

# workers power

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

## INSIDE:



MILITANT



FRANCE

# STRIKE WITH THE MINERS!

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AS THE N.U.M. moved towards greater unity and a full-scale national strike, the Tories - grinding their teeth - were forced to acknowledge that they lost the first round.

At first MacGregor reached for an injunction to hold the pickets in check. The judges dutifully obliged. But the NCB did not dare use the injunction as the dispute spread. They were terrified by the response of the miners and the organised workers' movement to the courts' interference.

The Tories threw a 10,000-strong police occupation force into Nottingham. They road blocked the Kent miners. They harassed and intimidated pickets. Still they could not stop the flying pickets or the courageous minority of Nottingham miners who manned their own picket lines and dramatically cut production in the Midlands.

The bosses were banking on the NUM right-wing to pull them out of a fix. But right wing stooges like Jones and Otley could not hold back the tide of militancy.

The Institute of Directors howled for the Tories to unleash their anti-union laws against workers taking solidarity action. But Thatcher was in a cleft stick. If she used the anti-union laws against the miners she risked a massive explosion of working class anger. If she did not use the laws then their weakness would be signalled to workers everywhere.

The miners have it in their power to destroy this Tory government and everything it stands for. If key sections of other workers join the battle alongside the miners then the Tories will not be able to turn the tables. Their defeat is certain.

The miners are striking to win. There can be no question of returning to work to discuss an improvement in MacGregor's insulting pay offer or NCB's proposals to negotiate or rephrase the closure of Cortonwood or other collieries faced with closure.

We must reject out of hand Labour energy spokesman Stan Orme's proposal for a conference to discuss energy needs. If the bosses are weak they will try to cheat us out of total victory with offers of compromise. The miners must stick out for NO PIT CLOSURES - except on the grounds of proven exhaustion - and the full NUM pay claim.

The strike has already mobilised the force to undo the defeats suffered by miners in recent years. The productivity deal has set pit against pit and area against area. It made the mobilisation of a national strike that much more difficult. This strike must rip up the productivity deal for ever and win a national pay agreement that unites all miners.

Such a claim must lift all miners to the maximum level attainable under the bonus schemes. It must secure a sharp cut in the working week, decent retirement pensions and large scale recruitment to pits where overtime must never be worked again.

A total victory for the miners needs massive solidarity from the working class. What is more every section that has a dispute or claim pending should take action now alongside the miners. Their chances of winning their own demands will be 100 times greater if they do this.

British Rail have refused to meet their settlement date with ASLEF. The power workers' claim, for April 11th, has not been met. Gas workers have a claim in the pipeline too. The NGA is calling for support in its fight against the anti-union laws. Every effort must be made to link the fight for these claims with a fight for a total victory for the miners.

In many towns miners support committees have done invaluable work in winning support for the miners, in accomodating pickets and in raising the urgently needed collections to support the struggle. They must be formed wherever they do not yet exist.

As soon as possible these must be transformed into action councils of delegates of workers actively supporting the miners struggle and all workers locked in conflict with their bosses and the Tory government.

These bodies can extend and deepen the struggle to defeat this Tory government. They can encourage broader and broader sections of workers to join the fight alongside the miners.

When Thatcher and MacGregor see that the game of splitting the NUM and isolating it from other workers is lost they will let loose all their dogs of war. Their judges will sit round the clock handing injunctions and sequestration orders. The Association of Chief Constables will send in their 'tactical support units' or 'Special



Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

Patrol Groups' to bust the picket lines. The sewer press and the TV will spew out anti-miner propaganda. If we want to win we must parry each blow as it comes and prepare our weapons and tactics now.

\* We must win the active support of press and TV workers. We must get them to fight for the right to reply. If, or rather when, the hypocritical defenders of the "freedom of the press" refuse then the presses must stop and the plugs must be pulled. In all events we must stop their lying mouths.

\* Against the picket-busters. Picket defence squads must be trained and officered by miners and other workers with military experience. If troops are used we must win these sons of workers and victims of the dole queues

to our side. We must persuade them to refuse to do Thatcher's dirty work.

When the Tories start their legal attacks then we can expect on past form that the Labour and TUC leaders will turn every which way to demobilise the struggle. For five weeks Kinnock has been secretly putting the screws on for a ballot in alliance with the NUM right-wing. He believes the miners harm Labour's image and its prospects for the local and European elections. The Labour Party owed its last spell in government to the miners and may well owe its next one to them.

This may be unpalatable to Kinnock as it was to Wilson. Miners must say to the Labour leadership and the MPs - we need neither your windy advice on peaceful pickets nor your proposals for mediation or compromise.

We don't need a commission on the coal industry but the total scrapping of MacGregor's plans.

If Labour MPs want to be useful they can obstruct Thatcher's every move in Parliament against the miners. They can get onto the streets to argue the miners' case. Some have done so. Now let's see the leaders do the same.

Arthur Scargill rightly told the TUC to keep their noses out of the NUM's internal difficulties. Having seen Murray's betrayal of the NGA and pathetic inactivity over GCHQ the NUM was right to ask individual unions directly for support in blacking coal. But Neil Kinnock and Stan Orme will doubtless combine with Murray and Co to urge restraint and mediation on the miners. They could even be called in by Thatcher if the miners have her on her knees. And they'd come running to pick her up.

Our answer to Murray and Co must be - not mediation but solidarity and with no strings! The TUC can do one essential thing which the individual unions cannot - call an all-out General Strike!

The first time the Tories move against the unions with their injunctions and their sequestration orders the TUC must declare an immediate, all out, indefinite general strike until the anti-union laws are smashed and the miners are victorious. The TUC must publically let the government know that in no uncertain terms, now. They must act the moment the Tories try to use their laws.

After years of Tory attack we have it in our power to defeat them. The miners have declared war on them on behalf of all workers. We must not let them down.

- \* Total victory to the miners.
- \* ALL OUT alongside the miners: Black all coal movements. Bring forward and link all claims against the Tories.
- \* Build action councils in every area.
- \* For a general strike to smash the Tories' shackles on the unions.

## Total victory to the miners!

## Bring forward the claims!

## All out alongside the miners!

## Black all coal!

## General strike against the anti-union laws!

# Nicaragua: U. S. IMPERIALISM'S NEW OFFENSIVE

"IF THIS IS non-binding I can live with it" was how Reagan greeted the US Senate's resolution calling for an end to the mining of Nicaragua's major ports. It will take more than toothless resolutions to divert the US Administration from its present drive to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. For Reagan this is an urgent task, made ever more so by the deteriorating military situation in El Salvador.

The US Government knows that only by inflicting a massive defeat on the masses of Nicaragua, as it did on the people of Grenada, can it hope to restore imperialist "stability" to Central America.

The latest stage in Reagan's military campaign against Nicaragua has involved the mining of three major ports - Puerto Corinto, Puerto Sandino and El Bluff. Added to the enormous economic damage inflicted by the CIA financed "contras", this latest US assault aimed to disrupt the vital import and export trade of Nicaragua.

Within the first month of the mining six ships refused to dock in Nicaragua and unloaded their cargo at Costa Rica instead. Further disruption would have been caused if the US action could have provoked Lloyds of London to declare the area a "war zone" and thus massively increase the costs of supplies to Nicaragua.

From the end of February merchant ships heading for Nicaragua not only had to run the "normal" blockade of US warships, which regularly stop and harass these ships, but also had to run the gauntlet of acoustic mines. These mines originated from a specially converted Panamanian freighter operated by the CIA and stationed just 12 miles off Nicaragua's coast. CIA operatives constructed the mines and passed them on to launches operated by "contras" organised and financed by the US Government. Between February and the end of March, 11 ships were damaged by mines - 6 Nicaraguan trawlers and five foreign merchant ships, including Dutch and Japanese vessels, as well as a Soviet oil tanker which had five of its crew members injured in the explosion. This flagrant violation of "international law" and open act of war against another country led to a Nicaraguan resolution condemning the actions in the UN security council. The US vetoed the resolution, the only other government not voting for it being Britain!

When Nicaragua later attempted to take the matter to the world court, the US administration quickly informed the UN that they would not accept the court's jurisdiction for any cases involving Central America for the next two years!

Even Reagan's staunchest supporters in Congress found themselves in a difficult position following these events. That well known friend of freedom and defender of the oppressed Barry Goldwater was forced to openly dis-associate himself from the Administration. Of course this was not because Goldwater was in principle against mining Nicaragua's ports, but because the House Intelligence Committee of which he is the Chair, has to appear to control the intelligence services. It appears that Goldwater had vehemently denied in committee that the President had authorised the mining, only to find out the following day that Reagan had given his personal written approval to the CIA operation! It was this bungling which united the Republican right with the Democrats. As Goldwater expostulated in his letter to CIA Director William Casey, in the case for an "increase in funds for the Nicaraguan programme, we were doing alright, until a member of the committee charged that the President had approved the mining."

The "Nicaraguan Programme" referred to is the aid supplied by Congress to finance the "contras" in their attacks and economic sabotage against Nicaragua. A further 21 million dollars is being asked for by the administration this year. It is the threat to this money caused by the mining that has so annoyed the likes of Goldwater. While the Administration has been forced to abandon this exercise for the moment, it is nevertheless pushing ahead with its plans for US backed invasions. After the poor showing of the CIA favoured FDN force based in Honduras, it now appears that large amounts of aid are being channelled as well to Eden Pastora's ARDE in Costa Rica. An offensive by 8,000 contras has now been unleashed inside Nicaragua. This is being carefully co-ordinated with the latest US-Honduran

military exercises on the borders of Nicaragua and El Salvador - operation "Granadero 1". Massive logistical support is being supplied by the CIA and US army from the newly constructed military bases and airfields inside Honduras. All these actions are designed to put the greatest pressure, economically and militarily, on the Nicaraguan regime, with the aim of forcing it to compromise with imperialism, or if it does not, to create the conditions for its overthrow. The calling of Nicaraguan elections for November makes this an ever more urgent task for Reagan. They will undoubtedly underline the popular support of the FSLN inside Nicaragua.

It becomes ever more pressing to mobilise against these plans of US imperialism. In Britain this means raising the question in every trade union and labour party organisation and condemning the complicity of the British government with Reagan's plans. We should aim to make the anti-Reagan demonstration in June a massive demonstration against US imperialism's offensive in Central America and in solidarity with the struggle against imperialism.

