

# THE RED MINER

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NO.13 NOV. '86



**workers  
power**

Bulletin for miners and their families 10p





Last month, Albert Wheeler, hard line Director for the Nott's area, outlined his plans for the mining industry at the mining engineers national conference. At the time, some thought that Wheeler might be out on a limb - flying a kite for his personal views. Not so national boss Robert Haslam has confirmed that Wheeler's proposals represent current Board thinking. Speaking to a Commons Energy Committee Haslam stated that while

*"I would not agree with every dot and cross of what he says - I do agree with the broad thrust"*

The "broad thrust" Haslam is talking about adds up to the following.

- 1 A six day working week.
- 2 A 24 hour working day - with either 4x7½hr shifts or 3x9hr shifts.
- 3 New technology to reduce the number of jobs.
- 4 New tighter incentive schemes.
- 5 Output per man shift increased to 6 tonnes.
- 6 A national labour force reduced to 70,000.

Some list ! The only point missing is, the introduction of privatisation. The only reason privatisation is being left out (publicly) - is because the Board and the Tories are frightened of the political impact of letting the cat out of the bag at this stage. Miners know better. The Tories will sell off profitable sections of the industry. But first they consider it necessary to go through another period of "softening up" in line with the Wheeler/Haslam plans - after which privatisation will be discussed publicly rather than privately. This week Thatcher has announced her plans to privatise the whole of British Steel after selling off the most profitable bits already. There are more than a few similarities between what has happened to steel workers and what they want to do to miners.

**FIGHT NOW - DON'T WAIT FOR KINNOCK!**

Faced with the prospect of this new onslaught, there has to be a determined fightback. However, this is not the view of



Scargill, calling for action against pit closures. But what about the rest of the executive?

the Communist Party/Labour Party majority on the NEC. They continue to advise caution. Making the Great Strike's defeat permanent seems to be the strategy of the NEC majority.

All they can propose is waiting for a Labour government under Kinnock. Faced with this argument - 3 points come to mind.

First - who says Kinnock will win ? General Elections aren't decided by whose turn it is.

Second - even before the General Election an awful lot of damage can be done - with more closures, speed-ups and redundancies. You only have to look at what has been done in South Wales (see regional reports) and the way the Board have ignored the findings of the independent review into Cadeby pit in Yorkshire

Third - there are no guarantees that Kinnock will re-employ redundant miners and recreate all the jobs destroyed under the Tories. We only have to look at his attitudes to the sacked and jailed miners to understand the extent of his treachery.

The alternative to this pessimism is to fight now - with industrial action against closures and speed-ups. There still remain many examples of militancy in the industry, still greater than any other British industry. Miners are still the vanguard of the British working class, but without the leadership they deserve.

# REGIONAL ROUND-UP

## SOUTH WALES

October saw further cutbacks by British Coal in the S.Wales coalfield. As expected Cwm and Nantgarw are to close with the loss of 1,300 jobs. British Coal claim that both pits are making heavy losses, and that Cwm was sustaining the worst losses in the U.K. (£67 per tonne). As usual in S.Wales the underlying reason given for closing the pit was severe geological problems - but this can only be overcome with adequate investment which was pitiful at both collieries.

The NUM didn't oppose either closure at local or area level, Des Duffield felt it "wouldn't have been worthwhile as the review would have had little impact on managements plans". True enough, but the 'leadership' did nothing to counter the rumours of closure and the demoralisation and uncertainty created particularly at Nantgarw. Closure was greeted by many in the workforce with a degree of relief, at least they finally know the future of their pit. In this sort of atmosphere B.C. has no problem in playing their redundancy money card to the full.



The closure of Cwm was particularly bitter for the Coedely workforce who had accepted the closure of their own pit only a few months ago. They transferred to Cwm, so as to not threaten Cwm closing in a joint review procedure of the 2 linked collieries. They are now faced with the prospect of transferring again. But where and for how long ?

A week after these colliery closures, British Coal announced that they are to shut Nantgarw coke ovens, currently employing 190 men. B.C. claim that the closure has nothing to do with axing Nantgarw colliery - it's main supplier Just a coincidence ! ? Meanwhile Cwm coke ovens will stay open and even expand production slightly, with a few jobs created. At least

that's what the management say, but they declared a few months ago that no more collieries would close before the end of the year, and look what's happened.

### NACODS SCAB AGAIN

True to form NACODS have played their now familiar scabby role in all this. Their 100 members at the two collieries have voted to accept closure and so won't even try to invoke their sacred review procedure. Area Secretary Glyn Jones even said that the closures of Nantgarw and Cwm were "all Scargill's fault" and that "he should have accepted McGregor's 'generous offer' during the strike." NUM members need no reminding that NACODS' threat to join the national strike was averted by their agreeing to accept the new review procedure - which they now believe is worthless.

### MORE CLOSURES ?

It now seems that the future of at least 4 more pits are in doubt - Six Bells, Lady Windsor, Abernant and Tower. In a recent interview on local T.V. the Area Deputy Director was asked about the future of these pits, to which he answered that Lady Windsor and Abernant had both had heavy duty faces installed "which were proving successful". Six Bells is due for review this month.

The long term future of Oakdale is in some doubt after BC's refusal to develop key reserves. This has already meant the cutting of 140 jobs.

As predicted in the last issue of Red Miner the Tredegar workshops will now stay open, but with the workforce slashed from 400 to 180.

