks ahead. In areas like Nottingham, the women could easily get into the housing estates and shopping centres and put the argument for a national strike there. They could help win support for the strike by addressing factories and workplaces staffed mainly by women workers.

All of this points to the urgent need to involve the wives' groups in the overall running and planning of the strike. In the strike committees and union meetings the women must be able to have their say.

The activity of the women from Kent and Hatfield Main shows the tremendous strength of working class women. They have been able to turn the tables on the media. They have, in a few short weeks, successfully challenged the attempt to turn the



wives into an anti-strike force.

The women from Hatfield Main are clear that they must now press forward to build a national organisation: "We want it to go national, get a national meeting to get all the women together. We need to let everyone know what we are doing."

The strike provides an ideal opportunity for building a national organisation of working class women. The importance of such a move was fully realised by the Hatfield Main women: "We'll try to help the contacts and the wives' network together nationally. It's the first time that working class women have been organised like

this since the fight for the vote."

If other women can be drawn in, women from other industries, women from factories supporting miners, women on the estates, then this women's working class organisation can spread. Closures and redundancies are not only hitting miners and their families. They are hitting all workers. That is why working class women everywhere should, in the Hatfield Main women's words 'get into the front line and start fighting.'

Our thanks for helping us to write this article to Carol, Lynn and Gail from Hatfield Main. ■

by Bridget Thompson

Bernie Malone



# FIVE YEARS OF THE ISL

# Lessons for th

IRAN'S CLERICAL RULERS are celebrating the fifth anniversary of their "Islamic Republic". They do so against a background of temporary economic stability and in a country where all open opposition has been mercilessly crushed. The aspirations of the millions who struggled successfully to overthrow the Pahlavi monarchy have been cruelly betrayed. These aspirations, not religious fanaticism, animated the huge mass movement that brought down the Shah.

The working class sought the freedom to organise in defence of its living standards and working conditions. The non-Persian nationalities that make up nearly half the total population of Iran wanted autonomy and self-government. The peasants wanted land and an escape from poverty. The urban poor and women wanted an escape from misery, enforced prostitution and oppression. The students, intellectuals and writers who suffered torture and death in the Shah's prisons wanted political freedom. All these aspirations have been betrayed as the Khomeini counter-revolution advanced towards a totalitarian dictatorship.

Political freedom, always tenuous in post-revolutionary Iran, has now been totally obliterated. Misery and hardship have increased as the masses have been forced to pay for Khomeini's now reactionary war against Iraq. The national minorities have either been bludgeoned into submission or, like the Kurds, live in a state of permanent war. Women, whether they want to or not, are forced to don the Islamic veil and are legally regarded as second class citizens. The working class has been progressively robbed of the social gains it won through the revolution. Every facet of Iranian life is now weighed down by the chains of Islam.

This counter-revolution that turned the clock back in Iran has raised the question amongst its former supporters- how did it happen? The most common answer is to argue that the largest mass mobilisation of the century to topple a pro-imperialist regime was doomed from the outset. Rami Nima in his book *The Wrath of Allah* expresses this view exactly: "Khomeini did not betray the revolution, for the revolution was his and the clergy's; he betrayed the aspirations of the masses who followed him. Khomeini's seizure of power was no counter-revolution, but the consolidation of victorious Islamic reaction". (p.143)

He argues that the Iranian revolution was always an Islamic revolution, and therefore always a reactionary revolution.

This view is by no means unique. It is shared by the handwringing academics and commentators around the journal *Khamsin* for example. Even the Socialist League have now a totally negative attitude to Khomeini, despite their initial enthusiasm. Phil Hearse, in *Socialist Action*, argues that "there can be no compromise with Islamic fundamentalism" (2.3.84) and laments that: "The course of the Iranian revolution was determined at a very early stage during the struggle to bring down the Shah in 1978-79." (ibid.)

The reader might perhaps be expected to have forgotten that SA's predecessor, *Socialist Challenge*, printed glowing reports from Iran, frankly recording its correspondent's enthusiastic joining in the cries of "God is great"

*An oil refinery control room in Iran*



in 1979. Perhaps comrade Hearse has also forgotten that instead of warning against the Islamic fundamentalists *Socialist Challenge* elaborated the most ludicrous analogies to defend Khomeini: "Charles the first, too, was overthrown by a movement which spoke with a religious voice."

Hypocrisy and deceit aside, the real problem with Hearse is that, like Nima and others, he concludes that there was no alternative to Khomeini. The revolution was foredoomed. So runs the logic of all who *tailed* the Islamic leaders precisely when an alternative to Khomeini was possible. The development of the Iranian revolution proves that Khomeini's victory was far from being inevitable. It was the result of the failure of the Iranian left to build an alternative working class communist leadership, independent of the Islamic movement.

The revolution in Iran was not simply or exclusively an Islamic revolution. It was not from the outset Khomeini's revolution. He did not create the revolutionary movement and was not in favour of the insurrection that finally toppled the Shah. He was actually pursuing negotiations to force the Bakhtiar government to resign peacefully. Even the Islamic-dominated mass demonstrations were not the decisive factor in the revolution.

**The revolution came about as a result of mass discontent with the Shah's regime. It was led by a coalition of forces, united only by their hostility to the Shah.**

The Shah shaped Iran according to the needs of the imperialist powers which had enthroned him in 1953. He fulfilled the role of gendarme of the Gulf for the imperialists. He tamed Iraq and sent troops into Oman. He built up an enormous army and a vast bureaucracy. Nima reports: "By the late 1970s they (civil servants - WP) had increased to over 560,000. The state bureaucracy accounted for as much as a third to a half of all full-time employees in the urban areas, at least in all the major cities." (p.44) The military and bureaucracy were substitutes for the Shah's lack of a real mass base of support in Iranian society.

The Iranian economy was extremely valuable to the imperialists. It was administered by the Shah's bureaucracy and guarded by the army and the security forces, SAVAK. The Shah's "white revolution" of industrialisation had turned Iran into an eldorado for foreign corporations. Talbot (then Chrysler), Hawker Siddely, GEC and a host of other companies had stakes in Iran. Most important to imperialism was the oil industry. At the time of the revolution, Iran supplied 13% of Britain's oil and 17% of America's. The consortium that controlled sales from the "nationalised" oil industry was 40% British and 40% American-owned.

The problem for the Shah's regime was that his modernisation programme left the economy at the mercy of the imperialists. In the 1970s their world economy moved into a severe crisis. The Iranian economy was brought to the brink of catastrophe. There was runaway inflation and mass unemployment. The luxury, corruption and incompetence of the Pahlavi court circles appeared in lurid relief-alienating even the weak Iranian bourgeoisie. Iran was chronically dependant on imports, particularly of foodstuffs. The influence of



*Khomeini with the assembled faithful*

rising world prices upon Iran triggered combined shortages, and escalating prices for food from 1976-78.