- ☐ US Imperialism, hands off Nicaragua
- ☐ Victory to the FMLN in El Salvador
- ☐ End British complicity with Reagan's plans



CIA backed ARDE troops set off to attack Nicaragua

## Elections won't keep imperialism at bay

FOLLOWING THE INVASION of Grenada the government of Nicaragua announced a series of measures which were obviously designed to undermine the Reagan administration's case that Nicaragua was a "Marxist state intent on exporting its revolution."

The various El Salvador guerrilla organisations "volunteered" to remove their headquarters from Managua; their presence had been denounced as proof of Nicaraguan support to guerrillas by the US. About a thousand Cuban advisors returned home. The strict censorship on the right wing newspaper *La Prensa* imposed as part of the State of Emergency laws in 1982, were eased.

An amnesty was declared for all those, apart from leaders, who had taken up arms against the regime. In the case of former land owners, whose land had been seized because of their exile, this involved its return or alternatively compensation. Most importantly the Government of National Reconstruction (GNR) declared its intention to hold "free elections" and has since announced that a 90 person Constituent Assembly will be elected on November 4th 1984 along with a President and a Vice-President.

These concessions were obviously designed to appeal to the Democratic "opposition" to Reagan's drive to secure the military overthrow of the GNR and to the European imperialist powers which are increasingly important in providing aid to Nicaragua. In demonstrating their willingness to return to "normal" bourgeois democracy, the Sandinista dominated government has received the immediate support of the Socialist International, which has been urging this course for some time. On March 15 leading members of the Socialist International declared their support for the elections and called for all opposition parties to participate. The calling of the election has caused serious problems for the right wing parties in Nicaragua. Many major representatives of the right have opted for exile and armed struggle against the government, thus severely weakening the internal opposition. The resulting state of Emergency decrees have made organising by the anti-Sandinista parties difficult. But having been calling for elections since 1979 the opposition has had

to content itself with threatening a boycott unless certain conditions are met. The "Democratic Co-ordinating Committee" comprising the four major right wing parties, the employers organisation LOSEP and the CIO-AFL backed Trade Union Unification Confederation have put a series of demands for their participation in elections. These include such things as a "national dialogue" with the leading "contra" organisations, the dismantling of the Sandinista dominated mass organisations such as the Sandinista Defence Committees, and the depriving of army and militia members of the right to vote!

These parties will be under great pressure to stand whether or not their "conditions" are met. Already one of the bourgeois parties, the Independent Liberal Party, has announced its intention to stand. This party had been part of the popular front coalition - the "Patriotic Front" which makes up the GNR. Its leader Dr. Virgilio Godoy has resigned as Minister of Labour to lead the party in the elections. The Sandinistas clearly expect to win the elections and thus prove their commitment to "pluralist democracy". The present "contra" offensive can only weaken the right wing parties and strengthen the FSLN's support amongst the youth as defenders of the revolution.

The current turn in FSLN tactics might have been expected to have caused some problems to their most ardent cheerleaders, the supposedly "Trotskyist" USFI. For several years these uncritical supporters of the FSLN have been explaining why Marxists should have nothing to do with the demand for elections or a constituent assembly on the basis that they represented the "classic blows of the bourgeois-democratic counter revolution" (11th World Congress Resolution on Nicaragua). The SWP(US) in particular has been vehement in its denunciations of the "sectarian error" of demanding elections to a constituent assembly.

This sudden turn of events apparently poses no difficulties for these dyed in the wool centrists who tail every twist and turn of the Managua government. *Intercontinental Press*, without pause for breath, declared the measures announced in November, including the elec-

tions, to be "a bold move" demonstrating "the strength of the revolutionary process". (Dec. 26 1983). For the SWP(US) the concessions announced, including the new incentive packages for big coffee and cotton producers and guarantees to big growers and rich peasants that their land will not be confiscated, are necessary to "strengthen class alliances" with these groups and the "urban middle class". (ibid. 26th Dec). *International Viewpoint*, The Mandelite English language journal has similarly endorsed the elections in a quick about turn.

For revolutionaries the concessions made to business and to the big farmers are exactly the wrong methods to strengthen the struggle against imperialism. It is precisely these classes that have been in the forefront of economic sabotage and collaboration with the CIA-backed "contras". The workers and poor peasants of Nicaragua need to be mobilised against imperialism and against the open and disguised internal counter-revolutionaries. This means expropriating the economic saboteurs and placing industry under the control of the workers. It means introducing a radical land reform which redistributes the land under the control of peasant committees, to those who till it. It means placing the officers and commanders of the militia and army under democratic control. It means above all not retreating from giving support to the struggle against imperialism in El Salvador and the rest of Central America but extending it and demanding unconditional economic and technical aid from the Soviet Union and Cuba in this struggle.

This is the programme that should be counterposed to the popular front perspective being peddled by the FSLN leadership and fought around in any elections. While elections will offer the possibility of fighting for such position amongst the masses and demanding the FSLN adopts such measures and breaks with the bourgeoisie, the election of a constituent assembly dominated by the FSLN will provide no way forward for the masses. Only a real workers and peasants government based on worker and peasant councils can provide the basis for a victory against imperialism.

by Stuart King

## El Salvador

ALMOST ONE YEAR after the murder of Commander Ana Maria, second in command of the Peoples' Liberation Forces of El Salvador (FPL), reverberations continue in the FMLN, the united command of the guerrilla movements.

Following a split in the FPL, the largest of the five organisations making up the Farabundo Martí Liberation Forces (FMLN), its leadership accused the late leader of the FPL, Salvador Cayetano Carpio, of murdering Commander Ana Maria as a result of political divisions within the movement, and committing suicide shortly afterwards as a result of being discovered.

The basis of the political divisions remain unclear, but it appears they revolved around a proposed fusion of the five organisations of the FMLN into a unified group, and the tactics to be pursued towards possible negotiations with the

government, as well as towards the role of the bourgeois forces within the FDR/FMLN coalition.

While Carpio split from the Salvadorean CP in 1970 over the question of armed struggle, he and his organisation remained wedded to the perspective of building a "popular front" alliance to oust imperialism.

The group which has since split from the FPL and from the FMLN, the Revolutionary Workers' Movement (MOR), has immediately declared its loyalty to his ideas.

Despite this fundamental programmatic identity, the FMLN has lost no time in issuing a statement denouncing this new group and implying that, if it is not already a CIA front, it soon will be (see FMLN statement in *Intercontinental Press* 23/1/84). The statement goes on to assert that there "cannot be revolutionaries outside or against the FMLN". Anyone who casts aspersions on the FMLN is therefore "not revolutionary".

Yet at the same time the FMLN/FDR have recently issued a set of proposals for a "broad-based provisional government" which clearly demon-

strates that the interests of the workers and peasants of El Salvador are being subordinated to the maintenance of an alliance, both actual and potential, with sections of the bourgeoisie.

Thus the proposals make clear that this provisional government will preside over a capitalist El Salvador - a utopia where "private property and foreign investment will not be counterposed to the interests of society". The exploitation of the masses by the imperialist banks and the IMF is enshrined in a commitment to "Renegotiation of the foreign debt on the basis of recognising the financial commitments made by previous governments. While US imperialism is reassured that such a government will take no steps to help the anti-imperialist movements of other countries in Central America by its commitment to "non-intervention in the internal affairs of countries in the region" (FDR/FMLN statement - *International Viewpoint* No 50).

While revolutionaries condemn without reservation the solving of political differences within the anti-imperialist movement by violence,

they also condemn the Stalinist substitution of political argument by unproven accusations that opponents are "agents of the CIA". For communist revolutionaries, the only strategy which offers the workers and peasants of El Salvador the possibility of complete victory over imperialism is that of permanent revolution - the fight for a socialist revolution in El Salvador and for a Socialist Federation of Central America.

Such a strategy in no way precludes fighting alongside petit-bourgeois and even bourgeois forces against imperialist puppets. It does preclude the tailoring of the immediate and historic goals of the proletariat and poor peasants to an alliance with the bourgeoisie. For an anti-imperialist united front in El Salvador, not a popular front! US troops out of El Salvador! Victory to the FMLN forces in their struggle against the Salvadorean Army - but for a workers' and Peasants' government in El Salvador!

by Stuart King

# FIGHTING MITTERRAND'S AUSTERITY

AS THE THIRD anniversary of his election approaches, all is not well in President Mitterrand's "socialist" France. The last five months have seen a series of events which reveal the uneasy rule of the Socialist Party/Communist Party coalition.

The new year saw the dramatic scenes in the Talbot plant in Poissy. In February a million right wingers marched in Versailles against government plans to remove state funding from religious schools. In the last two months farmers have kidnapped foreign lorry drivers, burned yachts and blockaded railway lines. Lorry drivers and owners, in a spectacular protest, jammed the country's key motorways for days. Most recently, steel workers' fury at the government's plans for cuts and redundancies erupted into confrontation with the riot police and massive protest marches in Lorraine and Paris.

Amidst these scenes, Mitterrand is busy demonstrating once more the truth of the old Marxist lesson that reformist "socialists" manage capitalism rather than attack it. Elected on a huge wave of left euphoria in the summer of 1981, the sweetness of Mitterrand's victory turned sour long ago for the French working class.

After a year in office, Mitterrand announced a huge austerity package involving a wage freeze, reduced benefits and increased taxation. Towards the end of 1983 it became apparent that a further wave of economic "rigour" was going to be necessary. This "rigour", of course, is directed solely against the French workers - not at the capitalists. The attacks of 1982-3 had helped to increase unemployment by 300,000 but this was not enough for the French bosses.

Compared to its major competitors in Europe, French capitalism is in a sorry state. Its gross national product is increasing at a mere 0.5% per annum - compared to 3.2% for West Germany and 3.3% for Britain. Year-on-year inflation currently stands at 8.9% - the highest of any of the major imperialist powers with the exception of Italy. Hence the austerity drive. The bosses are in trouble so the workers will have to pay.

## Steel sackings

The first official step in an attack on jobs - 160,000 of them - was the long-rumoured attack on steel. The official announcement came on March 29th; 36% of French steelworkers (25,000) are to be sacked from Usinor, the nationalised steel firm, over the next 2½ years. The news fell like a bombshell on the north-eastern region of Lorraine. Heavily dependent on steel production, and already savaged by cuts from the Gaullist government in the late 1970s, Lorraine - and especially the steel town of Longwy - face massive unemployment, a collapse of the regional economy and the disintegration of community life.