### OVERTIME BAN TO CONTINUE.

Meanwhile, the overtime ban on coal production continues, although its influence on management can be seen from the above events ! Productivity levels are once again on the increase despite the ban. A delegate conference in October voted to continue the ban. This was just after Haslam announced that the pay rise would now be backdated to last November - but at the same time pension rights would be affected by any strike over one week. Another delegate conference is due this month and it's clearer than ever that only

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a full overtime ban at the very least will have an effect against management's continuing butchery of the coalfield.

The recent closures mean that only half of the 28 pits in South Wales at the end of the strike are still open, with the workforce cut from 18,500 to around 11,000. The Area is increasingly reliant on anthracite and power station coal production after the recent reductions in coking coal capacity. While the anthracite market is relatively secure, since South Wales has the only true anthracite reserves in W. Europe, the long term markets for power station coal are less secure.

#### MARGAM DELAYED.

The £85 million Margam development has once again been put in doubt. The new super-pit would link up with British Steel's Port Talbot and Llanwern works, supplying them with coking coal. On a recent trip to South Wales Haslam stated that market prices were against developing the reserves at present. Haslam therefore becomes the fourth Coal Board chairman to make promises on Margam without any serious intention of going ahead with the development.

#### YORKSHIRE

The suspicions of the miners we talked to last month have been confirmed. At this month's Area Council meeting the resolutions on an overtime ban have been left on the table. The reasons given being that the National Executive have not yet met to decide the unions response to the latest from Haslam on pay. The likelihood is that it will then go to a national ballot. All of this is wasting time. As we argue in the editorial it continues to be a matter of urgency to mobilise and link up action against the plans of the Board.

Cadeby. On Friday (7/11) the Board confirmed it's intention to close Cadeby in the new year. They rejected the advice of the Independent Review body which said they had a moral obligation to the community in an area with over 24% unemployed. The Board said that keeping Cadeby open would go against it's basic strategy of seeking a low-cost, high-productivity industry. They claimed this was to fulfill their obligations to miners in other areas.



We know it is to trim down the industry directing investment into the pits that will pay handsome returns to their future private owners. This is another example that shows the need to build up the fight-back before it's too late. Scargill commented on the need for industrial action saying "The only way to save jobs, pits and communities is to take some form of industrial action". We agree with him the task is to get that organised!

Rossington Has been lucky (!) enough to be chosen for the new Coal Board safety scheme. Apparently those with the worst records on safety will be part of this new scheme. Good, we hear you say, it is time the management did something to cut down accidents caused by undermanning and the drive for production targets. Hold on a minute, who says that's what they are doing. NOT A CHANCE ! The selected pits will have their work units put into divisions and points will be allocated for each accident depending how long it takes the man away from his work. "The division leaders will be the team with the lowest accident rate. The rate will be calculated by awarding 1 penalty point for each accident, 5 for accidents resulting in 4 workdays lost and more for serious accidents at the discretion of the Colliery Safety Action Team."

What do they hope to gain ? Are they after men not reporting seemingly minor accidents to keep their team position in the league ? It will be no use trying to claim compensation for a knock on the head at work that leads on to ill health if that accident was not reported ! Watch out for this one at other pits.

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Brodsworth. The union and the Women's Support group at Brodby are raising the issue of the victimised men at a PUBLIC MEETING next Sunday 16th. at 6pm. in the Miners Welfare. Arthur Scargill and Sammy Thompson will lead the speakers.

Hatfield Main. Miners and the Women's Support Group from Hatfield were joined by representatives from Armthorpe, Rossington, Kiveton Park, Brodsworth and Renishaw Park as well as Doncaster Women Against Pit Closures on the rally at the Humberside docks protesting against the importation of South African Coal. The idea for the rally came from the Hatfield branch as a gesture of solidarity with the S.A. black miners. (see report later in this issue)

## NORTH EAST.

The first round of one day strikes by the Durham Mechanics has nearly reached its conclusion. The strikes, over the pay question, reinstatement and the closure of Seaham got off to a very good start at Murton in Co. Durham where a massive 80% voted in favour of strike action. (see last RED MINER)

So far a total of 7 pits have been brought to a standstill in the action and there is only one left to go before the promised action is successfully carried out.

The strikes have demonstrated the good co-operation between the Durham Mechanics and the Durham Miners who are themselves in the middle of an overtime ban. The miners have almost to a man refused to cross picket lines.

The reaction of the UDM to the strikes has been varied. At Murton and Westoe where there have been battles, they virtually stayed away. But at Wearmouth where there is the largest concentration of scab union members, including the first scabs to return to work in the North East, some did cross the picket line. NACODS members also crossed. Billy Etherington, Durham Mechanics secretary, accused NACODS officials at the pit of actively encouraging their members to indulge in anti trade union activity by crossing picket lines.

The Board tried to claim a victory at the Seaham/Vane Tempest combine, the late t pit to take action, where some NUM members did cross picket lines. As usual the Boards counting of heads included anything that moved. Jim Perry, Mechanic's president said, "We have seen the Coal Board playing the numbers game during the national strike". And as for their claims that the action was crumbling he said - "They will see that this is not the case in the coming weeks and those pits that have been solid will continue to be so".

In the North East, morale is good, the men voted on the action and are determined to go on

## **NUM woman**

A pit canteen assistant, Mrs Pat Curry, aged 47, has broken into the all-male world of the National Union of Mineworkers by being elected to the NUM lodge committee at Murton Colliery in County Durham, thought to be the first time a woman has been voted on.