These price rises affected the living standards of Iran's proletariat. The Shah's industrialisation programme had resulted in a large increase in the size of the working class- it stood at 2.5 million in 1977, with as many as one third of all workers concentrated in large plants. Many of those plants were in Tehran and the other big cities.

The price rises in 1976 drove sections of this proletariat into strike action. From 1975-1977, sixty major strikes or other forms of workers' protests took place. All of them were met by vicious repression. The combination of repression and hyper-inflation drove the workers into all-out opposition to the Shah. In 1978 a rolling general strike occurred. It began with the oil workers in Abadan and rapidly spread throughout the Iranian working class.

**By late 1978 1.5 million workers (industrial, rural and white collar) were on strike. They did not return to work until the Shah and Bakhtiar's government were overthrown.**

As the strike action grew, the workers began to form strike committees. They were strongest amongst the most powerful section of workers, the oil workers of Khuzistan. These committees organised campaigns against hated managers, against imperialist control of the oil industry. Increasingly they fought directly for the downfall of the Shah.

These were the workers who turned the oil taps off and effectively strangled the Shah's regime. Moreover, they were not, initially, dominated by Islamic forces. Details are scanty but it would appear that the Stalinist Tudeh party was the predominant influence amongst workers. Other sections of workers followed the oil workers' lead and the shoras-workers' committees - grew out of the strike committees. The rail workers' shora showed the potential of these bodies in the revolution when it blacked all military transport.

The urban poor were another element of the anti-Shah mass movement. The Shah's "land reform" of the 1960s had pauperised hundreds of thousands of peasants, who subsequently flooded into the cities. There they remained unemployed, becoming shanty-town dwellers. Rising prices and the lack of any chance of getting a decent job drove them to desperation. Their hatred of the Shah was intensified by the repeated attacks on their shanty towns by the police and army.

This vast lumpenproletariat was at the core

of the demonstrations in 1978-9. However, despite its loathing and hatred for the Pahlavi lumpen proletariat and the urban petty bourgeoisie - because they played no essential role in modern economy- lacked the decisive social weight to finish off the Shah. These classes looked nostalgically backward to old feudal society and to the Mosque. As organisers of welfare and as the defender of the Mostazajin (the disinherited) the Shi'i mullahs were able to cultivate widespread support among these layers.

The bourgeois elements of the anti-Shah coalition were the mercantile capitalists of the bazaar- ably represented by the highly- and the liberal "nationalist" capitalists. The latter were represented by figures like Bazargan (the first post-Shah prime minister) and eventually ex-president Bani-Sadr. Leaders of the ethnic minorities- the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Azarbayjani leader Ayatollah Shariatmadari- were also part of this alliance.

All had good reason to oppose the Shah. His modernisation programme conflicted with their Islamic traditions. The Shah's land reform stripped the mullahs of many of their estates. He deprived them of their control over education. His encouragement of modern distribution methods- department stores- state administration of banks etc- undermined the traditional role of the bazaar. This was compounded by an austerity programme in 1977 which placed huge tax burdens on the merchants. The liberal bourgeoisie found itself constantly elbowed aside by the paracourt clique and therefore from the rich to be had from the industrialisation programme. They put forward a national solution to this arguing for a "friendly" transition to national, rather than imperialist control of capital. Finally, the national minorities had suffered a denial of national rights and severe repression at the hands of the Shah.

Thus a grand coalition of forces came together in 1978 to overthrow the Shah. In the final stages of this process that the principal forces of the left emerged. The Mojahedin and the Fedayeen were both secret guerrilla organisations with little contact with the mass movement. They stepped into the open by organising and conducting the popular rising that overthrew Bahktiar in February 1979.

Despite this monumental achievement, despite their heroism, their forces, along with the Tudeh, were decisive in allowing Khomeini



# ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

## left

to achieve dominance over the mass movement.

The principal forces of the Iranian left lacked a strategy based on working class independence, and on working class leadership. The Mojahedin blended Shi'ite Islam with populism and socialism. Their goal was a harmonious Islamic republic based on the concept of To-whidi (divine integration). Thus their clash with Khomeini was never over the defence of the working class and its organisations. It became a clash over who was the guardian of true Islam.

While the Fedayeen were free from Islamic influence they were subject to the pressure of Stalinism. This led them to view the revolution under Khomeini as an inevitable and progressive stage in the "people's democratic revolution". In this schema the independent interests of the working class and its leading role were subordinated to the united struggle against Imperialism. This led the Fedayeen into the fatal belief that they could peacefully co-exist with Khomeini until the next stage of the revolution. The Tudeh party, well practiced at this game (having collaborated with the bourgeois nationalist Mossadegh in 1953) followed a similar line.

Their views on the nature of the revolution led all of these groups to cede leadership of the mass movement to the Khomeinists. During the revolution they raised no warnings against Islamic reaction. They did not raise to the fore the independent class demands of the proletariat in combination with revolutionary democratic demands, which would have met with an enthusiastic response from the masses in struggle. Instead they contented themselves with empty "anti-imperialist" rhetoric. They did not combine in action along with the mullah-led opposition whilst opposing its project of an "Islamic Republic" and offering no support to any bourgeois clerical government. Instead they remained silent and dissolved into the mass movement.

After the victory of an insurrection he opposed, Khomeini was therefore able to claim credit that was rightfully due to the left. Their lack of a political profile distinct from the mass movement enabled Khomeini to get away with this.

After the revolution, in the early period (March through August 1979) the left failed to develop the shoras into independent working class fighting organisations. They failed to turn them into soviet-type bodies - workers' councils going beyond the workplace and exercising control in all spheres of social life. More importantly they failed to arm the workers and bring a workers' militia into being. In short, in the first period of the revolution the shoras were left to themselves by the left. Insofar as the left did influence workers, they encouraged them to support the liquidationist "people's revolutionary" line.

Khomeini moved to fill this vacuum. The Shoras could not yet be smashed. They were too powerful a force and Khomeini's grip on power was too weak for that. Besides in reviving production in factories from which the management had deserted, they were performing a service to the beleaguered economy. Khomeini chose to Islamicise the shoras instead. In the first place their control over production was eroded. Bazargan's Labour Minister made clear that the councils should be trade unionised: "I do not believe in shoras. At most we can accept trade unions."

By April Khomeini's confidence was growing. New managers were installed in the nationalised industries (some 70% of all industry) and in May the Islamic Revolutionary Council passed a law empowering the Minister of Justice to "prevent the interference of unauthorised individuals or institutions in workplaces." At the same time a United Centre of Islamic Shoras was set up. This body began the process of purging the left from the shoras. However it failed to completely Islamicise the shoras. This infuriated the regime.

In 1980 it speeded its attack on the workers' organisations by establishing a special body to purge councils - the Heyat-e-Paksazi. Finally the Union of Islamic Shoras was declared illegal in the spring of 1980 and everywhere Anjoman-e-Eslami (Islamic Societies 100% pro-Khomeini) were established.