Response to the government's proposals was rapid. The Socialist Party offices in Longwy were ransacked and Mitterrand's portrait taken into the street and burned. Furious steelworkers ripped up the railway tracks. Riot police were sent in and street fighting ensued. On Wednesday 4th April a regional general strike was jointly called by the major union confederations. Tens of thousands marched and took strike action. Road blocks mounted by steelworkers sealed off Lorraine from the rest of France and from neighbouring Germany.

On the 13th Paris saw a 60,000 march to protest against the steel cuts; some banners on the march read "Mitterrand - treason; in the pay of the capitalists". So severe is the anti-Socialist Party (PS) feeling in Lorraine that 4 PS deputies from Lorraine have resigned from the PS group in the French Assembly. Mitterrand is now promising that Lorraine's smokestacks will be replaced with new technology plans. But of these there is no sign; the only visible future for the Lorraine workers is the dole queue.

## Divided Unions

As yet there is no united fightback against Mitterrand's attacks. Part of the reason for this is that the French working class is split into different union confederations, each representing a distinct political tendency. There is no equivalent of Britain's TUC. Only about 23% of French workers (4.5m) are unionised; of these, 1.25m are in the Communist Party (PCF) dominated CGT; 1m in the CFDT (which is loosely allied to the PS), 700,000 in the rightwing FO, and around 500,000 each in the education federation FEN and the professional confederation CGC. There are also various other smaller federations.

Traditionally the CGT has been the most militant grouping. However because of its domination by the French Stalinists, it toes an open class collaborationist line when it suits the party leaders. Most recently this was shown in the Talbot-Poissy events, where a large number of militants turned away from the CGT to the rival CFDT, in order to be able to defend their jobs (for a full account see WP 50). At present the Communist Party is playing a dual role, as dominant influence in the major trade union federation and junior partner in Mitterrand's coalition. Because of massive working class opposition to the austerity drive, the PCF have been forced to distance themselves from Mitterrand's policies.

In a TV interview on 2nd April, Georges Mar-



Steel workers demonstration at Longwy.

Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

chais, the PCF leader, described Mitterrand's plan for steel as "a tragic error". He pledged his support for the steelworkers' march in Paris. Workers looking to Marchais for any kind of decisive opposition to the government will have been disappointed. In his speech to the assembled steelworkers, he denied that the sackings were a "political" issue, and insisted that his presence was merely "an act of solidarity."

The PCF/CGT leaders are in a quandary. Their governmental position gives them part of the power and influence to which they aspire. But because that government is seeking to manage capitalism, it is inevitably being forced to implement attacks on the working class. To be associated with these attacks in turn weakens the PCF's base amongst workers. This contradiction was well expressed by a PCF mayor from Lorraine when announcing his resignation from the Party: "I could no longer agree to demonstrate in support of the steelworkers and at the same time support a government of the Left, with Communist ministers, which carries out policies contrary to the interests of the working class."

## The Dilemma of the PCF

The PCF cannot afford to go all the way with the government's policies - their electoral support has already fallen from 22.5% in March 1967 to 16.17% in June 1981. If the PCF was to completely support Mitterrand's austerity politics, there is little doubt that it would suffer a further massive decline.

Unlike the PS, the PCF is based on the active support and participation of hundreds of thousands of French workers. With around 800,000 members, and a massive party apparatus, it generally has the backing of the million and more members of the CGT.

All this means that there is a limit to the PCF's ability to dampen down struggles. Workers will not tolerate being continually used as ballast for the PCF's coalition manoeuvring. Hence Marchais' attacks on the austerity programme and the CGT's attempts to lead the Lorraine protests. They hope to contain these protests so as to not break up the coalition and to increase their bargaining power within it.

There are a number of signs that the PCF/CGT strategy will not be entirely successful. As struggles develop, groups of workers are coming up against the limits of the PCF/CGT fightback. In the fight against the steel closures a group has been formed to organise a fight for workers' unity against the bureaucrats.

The Lorraine-based group "Longwy: 79-84, meme combat" ("the same struggle") was formed after union leaders over-ruled the decision of 2,000 Usinor workers to march on Paris in October last year and the local inter-confederation committee ("intersyndical") fell into disuse. Although showing a healthy mistrust of union leaders the 79-84 group, like thousands of other French militants, does not yet have the political programme necessary to wage a successful fight against the bosses and the union bureaucrats.

At the moment, 79-84's programme is limited to organising inter-union unity. A 79-84 militant from Mont-Saint-Martin said: "If trade union unity (ie. the "intersyndical" - WP) is recreated, our group will no longer have any reason to exist. If not, we will attempt to build a general assembly of all steelworkers and we will enter into a new process of action." (Liberation, 30.3.84).

So far, 79-84's "action" has been limited to spectacular acts of protest: spray painting Paris-Strasbourg trains, blocking road and rail access to Lorraine, removing Mitterrand's portrait from town halls in the region and occupying management canteens. Without a clear political strategy beyond that of "unity", these anarchist-influenced actions will have little effect.

However necessary, it is not sufficient simply to argue for general workplace assemblies. Militants need political answers to put forward in such bodies, a programme which can counter the prevailing bureaucratic strategies of both the CGT and CFDT. This is plainly shown by the 79-84 contingent on the 13th April march on Paris; its slogan was "Save Lorraine". Although heartfelt, such apolitical localism was of a piece with the predominantly nationalist mood of the march's three main slogans: "Produce French; Consume French; Ban imports."

At the moment the PCF's chauvinist strategy is swamping any fightback by French workers. This strategy is nationalist not only at the level of slogans, but also in terms of seeking "national unity" - unity with the "progressive" bourgeoisie. French workers have no interest in pursuing a class-collaborationist policy such as that epitomised by the PCF. The role of the PCF/CGT needs to be taken up not only in terms of their bureaucratic control of workers' struggles, but also in the direction in which they lead those struggles, and the political allies they seek to win.



The rank and file grouping 79-84 hold their banner

Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

There must be no question of holding back workers' fights against the austerity plan in order to preserve Mitterrand's government or to maintain some spurious regional unity with the Gaullists. The only way to reverse the attacks on the working class is by a massive fightback by the French workers. That must begin with the steel industry. Against the regionalism dominating the movement at the moment, a national all-out strike of all steelworkers must be organised, with occupation of all plants threatened with closure.

Against the PCF's chauvinism French workers must argue for an internationalist fightback. The fate of the Lorraine steel industry is intimately linked with that of the neighbouring German and Belgian steel areas, and steel workers throughout Europe are under threat through the EEC's plans. A European-wide struggle against the Davignon

plan for EEC steel is necessary - and an essential part of this fight is the need for a United Socialist States of Europe, with rational international planning for need, not profit.

A fighting unity of the French labour movement must be formed by the building of local strike committees and regional councils of action to organise and co-ordinate the struggle, and to bring in the millions of as yet un-unionised workers. Although the public sector is the first group of workers in the governments' firing line, unity with private sector struggles must be forged.

The collapse of the steel industry is linked with the fate of the ailing French car industry. Already 20% (6,000) of the workforce at Citroen's Aulnay plant are to be sacked. More will undoubtedly follow elsewhere. In Aulnay, as at Poissy, the majority of those threatened with the sack are North African migrants. By placing anti-racism at the forefront of their struggle, the French workers can forge a stronger unity amongst themselves and also fight the slowly growing menace of racism.

## Launching a Fightback

To launch such a fight would mean dropping all the nationalist and chauvinist demands beloved of the PCF. There is no prospect of French capitalism hauling itself up by the bootstraps - except on the backs of the French workers.

The attempt by the PCF to restrict and control the workers' fight must be resisted. The PCF's strategy of peaceful co-existence with progressive national capital can only lead workers into the arms of the bosses. However, whilst hundreds of thousands of militants look to the CGT/PCF for leadership, they must be put to the test, together with their "socialist" coalition partners.

PCF and PS deputies must support all workers' struggles and argue in the Assembly against the government's policies. Every conceivable delaying tactic must be used to halt the passing of anti-working class measures. If the PS and PCF claim to act in the interests of the working class, let them turn their "rigour" against the French bosses. Let them join the workers in an attack upon the capitalists.

French workers must fight, for example, for a 35-hour week and job-sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay; for a massive programme of useful public works, funded from the bosses' pockets; for the immediate nationalisation, under workers' control, of all companies threatening redundancies. These are but the most immediate elements of a programme that could transform the balance of class forces in France.

Most crucial in organising a successful fightback against the bosses' offensive is the transformation of the unions into fighting organs of class struggle. There must be 100% trade unionism, one big union federation organised into industrial unions and free of all bureaucratic control, with the building of rank and file control over workers' struggles through factory and strike committees.

Such a transformation, coupled with a clear political fight for the interests of the working class would lay the basis for a successful defence of workers' jobs and living standards. Linked with the building of a French Trotskyist party, it could provide the raw material necessary to smash the capitalist system and herald workers' power in France.

by M. Howard.

# STATE CAPITALISM IN THE COALFIELDS

THE MINERS' UNION has a long history of fighting for the nationalisation of the coal industry. As far back as 1893 Kier Hardie introduced a bill to Parliament proposing the nationalisation of the mines. It argued that "...the nationalisation of the minerals and mines would secure the economical working of the same, the just treatment and consequent contentment of the mining population, and a continuous and cheap supply of coal and other minerals."

From that date until 1946 the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) and the NUM fought to secure the nationalisation of the mines. The MFGB drafted its own nationalisation proposals in 1913 which explicitly excluded compensation payments to the coal owners. In 1919 the MFGB included nationalisation of the mines as one of the demands of a planned national strike. This forced the government of the day to declare its acceptance of the principle of ending private ownership of the mines, as recommended by the Sankey Commission. Again in 1920 the MFGB voted to strike in favour of nationalisation.

Throughout the 20s and 30s the government and the coal owners resisted proposals for nationalisation. Indeed after the seven month stoppage in 1926 the coal owners increased hours and lowered wages in search of higher profits. No wonder then that Labour's Coal Industry Nationalisation Act of 1946 appeared to many miners to be the successful conclusion of a long hard-fought battle against the coal owners. It coincided with guarantees of a five day working week, heady promises to expand coal production and seats on the NCB board for NUM men such as Ebby Edwards. To many it seemed as if the days of exploitation were over.