**Back the sacked miners - affiliate**

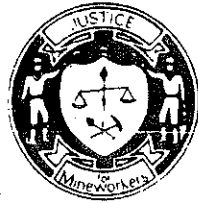
### **INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE FOR MINERWORKERS CAMPAIGN**

Organisation

Address

Enclosed Affiliation fee    National Organisation    £50      
    Regional Organisation    £25      
    Local Organisation    £ 5   

Cheques payable to "National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign" please  
 Please return to National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign,  
 c/o NUM Durham Mechanics Association, 26 The Avenue, Durham DM1 4ED



## NORTH DERBYSHIRE.

Next April North Derbyshire and South Midlands coalfields are to merge to become Central Area which will consist of North and South Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire.

One pit in North Derbyshire, Highmoor (the most militant) will become part of the South Yorkshire Coalfield in April. The new area will have 12 pits; Arkwright, Ireland/Markham, Renishaw Park, Shirebrook, Warsop Main, Badesley, Bagworth/Ellistown, Bolsover, Cadley Hill, Coventry, Daw Mill and Donisthorpe/Rawdon. The new area will have its Headquarters in Leicestershire with staff jobs to be lost.

North Derbyshire have escaped lightly, the Boards attacks up to now, with Whitwell Colliery being the only closure. But as expected it was only a temporary reprieve until the Board had dealt with the solid areas. Reductions in manpower and transfers has meant Ireland colliery merging with Markham to become Markham complex No.5, while Arkwright and Renishaw Park are ticking over on the minimum of manpower resulting in health and safety standards at rock bottom.

# WOMEN SUPPORT SILENTNIGHT STRIKERS

Hatfield Womens Support Group. Women from the Hatfield Main Women's Support Group have started to campaign on behalf of the sacked strikers at Silentnight, on strike now for over 17 months.

Red Miner spoke to Elaine, (one of the founding members of the group back in March 1984), about their work.

We asked Elaine why they had chosen this particular struggle.

Elaine: Well we got a letter from one of the women strikers asking for our help. They wanted to get in to speak at trade union branches because they felt their struggle had been totally forgotten by most of the unions.

Red Miner: What have you been doing?

Food collections mainly - outside our local supermarket. We collect on a rota basis on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. We also collect money by selling badges and hold a raffle every week for a Christmas fund. We have given out lists of the children's names to get presents and will make up Christmas parcels for the single men. We helped get them a speaker at the Doncaster Trades

Council Day of Action on Women and have joined their picket at Sutton.

What effect has this had on your group?

More people are coming to the meetings and we are becoming more active again. The group is meeting every week now instead of fortnightly.

You mentioned picketting

Yes, we went over last Wednesday (5th Nov.) in a van 10 women and 2 men. We went to take the food we have collected and to give them support on the picket line. They were really pleased to get help - although they are in good spirits it must be hard. The picket is usually small and they can't stand near the gate as the boss has taken out an injunction to stop them. We stood on his private property though! And more pigs were soon drafted in, 2 car loads of them. They tried to arrest a picket on his own but we stopped them.

The scabs working in the place seemed very young I would say they were on YTS schemes and they are bussed in from Keithley every day, right into the place and they don't come out for dinner. Most likely in a few months time they will be on the dole as well.

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## 'BLOODY SUNDAY' MARCH

In January 1972, the British army shot down 14 unarmed civilians in Derry, Northern Ireland. It came at the height of nationalist opposition to the British army and the systematic denial of civil rights by the northern orange state to Catholics and Republicans.

Fifteen years later, little has changed. The army is still there and the Republican population still faces systematic repression. The labour movement in Britain has continually dodged this question - preferring to support the bi-partisan approach of both Labour and Tory parties. Because of this Bloody Sunday marches over the years have attracted minimal labour movement support.

RED MINER urges its readers to change things this year. The "Bloody Sunday" march is to be held in Sheffield on Sunday January 31st. We need to make sure the march is raised in NUM branches and that transport is organised to get people to the demo.

No time should be lost in raising the issue now and winning support.



Last Years March in London.

**BRITAIN  
OUT OF  
IRELAND**

# BUILD WORKERS' SANCTIONS CONFERENCE

Current events in Southern Africa must remind Red Miner readers to continue to work for effective workers solidarity action.

Hundreds of trade union leaders are still in jail and there are continuing fears for their safety. Each month reports filter out of prisoners or detainees 'committing suicide'.

The Apartheid regime has also stepped up its attacks on its neighbours. It is determined to cow Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and other 'Front-Line states'. Whether or not it was responsible for the death of Samora Machel, President of Mozambique, it certainly has been increasing pressure on that country through both military and economic measures. It supports, funds and arms 'Renanto', a reactionary guerrilla movement. And in response to recent sanctions moves, it is expelling migrant Mozambican workers from South African mines.

In the face of this, the response of the British Trade union movement still falls pitifully short of what is necessary. The TUC has been jolted into producing a glossy booklet, and to encouraging regional conferences, but it still fails to campaign for workers boycott action. The union leaders are still concentrating on the consumer boycott and disinvestment. Neither of these can cut the lifelines of the Apartheid regime now. Workers boycotting goods and services to and from South Africa could do that.

However round the country there is more evidence that trade unionists at a rank and file level are prepared to take action. Members of the Civil Service unions in Passport Offices, libraries and trade departments have helped to cut South African links. Union pressure in Local Authorities and Health Authorities has succeeded in getting more of these bodies to break their links with South Africa through orders and contracts.

The urgent task is to co-ordinate, lead and encourage this action. That is why Lambeth Trades Council has agreed to call a conference on December 13th. (details below). So far this has been sponsored by several trades councils and trade union branches. We would urge Red Miner readers to raise this at their branches/Areas and get delegates to it.