Of course this protest did not kill off the workers' protests. In July 1982, for example, a strike at the huge Esfahan steel mill won



Armed but veiled Iranian women on the march in Tehran

concessions from the regime. However by failing to build and unify the shora movement in the immediate post-revolution period, the left handed Khomeini a golden opportunity to dissipate a potential rival centre of power, the power of the workers. His victory over the shoras was not inevitable. A correct orientation could have turned the workers' movement into a conscious contender for power. Moreover in the absence of a communist leadership capable of carrying out such a strategy, Khomeini was allowed to triumph.

At the level of national politics the left also handed Khomeini a victory. In the first period of the revolution they refused to argue against the establishment of an Islamic Republic. They foolishly believed that the "democratic stage" of the revolution could be fulfilled under a clerical garb. For this reason despite their boycott of the March 1979 referendum on the Islamic Republic, they merely argued about the form and terms of the referendum. They did not wage a campaign against an Islamic Republic.

Khomeini used the referendum as a plebiscite to legitimise his bonapartist rule. He moved quickly to renege on the convening of a constituent assembly. A Council of Experts was elected instead. This pushed through an Islamic constitution in which Khomeini was recognised as the Velayat-e-Faghih - God's interpreter and ruler. Despite its religious trappings, the constitution was a bonapartist one, granting Khomeini and a Council of Guardians a Shi'ite veto over all laws. Under this procedure, laws on land reform, nationalisations, and expropriations of exiles' property have all been blocked.

With his power constitutionally recognised, Khomeini and the Islamic Republican Party led by his supporters closest in the hierarchy like the late Ayatollah Beheshti, launched their first counter-revolutionary offensive in August 1979. The Fedayeen offices were raided, liberal and left papers were closed down, and Kurdistan was invaded. To some extent Khomeini's real power fell short of his constitutional power. The Kurds proved more than a match for the ill-trained Pasdars and demoralised soldiers sent against them. The left were able to retreat in good order and reassemble their forces. Faced with this situation Khomeini himself was forced to make a tactical retreat.

To gain time and strength he opportunistically supported the occupation of the American Embassy to rally the whole country around him. He employed anti-imperialist demagoguery to reassure those worried by the August events that the revolution was still true to its original course. Later in 1980 when Iraq invaded Iran, he again appealed to the masses' hostility to imperialist aggression in order to strengthen his hold and isolate his enemies.

The trick actually worked. The Mojahedin fell silent. The Fedayeen split, and a majority went over to Khomeini's side, declaring that the Islamic regime "despite many deficiencies continues to be a bastion of anti-imperialism" (quoted in *Iran Since the Revolution*, Sepehr Zabih).

Likewise the Tudeh party believed the "democratic alliance" had come into being. They argued that Khomeini and the IRP were progressive as against the liberal bourgeoisie, increasingly personified in 1980-81 by Bani-Sadr. Thus they believed in unity with Khomeini which was, in their own words, designed

"to give a scientific framework to Khomeini's thoughts which were very general, vague and hazy." (*Marxism Today*, August 1983, interview with Tudeh leader A. Sadegh.)

Far from having "hazy thoughts", Khomeini and Beheshti knew exactly what they were doing. They used empty "anti-imperialism" to rally the masses, weaken their liberal bourgeois rivals, give cover to their demobilisation of the shoras and incorporate and disarm the left.

At the same time they consolidated their hold on power - coming to dominate the Majlis and force Bani-Sadr to accept their candidate, Rajai, as prime minister. Most important of all they trained, equipped and enlarged the Pasdaran into a permanent pro-IRP/Khomeini fighting force. While this took place, the principal forces of the non-Islamic left - the Tudeh, Fedayeen majority and the so-called Trotskyist (USFI) HKE - all became slavish followers of the Imam's line. The Fedayeen minority was an honourable exception to this.

As the conflict between Bani-Sadr and the IRP intensified, the Mojahedin made an about turn and sided with the President. His role as a butcher of Kurdistan in August 1979 was conveniently forgotten. He became the new bourgeois ally in the "people's democratic revolution". (For a full account of the fall of Bani-Sadr see *Workers Power* No.24).

The counter-revolution in Iran began on a national scale as early as August 1979. It was completed in the period between June 1981 and mid 1982. In this period a full-scale war on the Mojahedin, the anti-Khomeini left and the Kurds was launched. Some 20,000 executions were carried out. Public hangings, torture, show trials, mothers were televised denouncing and betraying their children. Barbarity became the norm. The Khomeini regime survived the Mojahedin's desperate acts of individual terror on it. In so doing it proved itself more barbarous than ever the Shah had been.

In mid-1982 Khomeini called for the terror to be eased. This was prompted by the need to stabilise Iran for economic purposes, and the belief that the principal threats to the Islamic republic had been defeated. Events since then would seem to suggest that Khomeini has enjoyed some success on both fronts. Urban guerilla warfare has decreased considerably.

The economy seems to have had a modest revival. Oil production has risen from 1.48 million barrels a day in 1980 to 3.2 million in 1982. In January 1983 oil rationing was abolished. Relations with imperialism have improved. In the first quarter of 1983 the "Great Satan" granted 13 export permits for previously embargoed goods, and US exports to Iran reached 200 million dollars worth in 1983.

Appearances, though, can be deceptive. In the first place the regime remains torn by factional strife. The Imam's line and Hojatieh (actions within the ruling Islamic Republican Party) have waged a battle over economic policy which has had fatal consequences for the Tudeh. The Imam's line faction favoured a state-capitalist approach and extensive trade with the USSR and the Eastern bloc. Their model was Libya. The Hojatieh, based on the mercantile capitalists and controllers of the state industries ("technocrats") counterposed to this the decentralisation of the economy and a heavy reliance on trade and private capitalism as the norm. The Minister of Industry spoke for the Hojatieh when he declared: "The government would better leave industry to the private sector...Islam respects private ownership."

It is undeniable that Khomeini favours this faction, but is not prepared to allow it to completely destroy the Imam's line faction in the way Bani-Sadr was destroyed. He recognises that his continued mass support amongst the urban poor, is, to some extent, due to the social policies of the Imam's line faction. He knows he still needs that support. However, as a bonaparte, he has protected the Imam's line faction and warned them not to oppose him and the Hojatieh policies he favours. He did this by sacrificing his most loyal ally, the Tudeh. Their reward for slavish support has been the arrest of 1,500 members, the closing down of their press and the banning of their party.

As in Spain, Indonesia and Chile, the "democratic alliance" has cost the blood of the Stalinist party's rank and file. The executions of Tudeh members have begun.