Yet the history of the NCB has been a history of drastic cuts in the workforce and a remorseless drive to push up output from those who remained in work.

The NCB employed about 700,000 throughout most of the 1950s. This was cut to 250,000 by 1974. Today the NCB employs only 185,000. In 1947 the NCB took over 980 collieries; today there are only 176.

Far from guaranteeing "the just treatment and consequent contentment of the mining population" the NCB held miners wages down until the great strikes of 1972 and 1974 forced the employers into retreat. Now the NUM calculates that MacGregor intends to axe 70 pits and 70,000 more jobs by 1988 and scrap over 100,000 jobs by the year 2,000.

Other groups of workers have suffered exactly the same fate at the hands of nationalisation. British Rail cut its workforce from 515,000 in 1960 to 160,000 in 1984. British Steel employed some 270,000 workers in 1967; by 1984 its workforce was below 100,000.

## Privatisation

Why has nationalisation - an old demand of the organised workers' movement - turned into an instrument for shackling and exploiting the workforce? Given the record of the nationalised industries what action should workers take in the face of plans to privatise nationalised industry, including the mines?

Tebbit recently made it perfectly clear that he favours de-nationalising the coal industry when he said: "...I wonder whether we would have a coal mining dispute if we had de-nationalised the coal industry 10 or 20 years ago. I would fancy we would have cheaper coal, cheaper power, better paid miners and a more efficient economy today. It is a thought for the future."

If the miners were to lose to MacGregor then privatisation would not be far behind. MacGregor's first press conference saw him welcoming private investment as indicating "that the industry has a future." The 1983 monopoly and mergers commission report on the NCB was also set on paving the way for privatisation. It proposed an increase in the limit on private open cast mining from 35,000 to 100,000 tonnes. Its proposal that each mining area should operate as "individual business units with financial as well as production targets" is clearly aimed at separating out the more profitable coalfields for privatisation in the future.

The NCB and other nationalised industries, behave like other capitalist companies precisely because nationalisation was carried out as a measure to stabilise and maintain capitalism and not as a means of destroying it. During the Second World War increasingly broad sections of capitalists and capitalist politicians became resigned to the prospect of nationalising the coal industry. They did so partly because they feared the militancy and organisation of the working class. But more importantly they did so because the individual private coal owners had proved incapable of generating sufficient profit for themselves from the mines to maintain necessary investment and because private industry as a whole required a coal industry and was prepared to take responsibility for investing in it through the state.

Coal nationalisation meant the passage of ownership from one section of private capitalists into the hands of the capitalist class as a whole, represented by the state. Nationalisation of the mines was recommended in the Reid Report for the Ministry of Fuel and Power in late 1944. Liberals as well as Labour politicians embraced its argument. *The Economist* - always a fiery advocate of private enterprise - declared: "If it can be proved that some form of public ownership is technically necessary for efficient production, then the opposition to it in this pragmatic land, will melt away. And the proof is now very nearly complete. It might conceivably be pos-



The National Coal Board, 1946, in session at Whitehall. Third from left, Ebby Edwards; Sixth from left, Sir Walter Citrine.

sible, though only with great difficulty, to bring about the necessary amalgamations by private negotiation; but the provision of the additional capital is a task for the state alone." (7th April 1945)

The coal owners were content to drop their resistance to nationalisation in exchange for guarantees of substantial compensation. They were paid £164,660,000 in government stock in the form of annuities to the old owners which will be paid up to the year 2,000. £78,457,000 was also handed over to various owners of royalties. The capitalist state paid handsomely for holdings that the coal owners could not make sufficient profit from. Prior to compensation the owners artificially inflated the value of their holdings. From its birth the NCB was saddled with paying back this compensation debt. The sweat and toil of the miners would continue to profit the old owners even though the mines were nationalised.

The National Coal Board was established to run as a capitalist concern. Its creation strengthened the private sector by relieving it of responsibility for an industry which required a vast new investment programme. The first Chairman of the Board was to be Lord Hyndley who had himself been managing director of Powell-Duffyn, one of the largest of the colliery companies. Three ex-mineowners sat on the first board of nine members.

## Bureaucrats on the Board

Trade Union leaders were also lured onto the Board. Lord Citrine - twenty years secretary of the TUC - was given responsibility for Manpower and Welfare and Ebby Edwards - first secretary of the NUM - took responsibility for Labour Relations. The Trade Union leaders were to be used to sell the NCB's policies to the miners whenever the old coal owners or civil servants failed to do so.

While the compensation and management showed the capitalist intent of the nationalisation, the NUM co-operated wholeheartedly with the NCB as if it was now being administered by and for the workers. The NUM executive, at the request of the Labour Government, instructed Edwards to join the board. It also decided to assist the NCB "by releasing those of their officials whom the Board wished to appoint as Divisional Labour Directors." (NCB report 1946). These new recruits proved invaluable to the bosses in selling speed-ups and six day working to the miners in the late 40s.

The NUM leaders collaborated with the employers in running the NCB as if nationalisation meant the end of a conflict of interest between miners and the state's appointed managers. Many of the leaders were bought off directly into management.

Those who remained in their union positions bargained away miners' jobs and hard won gains in the name of administering the NCB in the interests of "the nation". Arthur Horner, NUM leader, for example, agreed to voluntary six day working after a request from Labour Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin to increase coal production so as Britain could do better in foreign policy. The result was that many miners became dependent on overtime and Saturday working, undermining the NUM's own bargaining position. Nationalisation served to disarm miners from fighting to defend and extend their interests.

Throughout the 50s and 60s Tory and Labour

Governments alike pushed up productivity and cut the workforce. Output per manshift increased from 22 cwt in 1947, to 25cwt in 1957 and to 39cwt in 1967. The pace of colliery closures was quickened considerably during the 1960s. Labour managed to close a colliery a week between 1964 and 1968, with the co-operation of the NUM leadership.

After the miners' victories of 1972 and 1974 Labour set out to undercut the value of the national pay claim by instituting productivity dealing in order to divide pit against pit and area against area. Once again the right wing leaders of the NUM backed the plan to the hilt - against the express wishes of a majority of miners.

## Serving private profit

The nationalisation of the coal industry did not put an end to the exploitation of the miners. At every turn the nationalisation serves private profit. Compensation enabled the old owners to set up in business elsewhere. The NCB provides lucrative markets for supply firms and coal that no individual capitalist had the means to produce. 155 private collieries, producing 1.5 million tonnes a year, work under license from the NCB which provides them with technical help, insurance cover and a rescue service.

Most glaringly every year the NCB's interest payments on its accumulated debt becomes larger and larger. In 1979/80 the NCB officially paid out £184.7 million in interest compared with its government deficit grant of £159.3 million. In 1981/2 its interest payments amounted to £366 million compared with a government grant of £374 million.

The nationalised mines make sure that the profits

"Hand-getting" coal at Bates Colliery, Northumberland.



of the banks and finance houses boom. The miners are exploited for the profit of private business through the medium of the NCB. The labour of the miners, like the labour of every worker, creates the profits of the ruling class.

The new generation of pit militants, born of the struggles of the late 60s and early 70s, have less evident illusions in the NCB than the NUM leaders of the immediate post war period. They seem less blighted by the view that the Government, the NCB and the union have a shared "common interest" that can be harmoniously harnessed. This is most sharply true in the face of the present Tory government.

However, if we look at the NUM leadership's response to MacGregor's plans it becomes clear that they have not broken with many of the crucial assumptions that crippled the NUM in the past. Arthur Scargill had pointed both to controls on the importation of coal and to a campaign against nuclear power as the means of preserving miners' jobs in a "British Coal Industry".

Both of these campaigns distract miners away from the real enemy they face and the only means of saving their jobs. It is not foreign miners - be they American, Polish or Australian - who are the enemies of miners employed by the NCB.

## International solidarity

As the French workers present fight against closures shows the crisis ridden capitalist system is everywhere trying to solve its problems on the back of the workers. What we need is maximum international solidarity to prevent the bosses playing off

different national groups of workers against each other under the flag of their various "national interests". In campaigning for British bosses to ban coal imports is to tread the path of collaboration to defend nationalised British coal that Horner and Gormley trod before with such tragic results for the miners.

Similarly with Scargill's campaign for a coal industry against a nuclear power industry. It is perfectly true that Labour and Tory energy policy has been shaped so as to deliberately undermine the bargaining position of the NUM and other trade unions. The NUM's *Coal not Dole* quotes a leaked cabinet minute of 23rd October 1979 that makes this abundantly clear: "A nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity from disruption by industrial action of coalminers and transport workers." But what is needed is maximum unity of all workers against the bosses and the government not a campaign for one national industry against the workers of another.

There is an alternative way of fighting to defend miners' jobs against the NCB and Thatcher alongside all workers. First, we must recognise that such state corporations as the NCB or BSC are capitalist. They do not represent "the Nation". Indeed any supposed "national interest" linking Britain's bosses and Britain's workers has always proved a fiction aimed at perpetuating the exploitation and oppression of the working class. The history of the NCB gives ample evidence of that.

The support the miners have secured from dockers and transport workers overseas demonstrates the real allies that must be sought. We must build active links with the miners and steelworkers of France at this present time. That is why the economic nationalism of campaigns for import controls is disastrous in that it makes this unity impossible.

The NCB management represents a capitalist boss, it is the representative of the capitalist class as a whole. We can take no responsibility for it, we oppose the participation of token trade union bureaucrats on its boards and panels. As long as the NCB is engaged in a capitalist economy it is a fiction to be that miners and workers could administer it in their own interests. Only the complete overthrow of capitalism would make this possible.

On the other hand we must fight to impose workers control in the NCB. By this we do not mean participation schemes, token representation or "democracy" schemes dreamt up by academics and bureaucrats. The NUM must organise itself in every pit, area and nationally to control the speed of work and the conditions of work - the NUM must organise to impose its own veto on management's prerogatives against MacGregor's attempted clamp-down. This means opening management's books and meetings to inspection by the workers. This is the road to asserting the interests of the workers against the interests of the bosses.