## CONFERENCE FOR TRADE UNION SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA.

Saturday 13th December 11a.m. - 6p.m. /  
Carrs Lane Church Centre,  
Carrs Lane.

(off High St. Near Birmingham Central Station)

Please return to: Bronwen Handyside, 17 Porden Road, Brixton  
London SW2 5SA. 01-274-7722 ext 2010 (£2-00 per delegate)  
(Office hours)

## SOLIDARITY RALLY with SOUTH AFRICAN MINERS

Organised by  
HATFIELD NUM and DONCASTER ANTI-APARTHEID  
MOVEMENT

**Ban South African Coal Now!**

11 NUM branches were represented at the rally on Saturday (8/11/86) in solidarity with South African miners. Along with women from the support groups and members of Anti Apartheid groups from Doncaster, Sheffield, Chesterfield and the City of London they marched to a rally near the wharfs where South African coal is brought in.

About 200 demonstrators heard Dave Douglass from Hatfield Main NUM (speaking in a personal capacity) speak about the latest brutal attacks by South African police and troops on black miners. Although Dave emphasised that we were not there to stop the coal or to picket the wharfs he did hope that in the future real pickets would be organised. "It is the responsibility of Seafarers, dockers, drivers, power workers, and factory workers not to handle and use South African coal soaked in the blood of South African miners."

Red Miner would agree with Dave about the need to organise real pickets. It is not enough to hope that the NUM executive will be able to do deals with the tops of the other unions to get this coal stopped. We should of course demand our officials take the issue up and that they co-ordinate and encourage an effective campaign of workers sanctions against S.A. goods.





# TORY HYPOCRITES

At the beginning of the Tory Party Conference, the 'Financial Times', the bosses' mouthpiece, commented that it was likely to be "more of a rally than a conference, and there is not much to rally about". The F.T. was right .....on both counts!

Conference spent the whole week calling for more of what we have been suffering for the last few years. A priority for Tories is privatisation - that is selling as much as possible to the already rich and powerful bosses. Mr. Lawson, the Chancellor, played to his drooling audience by boasting about having already sold off 40% of the state sector and promising to "privatise most of what remains" in the next parliament. When a leading young Tory called for the privatisation of the coal industry he got a standing ovation (there is no N.U.M. delegation at this conference!).

Illogically, Peter Walker, the Energy Minister, argued that to reduce unemployment what is needed is more.....privatisation! Mind you, to be fair, no Tory came forward with much better to offer the unemployed - conference called for an extension of 'training schemes' (they mean slave-labour schemes) and for more self-help 'Jobclubs'. (There is a free week's holiday for 2 in Finchly for the first 'Red Miner' reader to explain to us how this is to get jobs for the 4 million unemployed.)

## Barbarians

Quote of the week was by Dr. Rhodes Boyson : "every society is threatened....by barbarism produced by the wildness of the uncontrolled male young". Of course he may have been drunk at the time - but speaking of 'barbarism' the Tory Party does look like a good example of 'uncontrolled' 'wildness'.

At a time when workers are suffering record levels of unemployment, increasing poverty, real cuts in social security and pensions, poor and worsening housing, collapsing schools, inadequate hospital provision and longer waiting lists what do the Tories offer? More privatisation, deregulation of private rented housing, lower taxes for the rich, a few months extra on 'training' schemes for the unemployed, extra powers for the police, more attacks on trade union rights.....In other words they offer the rich the chance to get richer - and the rest of us can go jump.



Public enemy No.1.

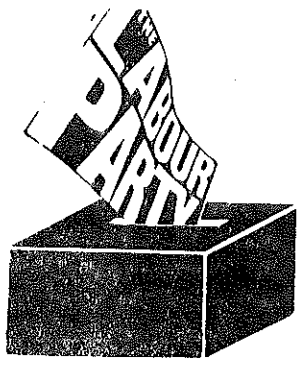
Not many Tories wanted to disagree with this but even when some did they were prevented from doing so. Resolutions hinting at dissatisfaction with the Tory leadership mysteriously 'disappeared', speakers who wished to question the Government's record managed to get to the rostrum apparently only after scrambling through an obstacle course - and all delegates only got a chance to speak by asking the Chairperson before the debates even started!

## Joke

The 'voting' was a total joke. Just about every resolution passed unanimously! Just in case anyone didn't know which way to vote they were 'reminded' by standing ovations for speakers who argued the 'correct' way. (In fact the ovation went on for such a long time after one of Mr. Lawson's speeches that he had to tell the delegates to stop it and sit down!)

All this from the Party that continually harps on about lack of 'democracy' in the trade union movement! This lot have passed legislation which interferes with how unions elect officers, conduct strike ballots, etc. Of course we know what they are up to : shackling unions to prevent workers fighting back. Yet Thatcher and her crew dress this up in terms of 'increasing democracy'. What a load of rubbish - as their own 'conference' showed they haven't a clue about healthy rank and file democracy

The hypocrisy and callousness displayed at Tory Conference reminds us of a slogan. Let's see how does it go?.....'We hate the Tories, the Tories make us sick'. They certainly do!