The fact that Khomeini has to continue with a limited terror to contain the rifts in his regime and continue the senseless war with Iraq to maintain the Islamic fervour of the Iranian people, testify to the underlying instability of his regime. Iran remains a powder keg. Its economic revival is hollow, based entirely on oil exports. Production throughout Iranian industry is still at pre-revolutionary levels. Living standards are down to one third of their 1975 level. Unemployment stands somewhere between 2 and 4 million out of an economically active population of 11.5 million. Only 800,000 of the unemployed receive dole. The cost of imports is rising constantly. In 1981 Iran's import bill was up to 18.2 billion and is still rising.

The same combination of repression and economic crisis that plunged the Shah's regime into disarray will do the same to Khomeini's system. Religious exaltation will not indefinitely hold out against crude material factors. Then no "miracles of Allah" will save Khomeini's regime. The Islamic Republic cannot last. Even more than was the case with the Shah, the action of the workers will prove decisive in the downfall of Khomeini or his successors.

The forces of the Iranian left who have not been either decimated or demoralised must learn the lessons of 1979-84. The revolution, if it is to triumph, must be a workers' revolution. Power cannot be shared with progressive bourgeois or clerics. They serve and belong to a class antagonistic to the interests of the masses in Iran. To lead the next Iranian revolution a revolutionary Trotskyist party armed with a clear programme for workers' power must be built. Only such a party can lead the revolution out of the dark night of Islamic reaction and into the freedom and light of a revolutionary workers' state. ■

by Mark Hoskisson

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# NO JUSTICE IN BOSSSES LAW

IN BETWEEN PICKETING, miners have perhaps snatched the odd moment to watch the news. There they will have seen the struggle - from the other side. The reporters finish praising the police, only to present us with a well-fed Tory spokesman spouting forth about "the right to work".

A lot of air time is spent upholding the rule of law and the picket-busting tactics of the police. Miners' wind-screens smashed in; roads blocked off; pickets stopped and locked up for fourteen hours. All of it defended and applauded in the name of the "rule of law".

Home Secretary Leon Brittan said on one news bulletin about the "fair play" of the cops: "Anyone who doesn't believe that what I have said is true can go to the courts and quickly establish if this is so." (BBC 30.3.84) What a joke! Anyone with a thousand or two to spare might try. But they would be sadly disappointed.

The idea that the courts are impartial, that they will curb police behaviour is a sick joke.

Unfortunately, all too many in the union movement do believe the law courts can be used to get justice for the working class. Many will agree about the odd bent judge, just like the odd bent copper, but will argue that surely the courts are above politics. This is a deadly illusion. Look at some facts.

For a start there are the 300 or so top judges who sit with a jury in the High Court or hear appeals. Their social background alone fills them with venom against any worker who is slow to tug the forelock. Four out of five of them went to public schools and Oxford and Cambridge. They live on private income while making their way up the ladder.

Every study shows 80% of them are from the upper and middle classes. They haven't a clue about the daily experience of the working class family. Their social and political attitudes are formed in the Gentleman's Clubs where they wine and dine with the very people we're up against! In fact they are the flesh and blood of the boss class down to their large farms and juicy shareholdings.



Lord Scarman, bewigged Tory

It's even worse when you think of magistrates' courts. About three-quarters of all cases are heard there. Most of the 200 plus miners arrested so far will come up against them. Who are they? Bosses, bosses' wives, bosses' mates (including the odd trade union official).

The ideas that judges and magistrates are above politics collapses when you realise they are all chosen by or on the advice of one man - the Lord Chancellor. None of them are elected. This lord is a member of the Tory Cabinet! In fact, the present office holder - Hailsham - was a prominent Tory MP for years. Thatcher herself picks the top judges.

Up until the 1930s (and again in the 1950s) a lot of judges were MPs

or parliamentary candidates before becoming judges. The fact that now more of them have got legal training just makes them more dangerous, because they can dress up their prejudice in legal forms and jargon. If only for no other reason than this, it was silly of Arthur Scargill to go to the courts in 1977 to ask these Tories with wigs on to defend the NUM rule-book against that Tory favourite Joe Gormley. They backed their pal then and now he sits as Lord Gormley with them on the plush benches of the House of Peers.

These close social and political ties of the judges with the ruling-class politicians are vital for the Tories and-always have been. Why? There are two ways of making law. Through Parliament or through the courts.

Parliament as lawmaker has certain disadvantages for the bosses. Being elected it is liable to come under pressure from workers. Strikes, militant demonstrations, the threat of revolution sometimes scares MPs enough for them to make concessions. This has happened throughout history.

The Chartist struggles of 1844-8 forced through the Factory Acts limiting the working day. In 1867 mass demonstrations in Hyde Park, ending in fighting with the police, persuaded the Tories to give half the working class men the vote. It was the same with the New Unions strikes in the 1890s and the syndicalist movement struggle in 1910-14. The Russian Revolution of 1917 scared our rulers enough to grant almost universal suffrage the next year!

That's why the courts are so valuable to the bosses. They are not open to the same degree of pressure.

Like the police and Whitehall, the courts are part of the executive of the bosses' state - unelected and unaccountable. Their role is to claw back as much as they can of the gains won through mass action. That's why real power lies with them, not Parliament.

Just look at a few examples. One of the top judges, Lord Denning, said in 1978: "People sometimes speak of a right to strike as if it were one of the fundamental rights of mankind. I would declare at once that there is no such right known to the law."

And he is right. The fact is that under English common law, which is judge-made law - striking has always been unlawful. This is because when a miner strikes he is preventing the NCB from using their property, namely the miner's labour.

As Engels once said, an employer can make law in the pit or the factory "and even if he inserts the craziest stuff, the courts say to the working man: 'You were your own master, no one forced you to agree to such a contract if you did not wish to; but now, when you have freely entered into it you must be bound by it.'"

If they possibly can, the courts will back the boss every time. Only workers' struggle has stopped them. Trade unionists used to be jailed for criminal conspiracy. By 1875 the labour movement had forced Parliament to retreat. So the courts used civil conspiracy! Again in the Trade Dispute Act of 1906, trade unions, now aided by a Labour Party group, forced the Liberals in Parliament to legislate this ruling away.

The bosses didn't give up. They got the judges to outlaw union money to the young Labour Party in 1901. The same 1906 Act made it legal again. And so it has always been: a division of labour in the ruling class between MPs and judges.

Parliament concedes when the pressure is on, and in so doing bolsters the illusion that Parliament can be used to completely emancipate the working class.

Judges regain what the bosses lose. Stanley Baldwin - the biggest Tory bruiser before Thatcher - who led the bosses in the General Strike and starved the miners back to work - once said of the judges "The conservatives can't talk of class war, they started it."

However nobody should draw the conclusion that Parliament is somehow neutral or that its Statute Law is specially respect-worthy in the eyes of workers. The anti-union laws of Tebbit, Prior and King are enough evidence here. The point is that in these Acts, just like the Trade Union Act of 1927, the bosses take advantage of a weakened labour movement. The Tories will continue to use both the courts and the House of Commons if workers don't fight back.