### Need for coal

The crumbling inner cities, inadequate hospitals, acute housing shortage and the existence of an army of unemployed show there is ample need for coal, steel and a multitude of other products to improve the living standards of working people. The capitalist system stands condemned because it cannot meet essential needs. It cannot put the unemployed to work because it cannot make a profit out of doing so. **Miners' jobs must be safeguarded and extended as part of a struggle for a massive programme of public works - houses, schools, nurseries and hospitals - under trade union control.** Such a plan of public works must be fought for in association with a fight for the nationalisation of the banks and finance houses - under workers' control to prevent the managers and bankers continuing and intensifying their sabotage.

The Tories are planning to privatise the plum profitable mines. If MacGregor wins then Belvoir, for example, is likely to open as a private pit. The entire labour movement must resist this not because nationalisation is somehow "socialist" but as a means of forcing the entire capitalist class to take responsibility for maintaining the jobs of all miners.

Thatcher and MacGregor bemoan the subsidy to the NCB. We say the NCB should immediately halt all interest payments subsidising the banks. **The dumb leaders of the Labour Party should declare openly now that they will cancel the NCB's debts and nationalise the banks with no compensation.** That will open the way to a coal industry that meets human need.

Over seventy years ago in 1912 the Reform Committee of the South Wales Miners in *The Miners' Next Step* predicted with painful accuracy what capitalist nationalisation would bring miners. Nationalisation, they said: "...simply makes a national trust, with all the force of government behind it, whose one concern will be, to see that the industry is run in such a way as to pay the interest on the bonds, with which the coalowners are paid out and to extract as much more profit as possible, in order to relieve the taxation of other landlords and capitalists."

Today, the miners are on strike against the latest consequences of nationalisation. But the miners do not stand alone in their fight against redundancies and closures. Three million workers are on the dole. Millions of others live in daily fear of the sack. In the face of this capitalist crisis the fight for a new form of nationalisation - nationalisation with no compensation and under workers control - opens the way for the working class to take state power out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and to expropriate the whole capitalist class. That is the alternative to the capitalist nationalisations that have been paid for with the jobs of miners, steelworkers, railwayworkers and Leyland workers.

by Dave Hughes

# RANK AND FILE CONTROL - The key to victory



Miners picket of Eggborough power station.

Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

LAST WEEK Ray Chadburn, the right wing Nottingham NUM leader, turned militant. There he was, on the television having been jostled by militant miners after the National Executive meeting, calling on Notts miners to strike. He pleaded with them not to be so parochial, and told them "to get off their knees". This is the same scheming right-winger who spent the previous four weeks sabotaging efforts to bring out the Nottingham coal field.

There is an important lesson to be learnt from Chadburn's turn-around. He has not really changed his spots at all. He was nowhere to be seen on Saturday April 14th when Notts strikers joined thousands of other miners in a magnificent march and rally in Nottingham. He is still part of the right-wing bloc on the NUM Executive and, even if he does speak out in support of a strike, he will be spearheading a drive to compromise with MacGregor from the outset.

It was the enormous pressure of rank and file miners that has forced Chadburn to give verbal support to the strike. This pressure, symbolised by the huge lobby of the Executive in Sheffield and the 1000 strong mass picket at Cresswell and Babbington collieries in the earlier part of the week, has split the right-wing. Chadburn and Sid Vincent of Lancashire are faced with sizeable minorities of strikers in their own areas, and flying pickets from outside. They cannot afford to turn around and attack the strike nor are they prepared to wholeheartedly support a strike and campaign for it in their own areas.

### Right wing set-backs

In an important sense, they have been temporarily immobilised. This leaves only the rump of Gormley's old gang on the Executive, Roy Ottey, Trevor Bell, Ken Toon of South Derbyshire, and Jack Jones of Leicestershire, holding out against the strike. The right wing have suffered set-backs because of the militancy and determination of rank and file miners.

Of course, Scargill and Heathfield have boxed clever on the Executive. But they would not have successfully out-manoeuvred the right during this campaign for an anti-strike ballot, had it not been for the fact that thousands of miners had invaded the right's own areas to spread the strike.

The mobilisation of the rank and file has been decisive throughout the strike. The spreading of the strike to most of the coalfield was achieved by pickets. The solidarity that has been won from transport, rail and steelworkers, has been the result of picketing and delegations of miners who have addressed meetings up and down the country. In the course of this mobilisation the rank and file have shown initiative, energy and ingenuity in building the strike.

In the early days of the strike the momentum for picketing came from mass meetings at pits in Yorkshire and South Wales. At the Armthorpe pit, near Doncaster, a mass meeting of 1,000 miners kick started the picketing in Nottinghamshire. At Nantgarw in South Wales a mass meeting voted initially against a strike. Militants put on a picket line to carry on the arguments. By the following Wednesday a second mass meeting voted overwhelmingly to strike. Within days Nantgarw miners who

had originally voted against action were on flying picket duty in the Midlands. The same pattern was repeated in many South Wales pits.

*The mass meeting and picket line combined were the essence of workers' democracy. Particularly at the start of the strike they helped mobilise miners and win over waverers.*

The flying pickets are another vital weapon for the rank and file. They can bring out waverers, stop the movement of coal and help the militant minority in the non-striking areas. The Nottingham miners who have struck have been helped and encouraged by pickets from Yorkshire, Wales and Kent.

The flying pickets are also a means of beginning the fight to oust the right-wing leaders like Chadburn and Jones. The pickets refused to respect Chadburn's bureaucratic pact during the run-up to the ballot. They interfered in other regions' affairs and got results. The line Chadburn is now taking is eloquent proof of this.

### Ready to take over

As the strike develops the rank and file activity must be maintained and increased. There is always the danger that, if rank and file pressure is lessened, the officials will take over the running of the strike. To many miners this will not seem a problem. After all, their leaders are men like Scargill, Collins, Heathfield, McGahey and Williams - all left wingers and all clear enemies of MacGregor, Thatcher and even Ottey.

Despite this rank and file miners must develop self-reliance. The left-wingers have, in the course of the strike, hesitated and fudged. It was only at the Nottingham rally that Scargill made clear that he was in favour of a national strike. Prior to that the left sanctioned the rolling strike but made a deal with Chadburn and co. that let them off the hook. Jack Taylor, in Yorkshire, toeing this line, originally appealed to Yorkshire pickets to stay out of Nottingham saying "Let them make their own arrangements."

Of course Scargill and Taylor want to defeat MacGregor. The point is that the pressure they are under as officials makes them fearful of mass rank and file action. The reason for this is simple. Such action - and the new decision-making processes it opens up such as mass meetings - breaks with the bureaucratic custom and practice of the NUM which enshrines the control of the officials over the rank and file. They see this as a threat to their positions.

In fact, if they are serious about turning the NUM into a fighting, class struggle union, they have nothing to fear. They should do everything they can to help build on the initiatives taken by the rank and file. Mass meetings open to proper debate, prepared for by pit bulletins, a regular *Miner* open to rank and file debate on tactics of the strike, are the most democratic and efficient means of taking decisions.

There was a crying need for such mass meetings in Nottingham, for example. In them a spirit of solidarity could have been achieved and the torrent of anti-strike propaganda from the press countered.

The truth is that even if Scargill and Heathfield can be won to a perspective of rank and file control of the strike and the union, they cannot be relied upon to initiate it. This task has fallen to the militants who are active on the picket lines.

The militants must organise themselves into a rank and file movement. This must set itself two goals. First it must make sure that the strike is controlled by the rank and file. In every pit a strike committee must be elected from pit-head mass meetings. Tens of thousands of young miners have come to the fore on the picket lines. They must be drawn directly into the running of the strike. The lodges and branch committees should either be expanded and open to these miners, or new strike committees must be set up.

The pickets will need to be maintained over the whole strike at depots, power stations, docks and so on. More miners must therefore become active in the strike. Regular mass meetings to discuss and decide on the course of the strike, can begin to draw presently less active miners into the struggle. The wives organisations that have been built must be drawn into the running of the strike as well. The officials must be bound by the decision of these meetings. Negotiations on the strike need to involve not only the officials but also the strikers. An area strike committee made up of a majority of rank and file delegates from the areas, and the officials must be built.

A rank and file movement built in the strike, must press on after the strike to transform the NUM. It would have to stay linked together by national and local conferences and producing its own paper and bulletins, a rank and file movement would organise to hold the left leaders to their fighting talk and replace them with authentic representatives of the rank and file whenever they wavered or betrayed. It would fight to transform the union so that every leader was regularly up for re-election, was accountable to a lay delegate annual conference and was paid no more than the average wage of a working miner.

At a pit level a rank and file movement would find new ways of involving all members. It would fight for regular work-time pithead meetings to become the basic democratic decision making bodies of the NUM. These would supersede the national ballot and be a thousand times more democratic than it. The Sunday Lodge meetings, which suffer from low turn-outs, are no replacement for pithead meetings. The system of "delegates" for each pit is no substitute for an equivalent of workplace based shop stewards. Each workteam or section should have a representative. Each pit should have a committee of these delegates with full negotiating powers.

In each region these committees should be linked up as regional bodies. Their action should be made automatically official by the Executive. The national and regional NUM papers must be overhauled and turned into campaigning papers, democratically run and open to contributions from all miners. Every pit committee would need to supplement these papers with regular pit bulletins.

### Transform the NUM

The aim of militant miners must be to use the strike to build such an organisation and transform the NUM into a real class-struggle union. Rank and file miners and leaders who are real fighters for and with the rank and file have nothing to fear from such changes. Workers' democracy of the sort we argue for will strengthen the union, not weaken it. If Scargill and the left are not to become lifelong prisoners of their positions they should lend their weight to the building of such a movement.

Their record to date suggests they will not, but should they do so we should welcome them without sacrificing our independence to them and their positions. Our motto must be with the leaders when possible, against them and replace them when necessary, watch them always.

by Mark Hoskisson

ASLEF drivers respect NUM picket of Aberthaw power station



Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

# MILITANT- Labour's tame 'Marxists'

THE CAPITALIST PRESS are fond of describing the Militant Tendency as "Trotskyist Revolutionaries". For their part Militant proudly declare themselves to be the Marxist wing of the "Labour Movement" (by which they mean the Labour Party). A close examination of the politics of Militant shows that neither of these assessments are accurate. Militant have long since abandoned the revolutionary essence of Trotskyism. Their "Marxism" is in fact a series of dead schemas bearing little or no relation to the class struggle.