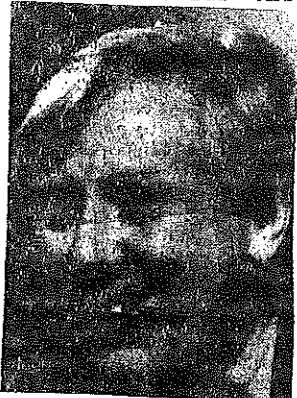


# AFTER BLACKPOOL

Last month Red Miner ran an interview with Cath and Mick from Coventry Colliery. We said we wanted to start a discussion about the Labour Party. In the article below we outline our view of what happened at the Labour Party conference this year and invite readers who disagree with us to send us their views.

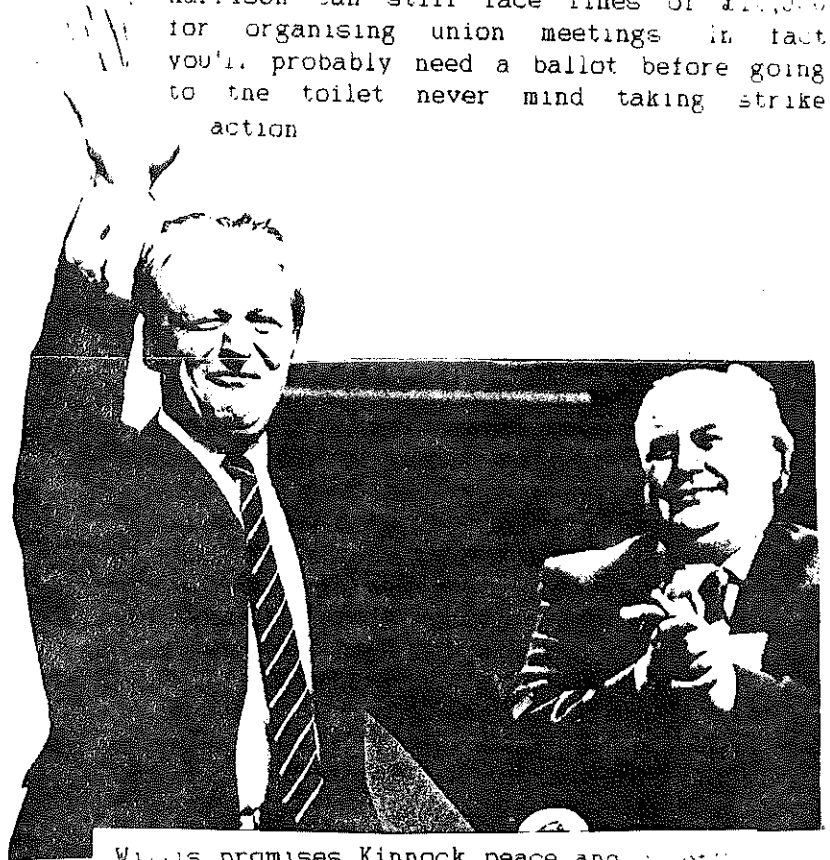
Election fever is here. The party rallies (they could hardly be called conferences!) this autumn, followed by Lawson's meagre public spending handouts last week have fuelled speculation of an election early next year. Already millions of working people are eagerly anticipating their opportunity at the ballot box to vote out Thatcher and Co. once and for all, and who could disagree with that? A Kinnock government might not be the most endearing prospect, but surely anything's better than the Tories isn't it?

But the Kinnock alternative carries a price with it, in order to present a unified and moderate image, the Labour leaders have purged their programme of any radical elements. Kinnock is using Alliance policies and the smoothie Alliance image to try to win the middle class voters over. His promises to them are many, more police on the beat (you remember those friendly cobbies during the strike); continued support for home ownership and the sale of council housing (that should please the million homeless), and no significant increases in taxes for the rich.



Kinnock's side-kick Hattersley on the other hand, has been making the rounds of the big business luncheons, promising low wages, low public expenditure, low inflation - in short low everything except dole queues.

And the crowning achievement of the new, reformed, model Labour Party is its commitment to maintain the anti-union laws. Of course they will change them a little, paint them red instead of blue, give them a new name, but the great strike would still have been illegal, as would boycott action against South African goods. Trade Unionists like NGA member Tom Harrison can still face fines of £1,000 for organising union meetings in fact you'll probably need a ballot before going to the toilet never mind taking strike action.



Wilson promises Kinnock peace and quiet

And as for Labour's promises to workers, they're minimal. A million jobs in two years (gee thanks a lot)- and after that? Nothing said. A bit more money for the health service, education, housing, etc but not a lot as they're "not prepared to let public spending get out of hand". No new nationalisations, no massive expansion of the coal industry for example, no measures to compensate for 8 years of Tory rule. Well they can't do too much you see, because there is a recession on, and it's going to get worse. So we'll have to tighten our belts and think of Britain (read "bosses profits") just like in the last Labour government.

**MINeworkERS  
UNITED  
FOR  
LABOUR**

Nonetheless you might say - as Ken Gill did at TUC congress - "With the prospect of another term of Mrs Thatcher, I think the trade union movement is prepared to put up with almost anything, achieve any level of unity...to make sure that doesn't happen again."

Fair enough...except that that means unity on Kinnock's terms, unity with the SDP voters, unity with those who'd run a mile rather than take a stand now and fight. It means don't do anything that might embarrass Labour, and it means that demoralisation will spread yet further in the 'New Realistic' labour movement.

## **NO INCOMES POLICY! NO ANTI-UNION LAWS!**

RBD MINER will campaign for an alternative to the "wait for Kinnock" perspective. Our alternative is two-fold: Firstly, don't wait for Kinnock but fight now! On pit closures, job losses, wage demands; on resisting all attacks from the Tories and the bosses, we don't have faith in any future Labour government to do the job for us - it's up to us.