The final merit of the courts for the bosses is the speed and inventiveness with which the judges can make law. Legislation is slow. Denning's decision in the steel strike in 1980 against picketing derailed the strike for a while. The courts played a similar role in the General Strike and the NCB will use them in the miners' strike when they are ready.

The inventiveness of the judges stems from another feature of English common law: the great powers the

judges give to the police. For example, there is no legislation (yet) which stops Kent miners from travelling through the Dartford Tunnel. But the police wanted to. Answer? Use the three tried and tested common law offences: obstructing the police, suspecting a breach of the peace, and nuisance. With these three weapons the police have all the power they need to fill the gap left by legislation.

All this points to one conclusion for miners and those in solidarity with them. When the bosses use the courts against the strike they have to be defied with full consciousness that their decisions are not above politics. Instead they are laying down the bosses law. Already in the dispute the NCB have gone to the courts to stop "secondary" action. They haven't gone all the way and got the union fined as yet, because they feel they have to keep the Notts pits working and they fear that it will drive the wavering miners behind Scargill in defence of the NUM's

right to exist.

This cynical manipulation of the law for the bosses and the Tories can also be seen in the decision of the courts in Scotland not to grant an injunction by a group of Coal Merchants against picketing of their yard. The reason? None other than that they haven't been tipped the wink by Thatcher and Brittan yet. When they do, miners should beware. They will find Len Murray, Neil Kinnock and their own right-wingers (at least) echoing Bill Sirs' words in 1980: "We are and always have been a union which obeys not only the letter but the spirit of the law."

This was certainly true of Bill Sirs and tragically, because of this, half his ISTC members have lost their jobs while he's kept his. The miners must not let history repeat itself because of "Respect for the law".

by K. Hassell

## 'Militant' strategy threatens defeat in Liverpool

THE DEMONSTRATION ON Budget day in Liverpool, March 29th, showed both the strengths and weaknesses of the Militant led campaign in the city. The turnout, of about 15,000 fell far short of the 50,000 that Derek Hatton had confidently predicted in the run up to the day.

There was no doubt that amongst public sector workers there was widespread strike action in support of the council's stand, with buses off the road and virtually all council workers out. Support also came from hospital workers and Liverpool dockers, 2500 of whom struck. But noticeable by their absence were any significant contingents of workers from private industry most of whom worked normally that day. This was the case for instance in Fords Halewood where it was left to the "conscience" of the workers to come out following a recommendation by their stewards - few responded.

The weaknesses of Militant's "council led" strategy to fight the Tory cutbacks are clearly beginning to show. Indeed their tactics show an omnibus similarity to those of Lothian and Lambeth councils in similar struggles. Both of these struggles ended in defeat.

At first sight Militant's strategy looks decidedly better than either campaigns waged by those left councils. Unlike Livingstone's strategy for defending the GLC, a strategy which depends on mobilising the 'broadest possible' opposition to Thatcher and sowing the illusion that somehow Tory wets and peers of the realm can be mobilised against the "outrageous constitutional proposals" of the Tories, Militant stress the importance of working class actions. Yet so far Militant's strategy only uses the organised workers of Liverpool for periodic crowd scenes. The councillors still hold centre stage. In Lothian and Lambeth the same thing happened. The problem is that mass action cannot be simply summoned-up to fit a pre-arranged timetable of council meetings and local elections. In both these cases when the workers missed their cue the 'Red' councillors simply caved in, loudly blaming the

'backward' working class for not supporting them.

The Militant-led council has concentrated on mobilising its workers through the Liverpool Council Joint Shop Stewards' Committee. It has also approached trade union officials in other areas to organise support. The leadership of this struggle is seen as the councillors themselves who have asked the JSSC to strike in their support and endorse their stand and strategy.

For the council workers this approach has grave dangers. Firstly the councillors still remain their employers - as the Liverpool typists and social workers discovered to their cost when the "socialist" council refused to meet their claims in full. To tie the struggle against cuts and attacks on working conditions to the leadership of the council would be a fatal mistake. Already at the first hurdle six Labour councillors have defected and no doubt as the threats of disqualification and surcharges come closer more will be driven to seek a compromise which will sacrifice their council workers' interests. It is absolutely vital for the workers themselves to take the lead in demanding no cuts and holding their councillors to account to them.

For this reason it is crucial to extend the area of struggle beyond the council workers themselves. Their must be a fight for the organisation of a city wide council of action which can unite rank and file council workers with those of private industry. Workers represented in the JSSC know very well that in the struggle with a Tory government determined to slash jobs and privatise services they will need to convince and mobilise private sector workers to come out with them. When these workers strike, profits stop being made. When public service workers alone stop work revenue is saved and services to other workers interrupted. Their action alone exerts only indirect pressure on the bosses and the Tories. To win the support of workers in industry "asking for support" from trade union officials and district committees is insufficient.

At present many of these bodies

themselves have difficulty in mobilising their own members. Many are bureaucratic and dominated by the right-wing. To get through, worker militants must establish links with shop stewards and groups of militants in all the important factories. Meetings must be organised and propaganda on the struggle against the cuts published. It is these militants and shop stewards' organisations that must be organised in a council of action.

The tactic in Liverpool is not just to organise workers in support of council actions which further the struggle, but to organise the workers independently. If this is done then they can lead the struggle if need be against a compromising Labour council or a Liberal/Conservative/Labour rebel coalition. Such organisation, through a council of action, which aims to make the city ungovernable if the Tories proceed to implement the cuts, will itself be a powerful weapon in holding vacillating Labour councillors to their promises.

Liverpool workers and Labour Party members must demand immediate and unqualified support for their struggle from the Labour leaders and fellow Labour councils. Kinnock, Cunningham, Straw et al should be inundated with resolutions from Labour Party branches condemning their cowardly back-stabbing of Liverpool. We must demand of the Knights, Livingstones, Blunketts and all the other "left" councils who are introducing rate rises and secret cuts in services to avoid a confrontation this year that they follow Liverpool's example in refusing rate or rent increases.

With the miners in battle, now is the time for every section of the labour movement to take action against the Tories' policies. And in right-wing Labour areas like Newcastle and Wakefield where Labour is introducing massive cuts in line with Tory instructions workers must organise to strike against the cuts and defeat these measures regardless of its effect on these Labour councils.

by Stuart King



# IRISH STUDENTS UNDER ATTACK

# LETTERS



## Whose security?

Dear Workers Power,

Your coverage of Thatcher's ban on unions at GCHQ (WP 50, 51) seems to me to be wrong on two counts. Firstly, in neither paper did you deal with the question of "national security" which was raised by the Tories to justify their action. Given the failure of the Labour or trade union leaders to deal with this point, it should surely have been taken up by yourselves, as it was by most left papers.

Secondly, in your front page article in WP50 there is a sentence that I strongly disagree with. You write: "If the government wants to prevent disruption to its so-called 'security services' let it pay the workers a living wage and provide decent conditions".

