

MINERS FIGHT BACK

MILITANCY is on the move again in the pits and the men have served notice on the management in a number of areas that they just do not intend to eat dirt anymore. But to be complacent and believe that the miners are going to have a smooth road back to the 'old days' is deadly.

One need only to look at our reports from some of the key areas to see that alongside the healthy rebirth of a fighting spirit in the union, some of the same problems that hampered the Great Strike are being repeated (see pgs. 4&5). One feature of the present period is perhaps a growing unevenness in militancy in the unions areas, even when compared with the Great Strike.

As our report from Notts shows the UDM is on the retreat but is not yet beaten. Durham is fighting but as Kent's Neil Harrop makes clear, the spirit of the rank file in the traditionally militant Kent coalfield for the moment lags behind other areas. In this area therefore the leadership is maintaining a more militant stance than the majority of the men. Yet in Yorkshire, as Alan Bailey tells us, it is lagging way behind the pugnacious attitude of ordinary miners.

In Scotland, the leadership are pursuing sellout policies, conniving in the murder of jobs, albeit with a heavy sigh and a shake of the head; while in Wales, despite the enthusiastic and militant response of the rank and file to the call for a limited overtime ban, the area leadership were very conservative about spreading the action and tried in essence to keep the action sealed up in South Wales.

Likewise at the head of the national union itself, many have 'insulated' themselves from the attitudes, moods and interests of the men, and in the aftermath of the defeat, figures like comrade Mick McGahey of our Communist Party have tried to win through compromise and electoral success for the 'next Labour government' so as to bring peace in the coalfields.

A crippling weakness of the Great Strike was the federalistic structure of the NUM. It can be seen all too clearly now why we argued throughout the twelve months of the dispute that rank and file miners should forge solid organisational links across area boundaries.

Alan Bailey from Armthorpe suggests that unless the Yorkshire leadership pulls its socks up and reacts more dynamically to the fighting mood of the men, the men themselves will use the official leadership as a doormat and take "action into their own hands". Frankly, we in *The Leninist* do not believe that would be such a bad thing.

Rank and File Miners' Committees established in Yorkshire could link up with the isolated militants at the moment fighting lonely battles in areas like Kent, Notts or Scotland and give a big boost to the fight to transform the mood of the men in more backward areas.

The importance and the urgency of establishing rank and file coordination can be seen if we look at the situation in Kent and Scotland in a little more detail.

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CHILE: ON THE BOIL

THE conflicting reactions to the assassination attempt on Pinochet revealed deep splits in the Chilean bourgeoisie. What worries his bourgeois opponents is not so much the arbitrary and bloody nature of fascism. No, what gives the ruling class in Chile the jitters, sets one section against another, is the sustained upsurge of mass discontent. They (including the air force and navy tops) openly express the fear that if Pinochet uses the 1980 constitution to maintain the military regime until 1989 let alone puts himself forward as the military's presidential candidate the masses will turn from protest to revolution.

It is therefore argued that bourgeois democracy must be introduced in a controlled manner, in order to dissipate the anger of the masses using a parliamentary safety valve. The United States is also fearful. It does not want to risk another Haitian or Filipino upsurge, let alone a social revolution, if it can get away with an orderly transfer of power to a safe civilian government. Because of this US ambassador, Harry Barnes, has loudly attacked actions by the military regime, arguing that "Pinochet is the Communist Party's best ally".

The higher echelons of the army and key sections of big business disagree. They reckon that if concessions are given they would only open the revolutionary floodgates: for them it is 'Pinochet or chaos'.

Nonetheless fascism is disintegrating and is in chaos. Splits in the ruling class are there for all to see, illegal mass demonstrations are now held frequently, student unrest is general and the shanty towns are in open revolt.

The 1973 fascist military coup exploded just about every Chilean political party. Only two managed to survive the storm relatively intact: the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party. The former did so to a large degree with the blessing of the fascist regime. It was allowed to maintain a radio station and a press with only occasional bannings. On the other hand the CPC relied on its deep roots in the working class. Its press came out illegally and it and its support in the trade union movement (the majority still with Christian Democratic leadership) has grown as the masses have regained their confidence.