Militant originates out of the break up of the Revolutionary Communist Party, British Section of the Fourth International, in the late 1940s. It traces its tradition back to the Workers' International League, the largest component of the RCP. (For a full account of the history of the RCP see Workers Power No.40). After the break-up of the RCP Ted Grant, the leader of Militant, joined the Labour Party in the early 1950s. There, with the help of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International (then led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel) he built a following and developed the perspective of long term, indeed strategic, entry into the mass reformist political organisations of the working class.

A document, written in March 1959, *Problems of Entrism*, expressed the rationale for the perspective of strategic entry.

"All history demonstrates that, at the first stages of revolutionary upsurge, the masses turn to the mass organisations to try and find a solution for their problems, especially the young generation, entering politics for the first time." (p.11-12).

The job of "Trotskyists" was to be in there when the masses joined up. According to this schema, which was taken lock stock and barrel from Michel Pablo, an inevitable stage in the building of a revolutionary party involved the emergence of revolutionary currents within reformist organisations. Thus Militant wrote in their *Programme of the International* (1950):

"On the basis of events, mass revolutionary currents will be formed, in the countries of the west, where Stalinism is the main current, in the communist parties, and where the reformists are a mass tendency, within the Social Democratic Parties." (p.11)

Militant have remained hooked on this perspective since then. Everybody not "in" the Labour Party is in their view outside of the movement.

## Massive Struggles

Militant's perspective of a mass marxist wing inevitably emerging from reformism is fundamentally wrong. Of course it is possible that this may happen. There is no reason however to suppose that it is an inevitable stage in the development of a mass revolutionary party or that as a consequence the major focus for revolutionaries is always the reformist party. A dynamic period of class struggle could well lead to the rallying of large numbers of workers to an independent revolutionary banner without their passing through such a party. At each stage marxists will need to estimate the balance of forces and develop tactics suitable to the conditions, including entry if that is necessary.

Only a grouping as completely besotted with the total entry tactic as the Militant would have sacrificed the opportunities that presented themselves for building a revolutionary tendency outside the Labour Party in the late 1960s. Militant's schemas were proved bankrupt in the real world as whole layers of radicalised youth and workers turned not to the Labour Party but to groups which openly claimed to be revolutionary.

Disgusted with the craven support that Labour gave to the US intervention in Vietnam, thousands of youth turned away from the Labour Party - the LPYS became a withered rump. Centrist organisations such as the International Socialists (now SWP) and International Marxist Group (now Socialist League) which rejected all work in the Labour Party grew apace, while Militant stagnated.

Again in the early 70s in Britain the main focus for revolutionaries was not, and should not have been work in the Labour Party. The mass struggles against the Heath Government, the miners' strikes, the massive struggles against the Industrial Relations Act led to no mass influx into the Labour Party, which continued its inexorable decline in membership. Militant's schema that workers would automatically turn to the Labour Party to "find a solution for their problems" was again proved wrong.

The Organisation which grew most dramatically in this period and recruited significantly amongst layers of young workers drawn to revolutionary politics was the International Socialists, not the

Militant group. True, their centrist politics and economic view of the Party squandered these gains, but Militant's perspective made it incapable of seriously building amongst these workers in struggle.

Certainly organisations like the IS and IMG produced equally glaring if opposite errors to the Militant.

They too had been chronic opportunists in the Labour Party in the 50s and 60s. However by the late 60s they dismissed the importance of reformism in the working class and failed to carry out even fraction work in the Labour Party or its youth movement. The victory of Labour and its ability alongside the trade union bureaucracy to attack and demobilise the militant rank and file, and so pave the way for the Tory victories in the last period, threw these organisations into crisis.

Ensclosed in the Labour Party the Militant found itself best placed to gain from the Bonnite movement which developed as a result of the betrayals of Callaghan and Healy. Its growth was interpreted as evidence of the correctness of Militant's previous schema. Militant's own phase of growth and the ephemeral growth of the left in the Labour Party were interpreted as symptoms of the onward march of "marxism" in the working class. Thus the real state of the class struggle - the number of retreats and defeats suffered by the working class since the beginning of the 1980s - are nothing compared with the advance of "marxism". In 1983 they wrote: "The objective situation is moving in the direction of Marxism and the subjective situation as well." (*British Perspectives*, 1983,p.8).

## Dreams

To explain this Militant engage in a ludicrous twisting of reality in which everything - defeat or victories - serves as examples of the inevitable process of "marxism's" advance. Thus on the eve of the Tory election victory they declared: "If the Tories win, as the right wing never tires of repeating, Marxism will gain. But if Labour wins that will be even better. Marxism will gain even more." (ibid.)

Such perspectives are the stuff dreams are made of - but they are useless as a guide to intervention in the class struggle.

In real life the left in the Labour Party has been thrown into disarray. The Bennites have signed a truce with the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership. Militant have been forced to witness the expulsion of five of their leading members. All of this is interpreted as a victory for "marxism".

Militant *International Review* described the defeat of the left at the 1983 Labour conference in glowing terms. It was a "moral victory" for marxism, a "stinging rebuff" for the leadership, and the delegates who voted for the expulsions "did so more in sorrow than in anger"! Those who saw the conference as a victory for the centre-right coalition were "purblind". Militant could see beneath the surface. The apparent victory of the right was merely disguising the fact that: "In reality, Labour's old right wing is shattered...The old

Militant: Knee deep in it!

**Militant**  
**What we stand for**



Militant Editorial Board.

Labour right is finished because, in a historical sense, their role is played out."

Such a twisted view of the real world might comfort Militant's supporters. It certainly does not arm them. In the absence of an advance in the class struggle and victories by workers over Thatcher, the right in the Labour Party and in the unions will grow in strength. They have, over the last period, made advances in the Labour Party and TUC, on the backs of defeated sections of workers - the steelworkers, car workers, health workers, railway workers and printers.

In order to halt their advance we need to recognise its causes, not pretend it does not exist. By emphasising the primacy of industrial class struggle as the means of turning the tide on the Tories, we can develop a strategy to defeat the sell-out merchants. In contrast the Labour cretins of Militant see the class struggle only through the eyes of the Labour Party and only then through the eyes of those blinded by the perspective of an ever onward march of "marxism".

Observers of Militant - and some of its supporters too - confuse Militant's work in the Labour Party with Trotsky's "entry tactic" of the 1930s. This is a big mistake. When Trotsky advocated that the French Trotskyists join the SFIO (the French Socialist Party) in 1934 he did so under very definite conditions. The Socialist Party was in considerable ferment following the victory of fascism in Germany. The socialist youth were in conflict with the reformist leaders and were moving daily leftwards. A clear left wing had developed around Marceau Pivert. If the Trotskyists had not entered the SFIO a unique opportunity to intersect with a real and growing left wing would have been missed.

Even so Trotsky was clear that such a fight to win over a section of a reformist party to revolutionary communism would of necessity be short. Why? Because an intransigent revolutionary struggle would necessarily bring down the entire force of the bureaucratic leadership against such a tendency. Thus Trotsky concluded: "Entry into a reformist centrist party in itself does not include a long perspective. It is only a stage which, under certain conditions, can be limited to an episode." (*Lessons of the SFIO Entry*).

## Tolerated

He also recognised the danger of turning a tactic into a strategy and conceding politically to reformism. It was necessary to defend oneself: "not by making concessions, adapting or playing hide and seek, but by a revolutionary offensive.." (ibid.)

Militant follows no such path. It is tolerated in the Labour Party precisely because it abandons a revolutionary strategy inside the Labour Party.

In order to remain long term in the reformist party, Militant has adapted to a reformist view of the struggle for socialism.

Militant's strategy is based on the idea of capturing the Labour Party for the left and carrying it to power on "socialist policies." These socialist policies boil down to a simple demand, for which the Militant are well known: "Militant has put forward the demand for nationalisation of the two hundred monopolies including the banks and insurance companies, with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need." (*Militant, What we stand for*, p.23)

This socialist transformation will be carried out through Parliament: "These measures would be carried through in Parliament by means of an Enabling Bill. The Tories have set a precedent for such enabling legislation when they rushed through entry into the Common Market." (ibid.)

## Parliament

This notion of the "socialist transformation" reveals the full and corrosive effects of Militant's many years of cohabitation (mainly peaceful) with Labourite reformists. It reduces the socialist revolution to a Parliamentary exercise.

For communists the socialist revolution will have to break the economic and political power of the capitalists. It will have to smash their state machine. To do this the working class needs an alternative power. The idea that this power can be a left Labour Government using Parliamentary means is a dangerous illusion. Parliament is a debating chamber for the bourgeoisie, not a centre of power. The real centres of bourgeois economic and political power remain the City of London, Whitehall, the Judiciary, the Police and the headquarters of the Chiefs of Staff - the Army. The ludicrous analogy of the Tories rushing through a Bill to join the EEC with a Militant dominated government expropriating the economic power basis of the bourgeoisie show just what parliamentary cretins the Militant really are.

Revolutionaries recognise that any such steps would immediately provoke the most massive onslaught of the bourgeoisie, and its military apparatus against any such attempts. That is why revolutionaries strive to mobilise the working class not as an adjunct of a Labour government, but as an alternative power itself. Our emphasis in developing the self organisation of the working class - workers' councils, workers' defence organisations, a mass working class women's movement, a revolutionary youth movement, is directed to this end. If a Labour Government was serious about challenging capitalism it would have to base itself on and place itself under the control of these organisations. Only if the masses make the revolution can its success be guaranteed. Yet in Militant's *What we stand For*, in its paper and perspectives, there is no mention of these types of organisation. They are not given any role in Militant's schema for the "peaceful" transition to socialism because it is a fundamentally Parliamentary one.

Militant's answer to the bourgeoisie's monopoly of armed force is the "enthusiasm" of the working class: "In reality their (the British generals') hands would be tied immediately by the enthusiasm that would be generated by a programme to establish a socialist Britain." (*What we stand For*, p.28).

Any such attempt to use the army against the working class Militant reassuringly informs us "would be paralysed by an appeal to the ordinary soldiers." (ibid.p.28).

Of course Militant outlines none of the communist tactics to defeat and break up the bourgeois army - the fight for a workers' militia, for democratic rights for soldiers, the election of officers, for soldiers' committees etc etc, because of their illusions in a Parliamentary and peaceful road to socialism. Thus Militant offers the working class the same bloody dead end that Allende led the Chilean working class into.