Surely this is a recipe for social peace - that is, 'give us decent wages and conditions and we won't go on strike'! What about strikes against the anti-union laws or in solidarity with the miners? Are you against such strikes at GCHQ?

Yours,  
Margaret Howard

We reply:

The comrade is right to point to these two problems in our articles on GCHQ.

We do not accept that Britain has any "national security" which we wish to protect. Britain is a capitalist country and, even when Labour is in power, the state forces are used to protect the bosses' interests, at home and abroad. "National security" relates to vital aspects of these bosses' interests.

In Britain, the police and the army attack protestors against the war drive; the huge "security" apparatus keeps tabs (now computerised, of course) on tens of thousands of working class activists; the repressive legal system makes it an "official secret" how many biscuits a civil servant has with their tea, and is used to crush any potential dissent within the civil service, as Sarah Tisdall's case showed. It is also clear that "national security" doesn't only refer to military matters. A civil servant leaking details of police plans to stop the miners' flying pickets, or Department of Energy plans to maintain electricity supplies, would be charged with a similar breach of "national security".

"National security" also encompasses Britain's interventions in other countries: the army's occupation of the North of Ireland and their massive harassment of the Republican population; the huge military presence in the South Atlantic, designed to keep the shipping lanes open for British shipping magnates, to keep the wealth of Antarctica available for British investment, and to keep the insurgent workers and peasants of South America cowed and unrebelling in the face of imperialist exploitation.

In GCHQ's case, the "national security" discussed so frequently by Thatcher touched on all these areas. But probably the most important aspect the Tories wished to protect was the bosses' strategic hatred of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China, towards which most of the antennae at GCHQ are pointed.

GCHQ forms the centre of a web of spy networks which protect "our" national security by interfering in the affairs of other countries, most notably the degenerate workers' states (the USSR etc).

There can be no question of supporting this imperialist meddling; there can be no question of "unity" with Thatcher on the protection of "national security". It will inevitably mean subordinating the interests of the working class to the interests of the bosses. No socialist, no class-conscious militant, should be prepared to do that.

The formulation from WP50 about strike action which the comrade refers to is not very good, although we would argue that it would require a very partial reading of the article to suggest that we were providing "a recipe for social peace". We are in favour of all workers taking strike action against the anti-union laws, in solidarity with the miners' strike, and so on. We did not intend to suggest that GCHQ workers should limit their struggles to immediate sectional demands.

FOR STUDENTS in the 26 Counties of Ireland, the opening months of 1984 have been a period of bitter struggle against the Fine Gael-Labour Party coalition government. At the end of a two month fight, the South's 50,000 students have effectively lost the right to free health care.

It took the full weight of the police and courts behind Labour's Minister for Health, Barry Desmond, to derail the biggest wave of student protest since the early 1970s.

Twelve years ago, the students led anti-war agitation in the South against the *Offences Against the State Act*. In the period of demoralisation and retreat in the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) since then, radical action-oriented leaderships have failed to mobilise the mass of students in effective defence of their rights.

Indeed, the right-wing had even succeeded in leading three of the largest colleges in the South in disaffiliating from the USI - about a third of the student population. By the early 1980s the students were weakened and a prime target for attack.

Since the 1970s, the 26 Counties' semi-colonial dependence upon imperialism has been aggravated. The cost of servicing a swollen foreign debt has been met by clawing back the gains of the Southern workers and their allies. Tax increases and expenditure cuts have followed each other in savage succession.

The Health Service is an obvious ch( ) for government cuts. This service has never been expanded to the levels of the NHS in Britain. 85% of government expenditure on health goes to

the Catholic Church for their "voluntary hospitals"!

Free cover - "the Medical Card" - has only been given to those below a low income. Students and youth, however, had been an exception, and were given Medical Cards automatically. The Coalition had long aimed to reverse this situation and introduce a means test.

## SEVEN STUDENTS JAILED

When Desmond announced the cut last December, USI students rebelled. The students' lot was already bad enough. Only 5% receive a full grant. Many are forced to live at home. USI leaders quickly organised an occupation of the Minister for Health's office.

The students involved - including the presidents of USI and two disaffiliated colleges - were arrested and charged under the "Forcible Entry and Occupation Act".

When term began in January, the Prime Minister - Garret Fitzgerald - was prevented from speaking at Trinity College, Dublin, by hundreds of students shouting him down. One of the largest marches for years took place. The Labour Party headquarters were occupied three times. It was clear that significant numbers of students were prepared to fight, and could be the force for a revival of the student movement against the cuts.

However, the USI and local student union leaderships immediately sought to isolate the issue of Medical Cards from the wider issues of education cuts

and the repressive legislation under which students had been imprisoned.

In effect, the perspective was to get student arrests for publicity in order to try and put moral pressure on the government.

The tactic was based on the desire for a quick partial victory in order to regain some of USI's lost credibility and affiliations. It presumed (wrongly) that the cards had been withdrawn only to save the £1R 2.5 million Desmond claimed would result. The USI leaders pinned their hopes on this being an ineffective cut which the government would be forced to reconsider.

So the willingness of the USI leaders to fight was marred by their failure to use the Medical Card issue to attack the whole system of cutting back on health and education. They also failed to put forward tactics which could mobilise the mass of students and link with the working class, the only forces capable of throwing back this determined assault.

IWG students argued for the building of action groups for each campus to give militants leadership in the day-to-day campaign; for a regional open conference, to hammer out a policy for getting back Medical Cards and for building a fighting student movement against all cuts; for the organising of mass indefinite student lecture boycotts and college occupations.

Mass action in alliance with health and college workers would have been the best way of giving muscle to the demand on Labour to break with the Coalition and to force the repeal of the repressive legislation.

By the end of February, the strategy of the USI leaders had foundered. Over

50 students had courageously faced court action for occupying governmental offices. Seven - including the Presidents of USI and the TCD students' union - had spent two weeks in jail.

But the initial anger of hundreds of students had not been turned into the action of thousands.

Anxiously seeking to avoid open defeat, the USI leaders grasped at the carrot Desmond dangled in front of them. This was a settlement which disgracefully accepted that students should not be automatically entitled to free health care, but which vaguely suggested some changes in the means test to be applied to students. The protest was abruptly called off.

Student union leaders claimed that most students would get their Cards back. Desmond stated that he had only "clarified" the situation, and that the cut would go through unchanged!

## LESSONS MUST BE LEARNED NEXT TIME

Although the USI and student leaders heralded the settlement as a "victory", the principle of free health care had been sacrificed. Just as damaging, the campaign had failed to build the foundations of a movement capable of challenging the fee increases, 25%-100% and the further erosion of grant levels. This spring the youth and students of Ireland will be anticipating more attacks on education and social welfare. They must think long and hard on these lessons. ■

by a member of the Irish Workers Group

# FIGHT ALL DEPORTATIONS

AFTER A year-long fight for his right to stay in Britain, Muhammed Idrish goes to the Court of Appeal in London on the 9th or 10th of May.