Secondly, yes vote Labour to get the Tories out at the next election, but don't concede an inch to their anti-working class policies.

Labour says it's a workers party, so let's demand they live up to that, to abandon their wage freezing ideas, to impose a living minimum wage on the employers, to provide a massive programme of useful public works to mop up the dole queues, and to nationalise all the firms resisting or sabotaging this programme, without compensation.

The voices of those resisting "unity at any price to get any sort of Labour government" will be small in number in the

## **RACIST LIES !**

You can always trust the gutter press to find something to vent their poison on and last month it was a sickening deluge of racism, egged on by the government's visa requirements for foreign visitors

"3,000 ASIANS FLOOD BRITAIN"  
"ASIAN FLOOD SWAMPS BRITAIN"

These were just two of the front page headlines. Headlines which don't only cause an increase in racist remarks at work in the pub etc. but headlines which can kill

There have been 63 racist murders over the past 15 years and the latest state attacks have, as Ann Owens of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants stated, "created a climate where it becomes legitimate to attack black people and by extension those that advise them".

The night after the "3,000 Asians flood Britain" headline in the Sun, Pankaj Patel's newsagent shop was daubed with paint and racist attacks in London's East End have increased.

### **COMBAT RACIST LIES**

Militants in the trade unions and Labour Party have a responsibility to take up the fight against this racist poison, and not let the bosses get away with their attempts to divide us.

They say unemployment is caused by immigration, well did immigration cause unemployment in the thirties, did it hell! Racism and unemployment are the direct products of capitalism, and the worse the economy gets the more the bosses try to shift the blame onto some other section of society.

We must fight for;  
No more deportations and  
No more Immigration controls.  
Support for black self defence.  
A positive campaign in the unions to expose their racist myths



# ABERFAN: COAL BOARD'S NEGLIGENCE NOT FORGOTTEN

October saw the 20th anniversary of one of the worst disasters in British mining history. At 9:10 am on October 21st 1966 "Black Friday" one of the tips from Merthyr Vale Colliery slid down a hillside and killed 144 people in the tiny South Wales mining village of Aberfan. 116 of those killed were schoolchildren in the Pontglas Junior School, which was literally engulfed by thousands of tons of coal slurry and slime. Most of the children in the school were buried alive with no hope of survival. A few children were rescued, but after 11 am nobody else was found alive. The rescue workers included miners from Merthyr Vale who were sent from the pit as soon as news broke and who had the heartbreaking task of digging for their own children.

At a stroke a whole generation of children in Aberfan had been wiped out. One in five of the residents in Aberfan and nearby Merthyr Vale were directly bereaved, and in Aberfan alone one in two. Yet despite this only two of the families have moved out of the village since the disaster. An already closely knit community was brought even closer together by the disaster and its aftermath.

Sole responsibility for this terrible disaster lies with the NCB, who ignored many warnings from residents about the safety of the tip. At the tribunal the NCB called the disaster an "unforeseeable accident". No acceptance of blame, no apology. They were found guilty at the tribunal of "bungling incompetence" and "failure to heed clear warnings". They had in fact built the tip on a spring. They had no system of tip control - which later led to a future act of parliament on tipping. The Board were found wholly to blame for the disaster. During the tribunal proceedings the local paper the "Merthyr Express" reported that parents shouted "murderers" at NCB officials, and that their children had been "buried alive by the NCB". This hatred and resentment of the NCB remains to this day.

Although found guilty, nobody was sacked from the NCB, there were no prosecutions of any kind. Lord Robens remained head of the Board. The Labour government of the time chose to take no action against those responsible for the tragedy. Indeed, the government's disgusting role throughout was one of

support for the NCB against the villagers. For example, the government refused to even pay the £150,000 costs of the tribunal - it had to be paid from the Aberfan Disaster Fund. Neither would it pay for the costs of removing the tips, again the people of Aberfan were forced to do so. The only compensation the bereaved families received was £500 for each child's life lost.

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Aberfan was remembered because it was a mining disaster which killed not miners but 144 people, mainly children in a mining village. But it should also be remembered as a disaster that could easily have been prevented. Cyril Vaughan chairman of the Community Association helped to rescue 6 boys and 2 girls trapped in the school, and to dig out the remains of others. He said at the time of the recent anniversary "I have never felt so hopeless, so futile and so angry. To think that after so many warnings and danger signs that the tip was allowed to come down and engulf the children. Unless ordinary people take notice there will be another Aberfan". The lesson we need to learn from the tragedy at Aberfan is that while the industry is run to make profit, unacceptable risks will always be taken and disasters will happen again and again. We must fight to improve safety standards now, both at the colliery and in the surrounding area. Recognising that this can only be fully achieved when the miners themselves control the pits and working conditions.

## FREE ELEUTERIO GUTIERREZ

Tin miners' leader Eleuterio Gutierrez is condemned to rot in jail because he is a militant workers' leader. Full details of his case can be obtained from Red Miner, c/o 138 Crookesmoor Road, Sheffield 6. An article about him appeared in last month's issue.

So far since then letters have been sent protesting about his detention from Renishaw Park branch and have been supported by the North Derbyshire Area. The local M.P. is raising the issue too. Also the Nov. Durham Miner will feature an article about him. We urge all NUM members to raise this in their branches and send letters of protest off to the addresses below.

The Bolivian Embassy  
106 Eaton Square,  
London SW1.