Pinochet has played a cat and mouse game with the Christian Democrats, offering them a negotiated end to military rule if they stay clear of the communists on the one hand, only to talk about military rule remaining until 1989 each time mass protests are crushed.

Excluded from the Democratic Alliance (set up by the Christian Democrats to negotiate with Pinochet), frustrated by its cowardice, and having learnt some of the lessons of Nicaragua, the CPC established the Popular Democratic Movement with the small Revolutionary Left Movement (previously denounced by the CPC as ultra-leftist) and left sections of the shattered Socialist Party.

Against Christian Democrats' unashamedly reformist strategy the CPC has shifted to one which relies on mass strikes, establishing what amounts to no-go areas in shanty towns and guerilla attacks by the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front (formed in 1980 using CPC militants who had served with the Cuban armed forces).

Unfortunately the CPC still has illusions in the parliamentary road to socialism which ended with 30,000 working class militants butchered in September 1973. While today the CPC is using revolutionary methods to fight the regime, it still fights for an anti-Pinochet revolution to establish bourgeois democracy, not a revolutionary dictatorship dominated by the working class, which can see Chile go uninterruptedly from democratic to socialist tasks. This is a serious weakness and until it is overcome Chilean workers face the danger of yet again being led up another Popular Unity road to disaster.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Blind alley

Jack Conrad on 'tartan liquidationism' has backed his argument up an absurd alley of 'British nationality'. Let us be plain. Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England are countries. (I suppose Conrad accepts that much, but I could not be certain). There is no country called Britain, only a state which is the executive of the ruling classes of those countries. Citizens of this state are British, but their respective nationalities remain Scottish, Welsh, Irish or English, there is no British nationality.

After any future smashing of the British (capitalist) state, it is conceivable that the workers of these countries might wish to construct a British workers' state. It is also conceivable they might wish to separate and construct independent workers' state either by choice or through the effects of uneven development or differing levels of class consciousness. That much is conjecture, the existence of the respective Celtic countries and nationalities, together with the predominantly Anglo-Saxon one is a simple matter of fact which cannot be ignored or redrafted into 'British nationality'.

Fraternally
David Douglass
(Geordie)

Jack Conrad replies:

Comrade Douglass confuses the concept of nationality with the concept of nation and then confuses nationality with country. Countries are geo-political state units, often containing subjects/citizens having many different racial, religious, linguistic and national origins, beliefs, cultures and characteristics.

Nationalities are communities united by cultural identity which historically follow the blood united tribal or clan community. Nationalities existed under slave society and feudalism. But only during the development of capitalism did we see the formation of nations and then nation states.

Therefore countries predate nations; so while it is often the case that 'nationality' and 'country' are linked they are different concepts. What about the concept 'nation'? Nations are historically constituted, stable but evolving communities of people, formed on the basis of five principal common characteristics, namely: language, territory, economic life, culture and psychological make-up. A nation is therefore not the same concept as country, nationality or state.

In pre-1917 Russia there were many nationalities in one country/state. It was the October revolution which allowed the full flowering of the national cultures imprisoned in the Tsarist prison house and their coming together in the socialist country of the USSR. Even then not all nationalities have formed nations within the USSR simply for reasons of size.

How have things developed in Britain? The English, Welsh and Scots are all nationalities. This is not in question. Historically there have been nation states in England and Scotland but not Wales let alone Cornwall or the Isle of Man. But since acts of union with Wales in 1536 and Scotland in 1707 we have seen on the basis of a common territory an acceleration of the already developing common language, economic life, culture and psychological make-up.

Indeed we would contend that there exists as a result a British nation which includes within it English, Scottish, and Welsh nationalities as well as those of Norse (ie Manx and Shetlander) origin as well as more recent migrant nationalities such as those from the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent.

As to the future. Well we support

the right of the Welsh and Scottish people (that is all classes) to form their own state/independent country if they so wish (and as the Irish have for so long wished we unconditionally side with their struggle for genuine independence and unity). This applies before as well as after our socialist revolution.