This appeal is the latest and possibly the last round of legal reviews. With earlier appeals ending in an adjudicator and judicial rejection, the crucial need now is for workers to take industrial action to stop the deportation, if the High Court rejects this appeal.

Muhammed's union - NALGO - has called a march of support on the 9th May in London. It is an opportunity to extend the basis of support throughout the trade union movement around this case in particular and the racist laws which underpin deportations.

This means organising a massive turn-out on the day, of trade unions, Labour Parties, black organisations, anti-racist groups, the unemployed etc.

The Home Office is calling for Muhammed's deportation, consequent upon the breakdown of his marriage to a British-born woman. A pathetic excuse from a racist government, whose real motive for seeking over 250 deportations per month is the attempt to intimidate and expel immigrant workers.

But Muhammed's case is not unique. NALGO should be calling for an end to all deportations. Indeed there are those like Afia Begum, a Bangladeshi woman who is facing the same threat because her husband was killed in a Brick Lane slum fire. The Home Office now argues that the conditions under which she was allowed into Britain - as a dependent of her husband - have changed.

The intimidation of Britain's black communities by the Tories continues unabated. Apart from police harassment, their other favourite weapon is deportation under the immigration laws. In 1982 when Baba Bakhtaura, a Bengali folksinger, was issued with a notice that he was to be deported, 18 people were fighting deportation in Bradford alone. In Oldham, 30 families were fighting to be united. While in Manchester, at least two fami-



Demonstration against the Nationality Bill (now Act), 1981

lies were being denied child benefit, because of impending expulsion orders.

Since then, things have got worse. The United Kingdom Immigrant Advisory Service has just released figures for 1983, showing that it dealt with 73,688 cases of appeals and representation. Over 8,000 of these involved people living in Birmingham! That was 2,000 up on the previous year. Countless others are not registered in these figures, because they do not appeal. They should not go quietly!

Everyone threatened by the vicious immigration controls should fight for their right to stay. It is the responsibility of the whole labour movement to make sure that everyone threatened by state racism is successfully defended.

A focus for activity is the demonstration to prevent Muhammed Idrish's

deportation on May 9th. In NALGO, it should be used as a starting point for industrial action. At least year's national conference, NALGO resolved to take limited industrial action if the deportation order went ahead. It also called on the CPSA, T&GWU, AUEW and others involved in the handling of deportations, to refuse to carry it out. This is an urgent task that NALGO needs to translate, rapidly, into action.

To achieve this sort of action, NALGO should organise a national conference to plan, organise and mobilise for industrial action against all deportations. It should open itself to all those under threat of deportations, allowing them full speaking and voting rights.

Such a strategy could begin a real fightback against deportations and

racist laws. At the moment NALGO are refusing to adopt such a strategy. They are confining the campaign to one man and one case. The leaders of NALGO are not prepared to mobilise their members around the general political issue - racist laws - that underlies this case.

Militants in the union must campaign to force them to generalise this issue: a labour movement campaign against all racist laws, drawing in the black community, must be built.

SUPPORT THE MAY 9th DEMONSTRATION. STOP THE DEPORTATIONS NOW!

Assemble Temple Place, London (Temple tube), 11.30 am May 9th. March at 12 noon. Rally in Jubilee Gardens.



# SOLIDARITY, SUPPORT, STRIKE ACTION!

**Workers Power talked to Maurice Bryan and Phil Sutcliffe, NUM Chairman and Vice-chairman at Snowdown Colliery, Kent. Maurice had to leave to arrange accommodation after his first answer. Maurice and Phil were in the Leicester coalfield attempting to spread the strike to Leicestershire miners.**

**WP:** Could you tell us about what success you've had so far? What have you been trying to do to get Leicestershire miners to join the strike?

**Maurice:** Initially when we came up last week, the first thing we did was to get in touch with the branch committee so we contacted the branch secretary and delegate at Ellistown. This was last Wednesday.

We told them who we were and what we were up here to do. We want to speak to miners and convince them that our decision to come out on strike in order to fight pit closures and to fight for jobs in the mining industry was the right decision, and that they ought to be out with us. Our fight is their fight.

Whilst they didn't commit themselves, we said we didn't want to be standing on picket lines picketing miners and that we wanted to be invited in to discuss with their members. On the night shift they did invite us into the canteen that night and we had some success.

That night Ellistown pit didn't work. There were about 50 men on nights. Of them 30 wanted to work and the reason those 30 didn't work was because a man in a key position refused to work while there was a picket on.

At Bagworth colliery we had a little bit more success. We were able to get into the canteen on every shift and the pit was on stop last week. On the Thursday we went back down to Kent and the pits went back to work. As a result of that we came back up on Sunday night.

Our policy has been all along that we want to come up and talk to the miners. We've been taking a softly-softly approach with the miners in this area. We've had some response but I think the leadership in this area are the ones who are not carrying out the work of the National Executive Committee. The NEC decided by a majority decision to call for strike action against pit closures. They've not come back and worked for that; in fact they're telling the men to go and work and cross picket lines.

**WP:** Is there any chance of getting the Leicester coalfield out by that method?

**Phil:** No, we've tried over a week of peaceful demonstration to the Leices-

ter miners giving them our case. The fact is that while we were doing that they've had a ballot amongst their own area and got about 89% against action.

What we're saying to them is that what they've done is balloted to shut Snowdown colliery in Kent and probably the Kent coalfield! That is why we're up here: to make them realise that the vote that they've had is a vote of disunity, for splitting the union and enabling the Coal Board, backed by the government, to shut pits. At the moment it's 20 odd pits, 20,000 men and there'll be more this year and more later on.

So what we're up here for really is to get them out. We've tried picketing for a week and it's just not working. So what we've got to do now is change our tactics.

**WP:** What about the argument - mainly put forward by the right wing - that you'd now need a National Ballot as a way of forcing these people out?

**Phil:** When I argue with the lads going through the picket line who say they want a National Ballot, the first thing I say is that in Kent we're not worried or scared about national ballots.

If we were to have a national ballot on what the union says and we were at work we'd get about 70% vote for a strike. Jack Collins - our area general secretary - has put it to us that if we want a national ballot what we'll do in Kent is book a big hall - and we'll get all the Kent miners in it, put the case to them, give them a paper and say now sign it and put it in the ballot box. We'd get 90% plus for strike action so we're not worried about a ballot in Kent.

The other thing I say to them is, when we're attacked in Kent, because we've got the leadership that these people haven't, when we're attacked by the Coal Board and the Government we vote with our feet - in other words we march out of the pit, we don't hide behind a ballot.