President Victor  
Paz Estenssoro  
Presidential Palace,  
La Paz,  
Bolivia

# ISSUES IN THE UNION



## THE MINERS' BROAD LEFT

Last month saw the second national meeting of the Miners' Broad Left. 114 miners and women from the women's support groups met in Barnsley to discuss the current problems facing miners.

This 'new' Broad Left was careful to emphasise its difference with the old election machine that brought Scargill and other leftwingers to prominence in the union. The miners present stated they were not there to set up an election machine alone. Jo Owens from Bilston Glen speaking from the platform called the meeting "an historic step forward within the ranks for the NUM" ... "we are building a national, open, democratic, campaigning rank and file Broad Left. Yes we will be putting up candidates in elections, their policies will be decided by the men - there will be no careerism."

The organisers stressed that it wasn't a splinter group but NUM members concerned to rebuild the union after the defeat of the strike and break out of the straightjacket put on by the rightwing dominated executive.

The conference passed resolutions that fleshed out the basic policy statement which included the following.

*"It is our intention to maintain and build on the democratic, socialist tradition of our union and to ensure a fighting leadership.*

- \* No Pit Closures
- \* Stop Privatisation
- \* Amnesty for Jailed/Sacked Miners
- \* Associate membership for Women's Support groups
- \* 4 Day Week with No Loss of Pay
- \* Miners Leaders on Miners Wages
- \* One Industry - One Union."

A resolution from Red Miner supporters called for the Broad Left to fight to spread the overtime bans in South Wales and Durham by pushing for a full overtime ban. This met with a lot of discussion as the organising committee made it clear they were against taking such a policy decision. The resolution was lost 25 votes to 36. Supporters argued that such a campaign could be taken into the branches and used to win militants to action and increase the action already taking place. Those against didn't want to call for something that wasn't going to be won in many areas.

This seems a strange argument from a new organisation whose stated aim is to try to take the lead in our union. Surely to do that we must be honest about what is needed and wage an all out fight to get that. How else will we win militants to fight with us.

Conference heard a speaker from South Africa calling for workers sanctions against South African goods. A resolution along these lines was passed as was support for jailed Bolivian tin miner Eleuterio Gutierrez.

There will be local Broad Lefts set up in all the coalfields and representatives were elected at the conference. We would urge Red Miner readers to attend these meetings and push for them to become genuine miners rank and file groups in the NUM, capable of linking up action nationally and challenging the 'new right' in the union. The test of the Broad Left will be its independence from the bureaucracy-left as well as right and its commitment to building a rank and file movement as opposed to another election machine.



# WORKERS HISTORY



## RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

### Part 4

Part four of RED MINER's history of the Russian Revolution takes the story through the months of reaction, and the isolation of the Bolsheviks, up to the defeat of Kornilov and the opening of the road to socialist revolution.

The defeat of the Petrograd workers, soldiers, and sailors in the July days opened the door to an orgy of reaction. The government ordered the arrest of the Bolshevik leaders and Lenin was forced into hiding. Most of the party leaders were out of action for the rest of July and most of August.

Kerensky was appointed head of a "new government" intent on restoring order against the revolutionary workers and troops. His government restored the death sentence at the front and, on July 16th appointed the reactionary General Kornilov to the post of Commander in Chief of the Russian Army. The Bolshevik daily "Pravda" was shut down and its printing shop completely demolished. House to house searches were ordered in the worker's districts in order to disarm the workers.

### Reaction

Bourgeois reactionaries became even more and more brazen on the streets. A worker from the New Lessner factory described the atmosphere

"At the market we came across a well dressed nurse in the middle of a crowd saying that Trotsky and Lunacharsky were arrested, that, Lenin and Zinoviev were in hiding....She called to mercilessly kill the Bolsheviks. We ask : Who gave you money to slander the Bolsheviks and the workers? We argued for ten minutes exposing the lies. Then about twenty merchants arrived and started to curse the Bolsheviks -"Beat the Jews and the Bolsheviks! Into the water with them!"-and the crowd thrashed us soundly. One comrade ran away, the other died in hospital two weeks later from the beating, they took away my pistol and threw it into the canal and began throwing stones."



LENIN

### Anti-Bolsheviks

The so-called moderate socialists who dominated both the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional government raised little or no objection to the wave of repression. The Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) launched their own anti-Bolshevik crusade in the factories where there was a bitter mood of defeat. In many workplaces anti-Bolshevik resolutions were actually adopted. This was particularly so amongst traditionally conservative sections of workers such as the printers who, in many cases, refused to print Bolshevik papers.

However key sections of the Petrograd workforce remained firm. On returning to work the cannon shop of the Putilov works unanimously voted to issue the following defence of their actions.

Citizens,

Like an ancient oak amidst the forest, the great Putilov factory stands amidst the nations industry, shaking the earth with the heavy blows of its hammers.

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Citizens! This is not the first time the Putilovtsi shed their blood in the interests of the working class. Remember January 9th[1905] and refrain from the indiscriminate accusations that are being heard on the streets. In the July days we went...not against the Soviet but for it. That is why on our banner was written.

*All power to the soviets!"*

The proclamation laments the defeat but ends with resolution.

Citizens! Look trustingly at the black smokestacks rising from the ground. There at their foot, the same kind of people as you, creating new values you need. Suffer and agonise in a bondage of perfected and fierce exploitation. There, slowly, consciousness is ripening. In our hearts, hate is being stored, and the tender conditions of another life for all humanity are being lovingly written on the bloody banner."