Yet this does not mean, and nor should it mean, that we advocate the separation of the various national elements of Britain. The Bolsheviks fought for the right of Ukrainians, Georgians etc, to have the right to self determination but did not advocate that these people use it to form their own independent states. They fought nationalism of all sorts and called for the maximum unity against Tsarism.

We are for the fullest development of democracy under capitalism and that includes a whole range of measures to encourage the development of Scottish and Welsh culture; not least language. The suppression of their culture was an historic crime. But for us such national questions are not just an evil in themselves; they obscure the contradiction between labour and capital and set worker against worker. Respect for the right of nations to self determination seen in this light is part of the struggle to clear the path for socialist revolution.

Support for the right to self determination is therefore compulsory for communists. But so is opposition to nationalistic narrow mindedness. This is a requirement of proletarian internationalism not a blind alley. That is why we say any movement (or individual) which fails to defend the organisational unity of the workers within the same state borders has not broken its links with bourgeois nationalism.

AIDS

I have just received *The Leninist* No.37 and found it excellent. One point on the letters, though. I feel you were too dismissive of the letter from Jeff Pascoe re AIDS. Because he made the effort to write to you about your headline of a revue about AIDS, you assume that he has read all past issues of *The Leninist*. I have met Jeff on picket lines at Wapping and therefore know that it is only recently that he has taken *The Leninist*. Therefore I feel you should give a better answer, a real explanation for your headline 'Contagious Desire.'

His concern I believe is genuine and as he states, "It is important that communists speak out clearly on sexual questions. And it is important for you (*The Leninist*), since the CPSU has a backward position on gay rights". He is not trying to build a "flimsy case" against you, and of course, if he has not had past copies of the paper, he could not have read what you have written on the gay question.

Fred Mannings
Stratford

Ian Mahoney replies:

Jeff originally wrote to us suggesting that *The Leninist* was displaying homophobic and anti-gay prejudices because of the title of a review in Number 37 — *Contagious Desire*. We wrote to Jeff privately and explained why we titled the review thus: the same explanation appeared in *The Leninist* reply, but unfortunately had to be edited out due to lack of space. The contentious phrase was actually 'lifted' by our reviewer from a chapter heading of a book by well known gay activist Dennis Altman on AIDS — *AIDS and the New Puritanism*. The point that Altman was trying to make, and one which was applicable to our review, was that once sexuality is in some way linked to contagious disease, further discussion of the issues raised tends to be hysterical and bigoted.

Another point needs to be made: Jeff waded in against our "homophobia" on the basis of the title of one review. He did not even refer once to the contents of the review which explicitly rejected notions of a "gay plague" and defended gays against the bourgeois moralists' witch hunts. Jeff did not have to read any of our past published positions on the gay question, comrade Mannings: all he had to do was cast a quick glance over the review he actually held in his hand, rather than presumably dropping it in his rush to get a letter in the post to us accusing *The Leninist* of chauvinism. We wrote "flimsy case", because we meant "flimsy case"...

Thouless NCPer

I have to admit to being really offput by *The Leninist's* attacks on the New Communist Party over *Militant*. I find the emotive language very childish. I have to read a very excellent aid to clear thinking by Thouless. It is an excellent antidote to tendentious propaganda. The use of emotional words comes very high on the list of dishonest forms of argument.

Secondly (in ascending order of seriousness) — what an astonishing argument:— The NCP supports the expulsion of *Militant* — Kinnock supports the expulsion of *Militant*. Therefore the NCP is "cuddling up" to Kinnock.

You could just as well argue:— *The Leninist* opposes state sanctions in South Africa — Reagan and Thatcher oppose sanctions — therefore *The Leninist* is cuddling up to Reagan and Thatcher.