Youth and workers who are serious about revolution should turn their backs on Militant. Their abstract propaganda for socialism, their schemas for capturing the Labour Party and the unions, their bizarre perspectives and faith in an inevitable advance to socialism, cannot equip youth and workers in today's battles or the ones that lie ahead.

by Mark Hoskisson.

# IRISH WORKERS AND THE NORTHERN STATE

ACCORDING TO THE British media the conflict in Northern Ireland is caused by sectarian gunmen engaged in a campaign of senseless violence. Most British workers accept this version of things. More surprisingly is that *Militant*, supposedly written by revolutionaries, actually echoes this view. It talks about a "socialist" solution to the Northern Ireland conflict based on working class unity.

These are little more than radical ornaments decorating a thoroughly chauvinist and British centered position. *Militant* condemns the IRA, Sinn Fein and other nationalist opponents of British imperialism as being no better than the pro-imperialist paramilitary protestant organisations.

Because *Militant* echo the prejudices of British workers it is necessary to answer their arguments. In the first place it is necessary to dispel the myth that the struggle in Northern Ireland is merely sectarian strife caused by purely religious differences.

Of course religious differences exist and much of the conflict is expressed in religious terms. But protestants and catholics are not engaged in conflict in other parts of the world. There are special reasons, rooted in the economic fabric of Northern Ireland, that explain today's strife.

Ireland's "English problem" began in 1169 when Henry II invaded the South and East seizing Irish lands. Over the next few hundred years England's rule was extended and harshly enforced. Massacres by every monarch to put down protest were routine. The native population were Catholics. In order to stabilize English rule, however, Scottish protestants were settled as tenant farmers on the confiscated land. In the 60 years up to 1700 the 60% of the land originally owned by Catholics fell to 14%.

From early on the Protestants were privileged as a section of the population. The growth of industry in the nineteenth century in the predominantly protestant North-East only changed the form of this privilege. Protestants were given skilled jobs, hired first and fired last. This is not just a story of past history fuelling present bitterness. As the world and UK economy plunged into crisis in the 1970s and 80s it was the Catholic minority in the North who suffered most.

Although they form about a third of the North's population they are still badly underrepresented in skilled and managerial jobs and suffer higher rates of unemployment. In the late 1960s the shipyards of Belfast employed some 2,000 Catholics. In 1980 this had fallen to 400, a proportional as well as an absolute decline.

In April 1982 a leaked report to the *Irish Times* admitted that there was not one Catholic to be found amongst skilled fitters and similar trades in the Harland and Wolff shipyard. At the same time only between 4-8% of skilled workers in Shorts Aircraft Factory were Catholic. Whether it is in US multinationals (Hughes Tool Co.), native engineering (H.J.Scott) or the public sector (N.I. Electricity Service) the picture is the same. Concentrated in the unskilled, and hence the lower paid, less secure jobs, the Catholics are second class citizens. The Catholic areas of Belfast have an unemployment rate sometimes twice that of Protestant areas. In housing and benefits discrimination in favour of the Protestants is also widely exercised.

## Protestant determination

The repeated rounds of conflict in the North ever since the 1921 Partition, have been caused by the determination of the Protestant workers to uphold the sectarian six-county state that defends these privileges. It was the armed repression of the RUC police (97% Protestant) against Catholics demanding reforms in the 1960s that led to intensified Catholic resistance and the sending of British Troops in 1969 to defend the status quo. The "Loyalism" of the Protestants, then, is not particularly to Britain but to any government that will guarantee these privileges against that threat.

Even if all of this is the case surely the IRA and the UDA's bombs and bullets only help inflame the situation? Aren't they just terrorists, mindless criminals?



Protestant workers drive Catholics out of the Belfast shipyards in 1920.

The first point is that these organisations did not create the sectarian strife, they are a response to it. But even then those two groups have totally different aims.

Since the UDA was formed in 1972 its main purpose has been to use murder as an indiscriminate weapon to terrorise the whole Catholic community in the North into accepting their miserable lot. Between 1969 and the end of 1983 the UDA and UVF killed 613 people. Over the same period the British army, UDR and RUC have claimed an additional 264 lives. Yet there have only been 218 recorded deaths of IRA and INLA members. This proves beyond doubt that the vast majority of UDA killings are of Catholic workers and not members of the organised resistance groups. Only last week a loyalist bomb killed Mrs. Margaret Whyte and injured her husband. *The Guardian* accepted that "None of the family has been connected or involved with any paramilitary group or any political party."

## Republicans responding

All in all 773 Catholic civilians had been killed compared to 495 Protestants despite the fact that Protestants outnumber Catholics 2:1. By contrast the bulk of the IRA/INLA victims (c.1200) have been members or ex-members of the RUC, army or UDA. They are responding to the military harassment and brutality of the "security forces".

It needs to be remembered that the IRA hardly existed in the North when the British troops went in in 1969. They only began to really organise in 1971/2 after internment (detention without trial) was introduced and after Bloody Sunday in January 1972 when 13 unarmed civilians were murdered by British troops.

The basic truth is that the IRA are seen by the Catholic minority as "their" defence against the Protestant para-military groups and the British army. As such the IRA have gained mass support. They are recognised as a policing agency in the Catholic ghettos (preventing petty criminal acts). The political wing - Sinn Fein - is growing in strength having received over 100,000 votes in the General Election (around 30% of the Catholic vote). This mass support means they are protected and cannot be isolated and defeated. This disproves all the British propaganda claims that they are "isolated" gangsters. It also refutes the *Militant* view that they are merely "individual terrorists". They are in fact a popular army of nationalist resistance to British rule.

The heart of the Northern population is 300,000 trade unionists both Protestant and Catholic, most organised in the Northern

communities behind a non-sectarian banner. Is this the road to a socialist solution?

Recent experience does not suggest this could work. In May 1981 Derry Trades Council stood "non-sectarian" candidates in the local elections. *Militant* greeted this as a breakthrough. Yet the three candidates received votes of 75, 88 and 64. Why? Simply, because any Labour Party on the British model, based on the trade union apparatus automatically reflects all the problems we have outlined in regard to the question of "trade union unity".

Once key political questions such as Partition or repressive laws are raised, the Labour Party would either avoid comment or console the majority Protestant population in the North. We only have to remember the fate of the Northern Ireland Labour Party under Loyalist pressure to join the British Labour Party. This would be the fate of any political initiative which accepts Partition and seeks to work within its framework.

*Militant* have claimed (6.1.84) that sectarianism has not led to the defeat of any strike over the last fifteen years. They cite this in order to prove the possibility of a Labour Party. This view ignores the fact that politically the Protestant working class have moved towards the extremist Loyalists over the last fifteen years. As the economic crisis has hit at their privileges they have seen their interests lying with Paisley and Co.

Up until the 1970s Loyalists of all classes generally followed the Official Unionist Party (OUP). Recently the workers have grown more suspicious of their bourgeois leaders, fearing a "sell-out" to the Catholics. This has driven them into the camp of the arch-reactionary Ian Paisley and his Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). In 1979 Paisley and his party received 170,680 first preference votes in the Euro-elections, 40,000 more than the combined vote of his two Unionist rivals. The 1982 Assembly elections proved that Paisley has the support of most Loyalist workers. They support a party which advocates a fight to the death against any concessions to the Catholic minority. No amount of Labour Party style reformism can reverse this trend.

## No meaningful reforms

What kind of solution to the North's problems should we favour?

The basic problem is that the Northern state is incapable of granting meaningful reforms to the Catholic minority. The Protestant community, especially its workers, resist every concession. In this they are backed by Westminster and 31,000 members of the "security forces". Meaningful change cannot come until this sectarian Orange state is broken up.

In 1921 Ireland was partitioned against the will of the majority. A majority today still desire a united Ireland. The problem remains the Protestant workers who do not. At the moment they prefer direct rule, total independence or death to being united with the 26 Counties in the South. They fear not unreasonably - that in a 32 County capitalist, clerical Catholic Republic, their economic and social status would be eroded. They would then become the second-class citizens. Yet this is precisely why no "democratic" concessions or offers made to the Protestants to tempt them into a united capitalist Ireland will work. They have refused such democracy before and do so now. They prefer their privileges to this.

Two things are necessary. First, it is vital to support the struggle of the anti-unionist nationalists North and South against repression and privilege. We must refuse to make any concessions to the Protestants' backwardness. Yet at the same time a revolutionary socialist programme can split the Protestant workers from the pro-imperialists. It can drive a class wedge within the Unionist camp. Through its fierce opposition to the Irish Green bourgeoisie of the South, it can show in practice to the class conscious Protestant workers that they have nothing to fear and everything to gain from a struggle to overthrow capitalism and form a 32 county secular workers' republic.

by Keith Hassell

Irish Committee. Cannot the development of trade union unity overcome sectarianism and forge class solidarity as *Militant* argue?

Trade union unity between both communities cannot exist for any length of time because the trade unions cannot avoid politics. The problem in Ireland has been that politics means such questions as national independence, the arrival of the British troops in 1969 and their continued occupation of the North. Protestant and Catholic workers hold different attitudes which stops lasting trade union unity from developing.

This does not mean that it cannot ever begin to develop. In 1907 James Larkin had great success in organising Protestants and Catholics into the National Union of Dock Labourers. Similar unity was achieved in the strikes involving carters and coal merchant workers. But this unity occurred because Protestant privilege was not threatened by these strikes.

The strike wave of 1911-13 was very different, and revealed all the problems confronting trade unionism in the North.

The 1912 Home Rule Bill was a major issue and the Protestant workers were mobilised against it. They effectively boycotted the Belfast Trades Council. All attempts at organising unity - such as the Larne aluminium strike in 1913 when mainly Protestant workers refused to join the mainly Catholic ITGWU - floundered. It was the same in 1919 when the mainly Protestant Engineers and Boilermakers in the shipyards refused the offer of sympathetic action from the ITGWU.

Since the World War of 1939-45 this split within the unions has been damaging for the working class. Despite the North having one of the highest levels of organisation in the UK, in the 60s and 70s it consistently had the lowest strike figures.

## Confronting the task

The discrimination in employment and housing alone led to massive job segregation. Workplace or residential trade unionism does not overcome this problem. Neither does the fact that almost one third of the Catholic workers are in Irish trade unions, not British based ones.