## Coup

The defeat of the workers made the right much more bold. Commander in chief Kornilov was canvassing a military coup in the top circles of officers and capitalists. Now that the workers were in retreat Kornilov considered the time right to topple the Provisional Government. After all the workers had no respect for it and the top military brass and bosses had no time for it. Better to establish a military dictatorship and clamp right down on the workers organisations.

At the end of August Kornilov marched on Petrograd with what he thought were loyal troops. The working class and their revolutionary party were in the firing line again, along with Kerensky's government.

In July the Bolshevik party was cold shouldered in many plants. The Party Petrograd committee reported that it was able to do hardly any agitational work in that period. Lenin remained in hiding in Finland. The experience of July led Lenin to change his perspectives. He wrote in late July

*"The objective situation is thus : either a victory of the military dictatorship with all it implies, or victory of the armed insurrection of the workers."*

Given the role played by the Soviet's leadership Lenin also dropped the slogan "All power to the soviets".

*"The slogan of all power passing to the soviets was a slogan of a peaceful development of the revolution, possible in April, May, June and up to July 5th-9th... Now this slogan is no longer correct, as it*

*does not take into account the change in power, that has taken place, nor the complete betrayal of the revolution by the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks."*

## Kornilov

Faced with the Kornilov offensive Lenin urged the workers to fight the counter revolutionary armies but *not in order to defend the government... but to defend the revolution and it's true objectives : the victory of the workers, the victory of the poor, the victory of peace."*

It was down to the working class, not the counter revolutionary armies to settle the final account with Mr Kerensky

With Kornilov marching on Petrograd and with Bolshevik agitators urging the formation of Red Guard detachments the Petrograd workers rallied to the defence of their organisations and their city. Putilov produced 100 artillery pieces in 3 days while, at the same time, sending 8,000 younger workers into the Red Guards and hundreds of agitators to the front. Kerensky cowered behind the workers defence squads powerless to stop the release of jailed Bolsheviks and the arming of the workers.



## Red Guards

The morale of Kornilov's troops was easily broken. The Red Guards saved Petrograd and in doing so saved Kerensky for the time being. But the road to armed insurrection was now opened before the working class. On 31st August the Petrograd Soviet supported a Bolshevik resolution calling for "a government of the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry".

Moscow followed suit on September 5th. With military reaction crushed, with the provisional government's weaknesses there for all to see the time was ripe for the party to lead the final struggle to take power into the hands of the workers.

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The final part of RED MINER's history of the Russian Revolution will be in the November issue

# WHERE WE STAND

## RED MINER

The Red Miner is produced by members and supporters of Workers Power. Workers Power is a revolutionary organisation fighting to build a new revolutionary party to overthrow capitalism - at home and abroad.

## WORKERS' STRUGGLES

We support all workers' struggles against the bosses. We fight to turn all struggles into conscious anti-capitalist struggles.

## REFORMISM

The trade union and Labour leaders believe capitalism can be reformed, made better, but they do not aim to overthrow capitalism. They act as go-betweens for the bosses with the workers. Even militant leaders limit their struggles to the fight for gains within capitalism. For this reason we are for building rank and file movements politically independent of the bureaucracy and committed to transforming the unions into democratic, class struggle unions.

## REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

A revolutionary party will be a workers' party, a party that, built in struggle, can learn and pass on the lessons of the 1984-85 strike and other struggles. We stand for miners taking their place in the front ranks of building such a party as they did in the 1920s. Only by building a new revolutionary party can we create the class army that can fight and destroy the stinking capitalist system that threatens us with always having to fight to protect our jobs, conditions and organisations.

## INTERNATIONALISM

We are committed to fighting capitalism internationally. We strive to build an international organisation of revolutionary parties. (Workers Power works with Irish, German, French and Chilean revolutionaries in the **Movement for a Revolutionary International**). In particular we fight nationalist solutions to the crisis put forward by reformists like calls for import controls. Such demands merely divide the working class.

## DIVISIONS

We fight all divisions in the working class. Divisions are fostered by the bosses to weaken us. We are implacably opposed to racism immigration

controls, fascism, discrimination against and oppression of women, gays or black people.

## THE OPPRESSED

We support all struggles by people oppressed by the bosses of Britain, America, France, Italy and the other capitalist (imperialist) countries. Immediately in Britain this means we support the right of the Irish people as a whole (not just those in the north) to determine the fate of their country. We unconditionally support the republicans and socialists in Ireland fighting for this right and demand the immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland.

## WORKERS' STATES

The USSR, Eastern Europe, etc are workers' states. Capitalism has been abolished. However, in each of these states a bureaucracy, based on the Stalinist Communist Parties, holds political power. This situation arose out of the international isolation of the Russian Revolution in the 1920s. The revolution degenerated at the hands of the bureaucracy headed by Stalin. The other workers' states were degenerate from birth in that they were created in the bureaucratic image of the USSR.

Therefore we call for a political revolution in all of these states to overthrow the bureaucracy and realise the full potential of these non-capitalist economies through democratic planning. At the same time, in order to preserve the gain for the working class represented by these economies, we defend the USSR and degenerate workers' states unconditionally against imperialism which, through war, will seek to re-introduce capitalism in these countries.

## OVERTHROW CAPITALISM

The revolutionary party we seek to build will have as its strategic goal the overthrow of capitalism by workers organised into workers' councils and armed so as to defeat the police and army that the bosses have used, and will use again, against us. We are for a socialist society in which all property is in the hands of the workers' state and all production is directed towards meeting human need - not satisfying the profit greed of the capitalists. We stand on the old slogan of Karl Marx:

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE,  
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS,  
AND A WORLD TO WIN.