Thirdly, the tacit support *The Leninist* gives for the Trotskyism of *Militant* is profoundly disturbing. You say the world communist movement "has abandoned one fundamental position after another" to them, "world revolution, the need to smash the state, the whole notion of uninterrupted revolution". The basis for the Trotskyite opposition to the Soviet Union (and thus their splitting tactics in every progressive movement) is precisely Trotsky's opposition to the idea that socialism was possible in one state, as a step on the road to world revolution; none of the opponents of Eurocommunism have abandoned the goal of smashing the imperialist state; Monica Laws
Herts

David Sherrif replies:

1. Our NCPer might find "emotive" language "childish". She would in that case find a lot of "childishness" in Lenin's *Collected Works*.

2. The NCP wants to affiliate to the Labour Party on principle. So given its sectarian position on *Militant* it is "cuddling up" to Kinnock. This is not conjecture but fact. We do call for state sanctions — but imposed and policed by working class power.

3. The CCG — with which the NCP seeks "communist unity" is undoubtedly opposed to Eurocommunism and it does so by standing on the 1978 *British Road* which the NCP split from the CPGB over. The *British Road* is reformist not revolutionary.

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed names and addresses, and certain details.

WRITE TO:
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Mike Hicks and Bill Freeman. No porridge for Mike.

of 'legal Marxism' within their Party. Under opportunist leadership the official CPT tried to lash together an unprincipled alliance between themselves and two bourgeois workers' parties, the Turkish Workers' Party and the Turkish Socialist Workers' Party, with a view to forming a legal 'United Workers' Party'. *Işçinin Sesi* correctly warned that this would mean the liquidation of the Party. In response they put forward a genuine revolutionary position: In a period when legal opportunities were being wiped out "what must be done is not to foster legalism but on the contrary to show its ineffectiveness and make illegal organisation the focus of our tactics." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Turkey Today* July/August 1980)

Now hold on, you may say, Russia in 1917 and Turkey in 1980 are entirely different to placid Britain. What we are talking of here, however, is a case of revolutionary principle, not national tactics. In Britain in the past, communists have stood against British 'law and order' whenever and wherever it conflicted with the interests of our class — which was often. Before the formation of our CPGB, one of its predecessors, the Socialist Labour Party, printed Connolly's Irish Workers' Republic on their press in Glasgow illegally after its presses in Ireland were closed. Arthur McManus, first chair of the CPGB, smuggled the illegal papers over the water personally. Later the CPGB was to make similar runs with arms and explosives for the IRA.

As a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, comrade Tom Bell had to take a fairly cavalier attitude to immigration laws so as to make the trips to Moscow and back that his position demanded. In the spirit of fair play and even-handedness for which it is renowned, the British state had denied Tom and other comrades passports.

National Organiser of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and communist, Wal Hannington, must have lost count of the number of times he was lifted for his NUWM activities. Contemporary photos frequently show Wal with plaster on his face or a black eye — trophies of the many none-too-peaceful encounters he had had with the police.

The state's attacks on Britain's disreputable communists started early.

The CPGB's first paper, *The Communist*, often fell foul of the censor because of the way it pushed the frontiers of bourgeois legality. The paper that succeeded it, *Workers' Weekly*, was to cause even more of a stir. In 1924 acting editor James Campbell was arrested for printing an "Open Letter to the Fighting Forces" which appealed to soldiers to "use your arms on the side of your own class."

The most famous trial in the history of British communism was that of the twelve Party leaders arrested before the General Strike in October 1925, and charged with sedition. This time it was so important for the capitalists to have these key officers in the general staff of the proletariat safely under lock and key in preparation for the confrontation to come that they jailed them all; some for six months and some for twelve.

Even as late as the first phase of WWII the CPGB could still boast of flouting legality when it illegally published the *Daily Worker* during the period when it was correctly characterising Britain's role in the war as imperialist.

Today's communists such as Hicks and Cox are a mere mockery of the word, by comparison. They have neither the courage nor the theory to fight in the way the founders of our Party did.