But as I said, we're not worried about a ballot. I think it will come to a ballot. The history of the miners shows that once we're out on strike then attitudes harden. We've got people up here now picketing that at our general meeting the Sunday previous to going on strike - voted to work.

They now realise what the issues are and are now up here picketing. So while we had a 60-40 vote, that vote will dramatically change in favour of strike action now that we're out.

Personally I think that the next meeting of the executive some time in April the right wingers will probably have their say and we'll have a ballot but that's what we wanted. We didn't want a ballot earlier we wanted a ballot after we'd been on strike about a month.



**WP:** Remembering 1972 and 1974 how do you think this strike compares with these strikes?

**Phil:** I experienced both the 1972 and 1974 strikes and was active in both. Then we were fighting purely on a wage issue - for better wages, so it compares very little. Although the 5.2% offer is coupled up, the important thing is the pit closures. It goes even deeper than that. The start of it was that they had to shut pits purely on economic grounds.

The amount of money that the state has paid on policing to get a few miners to work as far as I'm concer-

ned cancels out the economic argument. To me personally it goes much deeper; it's a political deepening crisis of capitalism where they see that to advance their aims they've still got to smash and control the working people even more.

The only way they can do that as our history shows anyone who looks - is to control and smash the unions. They must smash the miners' union which is the strongest in this country and then the rest are a pushover.

The other thought in their mind must be the denationalisation of the coal industry, getting rid of the so called unprofitable pits, leaving it wide open for the "profitable" pits in the Midlands and Yorkshire to be denationalised and given over to their friends the Tories and the capitalists, as a booming industry.

They obviously can't do that while pits are closing, so they'll shut pits in Scotland, Wales and Kent on the fringe. So firstly they're out to smash the NUM, weaken the working class for more onslaught and then de-nationalise the coal industry.

**WP:** Given that solidarity was so vital in 1972 and 1974 what have you been doing and what does the working class movement need to do, to organise solidarity to make sure the miners win?

**Phil:** The obvious thing that people have got to do is rally round and support the miners and most people do. Trade unionists rally around financially because they know the miners must win.

**WP:** What should the union leaders and the TUC do to win the miners' strike?

**Phil:** The TUC ought to do what they haven't done over the nurses in the recent health workers' dispute, the NGA, I can go back as far as you want - the railway workers, even further before that - the Post Office workers' disputes that the miners were involved in. The TUC never backed them. They allowed them to be picked off one at a time.

What the TUC should do and is there to do is to make sure that one union isn't picked off by the government and that all unions stick together. People should recognise that this fight is not just about jobs, although pri-

## Stop Coal...

**THE MINERS' STRIKE** has triggered tremendous solidarity action throughout the labour movement. In the front line of those supporting the miners are rail and transport workers.

In South Wales the NUR, ASLEF and the TGWU have blacked all movement of coal. The same is true in Scotland, Kent and Yorkshire. As the miners moved to picket power stations more and more workers have supported them.

At Didcot power station in Oxfordshire - the biggest coal burning station in the country - the normal run of 98 coal-carrying trains has been reduced to around 18. This has been due to ASLEF drivers, many from the Saltley ASLEF near Birmingham, abandoning trains at the picket line. At Cockenzie power station in Scotland and Aberthaw in Wales, pickets have enjoyed similar successes.

Now that the ASLEF executive have called on their members to "black completely the movement of coal and coke from any source" it is vital that no coal goes to power stations that are not yet being picketed. The quicker the power stations are sealed off, the better the chances are of winning.

Teaside dockers have shown what needs to happen to coal coming into the country. It must be left on the ships bringing it in. Dockers at every port must follow this example and refuse to handle incoming coal.

Workers not involved in the movement of coal can still actively support the miners. Money for the strike fund is needed. The donation of £1,000 by Ravenscraig steelworkers and the 50p a week levy by Scott Lithgow workers are great examples of what can and should be done to back the miners.

## ...Not Strikers

**UNDER ORDERS FROM** the government and the police the Welsh National Bus Company refused to hire coaches to the South Wales NUM. This outrageous interference with the right to picket was fought by workers at the bus company.

At the Porth Bus Depot workers held a protest meeting with the NUM. The drivers voted for a three hour strike on Thursday March 22nd and threatened an all day bus strike on the following Saturday.

As a result of this action the management withdrew their veto on buses for pickets. Any other attempts in Wales or elsewhere to prevent the NUM hiring buses should be met with similar action.

marily it is about jobs in the mining industry. Its about the industrial base of Britain.

They've already slaughtered the steel so we're here not just for pits but to stop them raping this country even more.

People in other unions must realise that and what I'd like to see is that if we're struggling here to get miners out then we should embarrass these miners by getting railwaymen, steelworkers, and power workers out and show the Leicester, Warwickshire, Nottingham and South Derbyshire miners that this is far more important than just their area and their six or seven years of coal. Its all about the union and industrialised Britain.

**WP:** This is a fundamental showdown. MacGregor and Thatcher aren't going to give in. They've waited a long time to take on the miners.

**Phil:** That makes it even more important for trade unionists to rally round the miners to make sure that we can survive longer than the bosses.

*Time Gentlemen please!*

## Build Miners' Support Committees

**ORGANISING SOLIDARITY WITH** the miners is far too important to be left in the hands of the Trade Union officials. The initiative must be taken now to organise Miners' Support Committees. These must represent rank and file trade unionists and organise to win mass backing for the miners.

In Leicester the Trades Council took the initiative of establishing a Miners' Support Committee comprised of delegates of all trade union, labour movement and student union bodies that actively supported the miners. At its first meeting over 30 people heard a Kent miner explain the miners' case and discussed forging links between picketing miners and the local NUR.

Plans were laid to leaflet local factories, putting the picketing miners' case, to organise meetings in the major factories and to raise workplace collections to back the miners. It was agreed to seek delegations to the Committee to ensure that it becomes a representative and seriously committed body.

Leicester is a town with a traditionally weak labour movement, but the experience there shows what rank and file activists can do to step up the fight to beat MacGregor and the Tories. In Stockport the Trades Council has given support to the founding of a similar committee.

In the West Midlands, on the other hand, the trade union officials have so far been able to set their own woefully slow pace to the organising of solidarity work. On the initiative of UCATT's Ken Barlow, the West Midlands TUC has set



*Miners must not be left to stand alone up its own bureaucratic "support committee". It has been committed only to token support for the miners - lending verbal support to the NUM, appealing for finance to affiliated unions and organising for MPs and TU officials to visit the pickets.*

Despite all the resources available to them, the regional TUC have done nothing to organise action to back the miners, or to make sure that miners put their case to the thousands of workers officially represented by the West Midlands TUC.

Where they are not yet in existence we must build delegate support committees that go all out to win mass backing for the miners.

Wherever the dead hand of the trade union officials threatens to create support committees that are moribund and bureaucratic, we must fight the officials and force the opening of the committees to delegates of all labour movement bodies that actively support the miners. ■