The divisions within the Northern Irish working class cannot be wished away. Only a programme that confronts the task of smashing the Orange state and, by using anti-capitalist demands splits the Protestant workers from the pro-imperialist Protestant bourgeois, can begin to overcome these divisions.

*Militant* argue that the introduction of a Labour Party in Northern Ireland could begin to reverse this process and draw both

# GET THE L.P.Y.S. INTO THE CLASS STRUGGLE!

MANY SLEEPLESS NIGHTS have been suffered by Labour leaders from Ramsey McDonald to Neil Kinnock over the idea of an independent Socialist Youth Movement.

The party bureaucracy wants a youth movement but a tame one. It needs a movement that will shoulder the donkey work of elections with all the energy and idealism that young people possess. Yet it must have no control over the political decisions that affect their daily lives.

The party leaders always dream of such a movement but in reality such a movement always turns into a nightmare. Consider the very position of youth in society - prisoners of the family home, getting the lowest wages and the loudest jobs; periodically lined up as cannon fodder in imperialist wars. All this propels militant youth into a struggle for their rights and livelihood.

Every attempt by the Labour Party to set up a tame youth movement has ended in disaster. Each time the youth have embraced the methods of class struggle instead of the passivity ordered by the Labour leaders. Each time revolutionary answers to the problems young workers face prevailed against reformist answers. Every organisation that the leaders have set up has been closed down because it became a focus for resistance against their betrayals - every one, that is, except today's LPYS.

**Under the dead hand of its so-called "marxist" Militant leadership, the LPYS is the nearest thing the Labour Party has ever had to a tame youth organisation.**

Militant undisputedly control the LPYS. Its supporters have a massive majority at national and regional conferences and, therefore, a monopoly on the National Committee.

Militant claims to be marxist and sometimes even "revolutionary" yet the YS maintain a shoddy peace pact with the Labour Party leaders. Within its ranks a stifling bureaucratic routine is the norm.

Working class youth have difficulty finding out where YS meetings are held. Once there they are treated to an unending diet of abstract socialist phraseology churned out, robot-style by trained "orators."

The main activity they're involved in is "building the YS". This boils down to door-to-door paper-selling, election canvassing and leafleting. All this is carried out with the aim of getting more unsuspecting youth to come and hear more Sunday school speeches.

Meetings are dominated by 'young' socialists pushing 25. The real cultural interests of young workers and school students are ignored. The membership is predominantly male. Prejudice against gays is tolerated.

## Bureaucratic routine

There is little concern for the specific struggles of black youth against racism and police harassment. The bureaucratic routine and regulations laid down by the Labour Party are stuck to more rigidly than in many constituency parties. Little wonder then that the YS remains an organisation with only three or four thousand active members.

**We must not forget that the right-wing too have contributed to its failure to grow. It is they who have dragged the name of Labour through the mud of a bosses' parliament every day. It is they who slashed the YS budget and expelled Militant supporters from the Party.**

But the state of affairs that exists in the YS today is a direct result of the politics of Militant. For all their "Marxism" and "Trotskyism", Militant can be summed up in one famous slogan - *Labour to power on a socialist programme.*

Leaving aside all the ambiguities of this slogan, you have to admit that this is a bit of a long-term prospect. Even Tony Benn - far from a revolutionary socialist - has made his peace with Kinnock until after the next election: **four years time!** What's more a Kinnock government returned on the back of a successful miners struggle would be no more socialist than the last one. And like the last one it would most likely use Benn's



popularity with the miners and other workers against them. Remember pits closed at a faster rate under Benn than under Thatcher.

Given this long term strategy it is only natural that Militant should settle down to a long boring process of routinely capturing the Labour Party bit by bit for "Socialist policies". This strategy is completely alien to the young workers' desire to change society now, to fight for socialism today.

**As a result whole movements of working class youth have passed by the YS the student movements of the early 1970s, the Asian Youth Movements, the ANL, the inner-city youth rebellions of 1981.**

The YS conference of 1984 takes place amidst great events that are drawing youth into politics around two key issues - unemployment and the threat of war. The current miners strike provides a golden opportunity to shake the dust of routine accumulated over years of defeat and retreat.

Tens of thousands of young miners are in the vanguard of the miners' fight for jobs. They are the most resolute because it is their future they are defending. Yet they are by and large denied a say in the running of the dispute. The young miners, who are the backbone of the picket line have begun to question all the ideas they had before the strike.

**A movement of young miners organised around revolutionary ways of fighting and revolutionary goals could not only be the key to winning the dispute. By taking the lead in organising support from other groups of workers, including the hundreds of thousands of teenagers on the dole, they could be the nucleus of a mass revolutionary working class youth movement.**

So too will youth who are drawn into action against the threat of a nuclear war. Until now the YS has ignored YCND and the masses of youth it can mobilise on the grounds that it is not Marxist but pacifist. This is certainly true, but the point is to change all that.

Every mass movement of working class youth there has ever been has made the struggle against militarism a priority. How else could this be since youth are periodically lined up to

slaughter each other to protect the interests of the bosses class.

But the record of the YS on this is abysmal. We live in an imperialist country. Every day the people of the countries Britain exploits and oppresses are portrayed as insane murderers by the media - 'the Argies', the IRA, the PLO etc.

**To cut against the pacifism of many of the youth who are attracted to the fight against the nuclear threat to their future it is necessary to win them over to the side of the oppressed.** Without giving an inch to the wrong ideas under which many national liberation movements fight we must organise youth to actively and unconditionally support their military struggles against "our own" country.

This is something the Militant and the YS have always refused to do. They argued for a 'socialist war' against Argentina. They condemn the heroic fight of the IRA as simply religious bigotry. They refuse to defend the Soviet Union in the context of the new Cold War, and of course, they refuse to intervene in Youth CND.

The YS conference this year can go two ways. It can either become a sterile rally for cheering on the NUM leadership; or it can hammer out a strategy for winning the dispute with the young miners in the militant vanguard of the rank and file.

The YS can either let loose more platform rhetoric about the fight against imperialist war; or it can actively involve itself with the YCND.

If these perspectives are adopted then it is also necessary to open the eyes of working class youth to the inevitable consequences. Like our forerunners, such a fighting perspective will draw upon us the wrath and venom of Kinnock and Hattersley. This is because it will involve a break with their rotten politics. As they control the bureaucratic apparatus of the Labour Party it may well mean a break with the Labour Party.

**The Militant would never consider this and as a result they help defeat the struggle of youth in advance. Workers Power puts the fight of working class youth today above this organisational conservatism and commits itself to the building of an independent revolutionary youth movement!**

## WORKERS IN ACTION



## Wives build the strike



Hatfield miners' wives show their support

**MILITANT WOMEN FROM** the striking coalfields have defied media attempts to whip-up an anti-strike movement amongst miners' wives. Women members of the NUM have joined with the wives and girlfriends of striking miners to form active support groups.

In Mansfield last week women from Kent, Yorkshire, South Wales and Scotland marched in support of the strike, putting their arguments across to local miners and their wives. Women from Kent organised the demonstration and led the march, carrying their Lodge banners. The numbers grew as they passed through town, joined by striking Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire miners.

The women have organised food and welfare facilities for strikes as well as child-care so that they themselves are able to take part in meetings, pickets and demonstrations. The Nottingham miners' demonstration had noisy contingents of women and when Scargill welcomed them during his speech there was loud cheering and applause from the miners.

Women have also been taking the arguments for strike and solidarity action to union and public meetings all over the country. The women from Hatfield Main got a tremendous reception when they spoke to a meeting of 200 people in Leicester, organised by the local support committee. Miners from South Wales who were there were impressed by the powerful way the women put across their message. One young miner said: "If that was my wife speaking here like that, I'd be really proud of her." They said they would go back and support their wives becoming involved in similar activity.

The women involved in these groups are vital for building support. But they must also make use of this period of activity and struggle to take up their own particular demands. Many of the miners' wives are workers in hospitals and schools, with their own pay claims and bat-

ties against cuts and closures.

*By raising these questions now, in their workplaces and unions, they can build links with other women workers.*

Many miners' wives are unemployed; they too are affected by closures, cuts in nursery provision, old peoples' homes and hospital facilities. The women's support groups can become centres for raising all these issues, drawing in other women from the unions, tenants groups and claimants associations. *They must become the basis for building an organisation which will be able to fight for women's demands on a whole range of issues.*

In the next few weeks there will be more pressure on other workers to strike with the miners and take solidarity action. Because the governments and media are so opposed to any such working class unity, they will try and set other workers against the miners. Women will play an essential role in countering their reactionary lies. Women must take the real arguments out to women workers in factories, hospitals and schools, to the wives of transport workers and steel workers and all those women and men who will directly or indirectly be involved.

In 1980 women steel workers in Stockbridge organised a "women's battalion" with posters and badges proclaiming "Steel Women's Power". They must be contacted by miners' wives now and brought back into action around this strike to help win over the steel workers.

Women workers are facing enormous attacks on their jobs, wages, conditions and services. If the government defeats the miners, women will be less able to resist these attacks. So all working class women have an interest in supporting the miners, struggling for their own demands at the same time. A mass movement of working class women will be a powerful weapon to stop the attacks and fight for women's needs and working class unity.

Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

## LEYLAND FIGHTBACK

AS THE MINERS fight closures and MacGregor's speed up regime British Leyland workers have also fought back against plans to cut the labour force and up the pace of work.

In Rover Tyseley workers have blocked a plan to create a surplus pool of labour and cut the number of workers employed on the gear box programme. A mass meeting rejected management plans out of hand and forced them to climb down.

On the Metro trim line in the Longbridge plant management also tried to cut the labour force without cutting the work programme. 200 workers there walked out on strike in protest. 3,000 day shift workers either struck or were laid off as Metro production ground to a halt.

As BL prepare to privatise their most profitable ventures Leyland

workers will need to organise to resist all attempts to push up the work load and increase the track speed. The management are set on pushing Rover Acclaim production to maximum speed.

In face of this attack, workers must fight to impose workers control over track speeds and work rates. Shop floor organisation will have to be strengthened immeasurably if this is to be done. And Leyland workers must link up their fight with the miners' struggle. Miners must be invited on to each section to win support. Solidarity work cannot be left to the convenors and full time officials. A fight against speed up and for the miners can turn the tide against management and re-build the fighting strength of Leyland workers.