This month sees the third anniversary of the US invasion of Grenada. To this day, the Grenadan soldiers and civilians killed resisting US forces have not been counted, nor their names recorded, although they are thought to number around 100. Meanwhile those US soldiers who died during the invasion have been honoured by the puppet Blaize regime, Ronald Reagan has been declared a 'national hero' of Grenada and the day of the invasion, October 25, has been made a national holiday. In this context it is impossible to believe that those who helped to make the Grenadan New Jewel Movement revolution, who resisted the invasion, will get a fair trial. So why put the NJM 18 on trial for his killing? It is a useful way to intimidate the masses, decapitate the revolutionary movement and give the invasion a veneer of a crusade for justice. Of course what the US was concerned about was reasserting its regional hegemony and fuelling its anti-Soviet war drive. Despite the shattering of the NJM, progressive forces are stirring again. NJM supporter Chester Humphrey, whose heroic hunger strike sparked a campaign to prevent him being extradited to the US, has been re-elected to the leadership of the Technical and Allied Workers' Union and in the face of 30% unemployment and deteriorating economic and social conditions in the country, other unions are now lining up against the Blaize government. In an effort to head off this pressure the government is doing its best to drag out the trial of the NJM 18 for as long as possible. Blaize is clearly out to put on a show trial and frame the NJM revolution itself. If the 18 are found guilty they face death sentences. Solidarity is being co-ordinated by The New Jewel 18 Committee. It can be contacted at: 388, Seven Sisters Road, London N4, Tel 01-802 3370.

7 Days letters page has for a change recently proved of interest; simply because comrades Sylvia Bolgar and Steve Monaghan, have given us a glimpse of the Stalin admiration society behind the publication *Straight Left*. Sylvia let her 'broad labour movement' mask slip first when she attacked Francis King's article on the 1936 Moscow trials. Telling us the obvious, she declared: "We may not be 100% sure of all the facts" — apparently this means we can't come to any conclusion about the rights and wrongs of Stalin's judicial massacre of Lenin's old comrades. Bringing up the issue now, she insisted, can only be a "diversion". Revolutionary justice demands the truth and the basis of the so-called evidence which was used to convict communists like Zinoviev, Rykov and Bukharin was demolished at the 20th and 22nd congresses. But what is this to a Straight Leftist? Steve implied that the mass executions were in some way justified because Bukharin had "harmful political positions", "headed the ultra-leftist opposition" and "supported the export of revolution in 1918". Yet, while Lenin argued that Bukharin sit on the leadership of the Party, Stalin had him arrested, falsely accused of being a fascist etc and shot. Were half of Lenin's Central Committee class enemies? Surely, if only for the sake of Sylvia and Steve, it is about time our Soviet comrades opened up all the records relating to "Stalin's abuses of power" to public scrutiny.

The CCG is well and truly in no man's land. Because its supporters are now nine-tenths outside the ranks of the CPGB it has no serious possibility of conducting a successful fight to win it. In a desperate attempt to draw others into the CCG sinking ship Ray Colvin, its National Organiser, has had a letter published by the *Morning Star* calling for "the widest possible dialogue aiming at re-establishing a united Communist Party" (September 24 1986). Yet a short while ago the same Ray Colvin wrote a curt note snubbing the leadership of the declining New Communist Party. The CCG is "unable to hold formal or informal discussions with your organisation" because "we are communists who are trying to restore the Communist Party to Marxist-Leninist principles" he informed the NCP (*CCG Campaign Newsletter* No.1). Why this prevents discussions with dead heads like the NCP — who normally fear discussion like the plague — remains a mystery.

Fighting fund

While the CCG languishes in "no-man's land", while the heads down Straight Leftists excuse their scabbing on those who called for a boycott of the Commonwealth Games, and while the Euros get according to comrade Monty Johnstone ever more "soggy" we Leninists have launched the Unemployed Workers Charter, upped our fight for workers' sanctions against apartheid, and made every effort to expose Kinnock's lies in front of advanced workers so as to convince them of the need to reforge our Communist Party of Great Britain. This work is still kept back by problems of finance. We need to invest in a whole range of equipment for our organisation, not least for The Leninist itself. Many of our readers have started to take more than copy and have been exceedingly generous and self sacrificing in terms of finance. Unfortunately many others have so far been content to send us the odd fiver and keep their copy of The Leninist to themselves. To these readers we make a fighting call: make out a monthly standing order to our paper, order extra copies and organise regular collections for The Leninist. As we go to press we have received £167 towards our £600 monthly fighting fund. So get the money, bankers order and extra orders rolling in now.

Legal Marxism

NOT SO LONG AGO the newspaper reading public was entertained by a little tale concerning our very own CPGB Euro, comrade John Cox. Comrade Cox, also Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (remember them?) vice-president, had found out that MI5 was tapping his phone. John, the CPGB Executive Committee and CND were, quite understandably, none too pleased at the third party on the line and so CND made a court case of it. They lost; an unsurprising occurrence when you take on the bourgeoisie in its own courts.

Comrade Cox was somewhat miffed at the 'chuftzpah' of Britain's official cloak and dagger men and loudly complained that "Communists have been under surveillance for some forty to fifty years without one conviction; can the same be said of MI5?" But surely this is because the Secret Service is full of pinko-commie subversives working for the Soviets — our comrades, remember John.

Commenting on this, comrade Dave Cook described the Party as a "legal democratic organisation" and furthermore that our CPGB "does not indulge in subversive activity of any kind". The bourgeoisie wipes its brow and heaves a collective sigh of relief.

Then there is the Communist Campaign Group, that gallant crowd of Darby and Joan 'Marxist-Leninists'. Oh surely here the flame of communist contempt for the strictures of bourgeois legality still burns bright. No way, Jose; and from their own lips (that is, the *Morning Star*) do they stand condemned. CCG leader Mike Hicks, and as he would have us believe, favoured by our Soviet comrades, recently came up before the beak. Like comrade Cox, Hicks has thrown up his arms in wide-eyed innocent horror upon discovering his home was bugged. On this occasion however the issue was concerned with his involvement in the Wapping dispute. Mike was denied any right to speak in court

and so read out a prepared statement to those waiting with baited breath outside. Previously he had "denied being engaged in any unlawful activity." (*Morning Star* September 12 1986), and, doubtless blushing with all due modesty, continued, "I am an elected official of my union at chapel, branch and national level. I am prominent in the Wapping dispute — with TV, press, radio and even cassette recordings to my name — everyone in the dispute knows me (a source of joy to all)... I state now in open court I have never been to a TNT depot nor shall I ever go to one. I have never attempted to, or encouraged others to, breach the laws of our land." (*Ibid*) There you have it: 'Bulldog' Hicks striking a blow for all that is right and proper in 'British justice' — a staunch defender of 'the laws of our land' indeed! In essence he is no different from comrade Cox, though at least we must credit Cox with a less inflated ego.

Hicks and the CCG claim to stand on the founding principles of our CPGB, yet their actions have little in common with those pioneering days. In Russia, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the inspiration for our Party, fought long and hard the trend resembling the CCG, the legal Marxists, who wanted to restrict the RSDLP's activity to purely legal work, in effect liquidating the party. Did the Bolsheviks ever kow-tow before the Tzar's or even Kerensky's 'justice'? Did they ever appeal to be allowed to operate as a 'legal democratic organisation'? Did they hell! And this paid dividends in the events of October 1917.

In Germany, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht along with many other of the Spartacusbund spent long terms in prison for their anti-militarist and pro-revolutionary activities. This, and the insurrection they fought for, went well beyond legality.

More recently in Turkey, prior to the September 12 fascist coup in 1980, supporters of *Işçinin Sesi*, Leninist wing of the Communist Party of Turkey, fought the poison

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In Scotland for example, the miners are actually fighting a desperate rearguard action against the management. There are only one third of the mining jobs that existed before the Great Strike. In mid-September, British Coal announced the closure of Connie pit in Fife with 480 men redundant.

The laughably named, 'Survival Plan for the two remaining pits in Ayrshire is bound to lead to job losses but the bourgeois press has smugly reported that the reaction of the Scottish miners leaders has been 'mild'.

Comrade George Bolton of our CPGB in fact puts his case in terms reminiscent of a British Coal press release:

"The coal board are trying to rationalise the industry to meet the current situation ... In the short term there are job losses, but in the long term there is a very good prospect for Bilston Glen and Monktonhall. It's a step backwards to take a step forwards."

That words like these should come from the mouth of a workers' leader is bad enough; that that workers' leader is a miners' leader is worse but what really takes the biscuit is that comrade Bolton is a Communist Party leader. Selling jobs should not be the role of members of the Executive Committee of our Party.

Other communist miners must come to the fore and use the current unfolding struggle to link Scottish militants with militants in other areas in order to coordinate action and build a new leadership.

In Kent, as Neil Harrop points out, although the men are wary of any fight at the moment, they nevertheless have a gut reaction against closing pits. In the baths, in the cage, in the welfare they might grumble about getting out of the industry, but they are hostile to any official who voices a defeatist outlook. Although they argue vociferously with militants who advocate taking action, they keep returning to these arguments as if it is really themselves that they are trying to convince.

Kent miners are in a pensive and gloomy mood. What could be crucial in jolting them out of attitudes like this is having direct link-ups with the miners taking action in other areas, action which is clearly victorious.

Alan is right when he says that any victory, no matter how small, can play an important role in building the morale of the men; but why should the impact of the 'warm glow' of such victories be confined to one or two areas?

What we have found from speaking to miners in all parts of the country is that frequently they simply do not know what is happening in their own union in other parts of the country. Neil in Kent was 100% correct to try to lift the fighting spirit of his men by pointing to action and victories in other parts of the country. But think how much more weight his argument could have been given by a report from one of those areas by an actual rank and file miner. Most of the area leaderships of the NUM with their often narrow, parochial outlook would not even countenance this — its up to the rank and file to break out.

Perhaps we in *The Leninist* are getting a certain reputation amongst some miners for being repetitive on the Plan for Coal; but we think that the point that we keep trying to hammer home about the question of profitability is too vital to simply say once and leave.

An approach which ties the livelihoods and jobs of the men in the pits to capitalist profitability is potentially fatal. Dave Douglass of Hatfield Main presents some strong and worthwhile arguments about the way miners should fight in the period of retreat, but we think it is

important to make some points about what he says.

We know only too well that the past period has been a difficult one for NUM militants, and as Dave points out the men of each pit have had to make out as best they could, without much help from either their national or area leaderships.

But we still underline this point — if miners even begin to accept the arguments about profitability and efficiency that underpin the approach of British Coal, they are playing a potentially very dangerous game. Capitalist economies are linked internationally; Britain is integrated into a world fuel market that is increasingly bear like.

For example, in the last 12 months the price of oil internationally has fallen from \$28 a barrel to \$14. Ominously for miners, the *Financial Times* of August 18 warned that this drop was "grimly reminiscent" of the upheavals in the world energy markets between 1955-1975, changes which more than cut the workforce in half.

During those two decades, pits closed at a rate of one every twelve days, and continued apace under Labour as well as Tory governments. The actual number of pits dropped from 850 down to 250 in this massacre. There are only around 125 collieries today, but not for long if the management have their way ...

So the problem facing Haslam is, "British Coal's competitiveness against other fuels, in spite of its great improvement in productivity." (*Financial Times*, August 18). When the price of oil collapsed, British Coal cut its prices to the electric industry and other major coal consumers by £400 million. There has been a small and uncertain recovery in oil prices recently, but it comes too late for British Coal to recoup its losses, in fact:

"This leaves him (ie. Haslam) no alternative to doling out more of the McGregor medicine in ever bigger dollops than would have been prescribed if oil prices had stayed firm." (*Ibid*).

Thus, while a year ago, 'safe' pits producing coal at less than £1.65 a gigajoule, the cut-off mark for profitability, will find themselves in the danger area as the level is revised down. The point we are warning against is thinking in narrow pit or area terms about profitability and productivity. Whatever its short term tactical advantages, it carries big problems.

Making a militant fightback dependent on the precarious state not only of rickety old capitalism, but also on this economy's vulnerable position in an increasingly unstable world fuel market is fraught with dangers. How can miners break out of such an approach if upsets in the world market ruin their area's profitability?

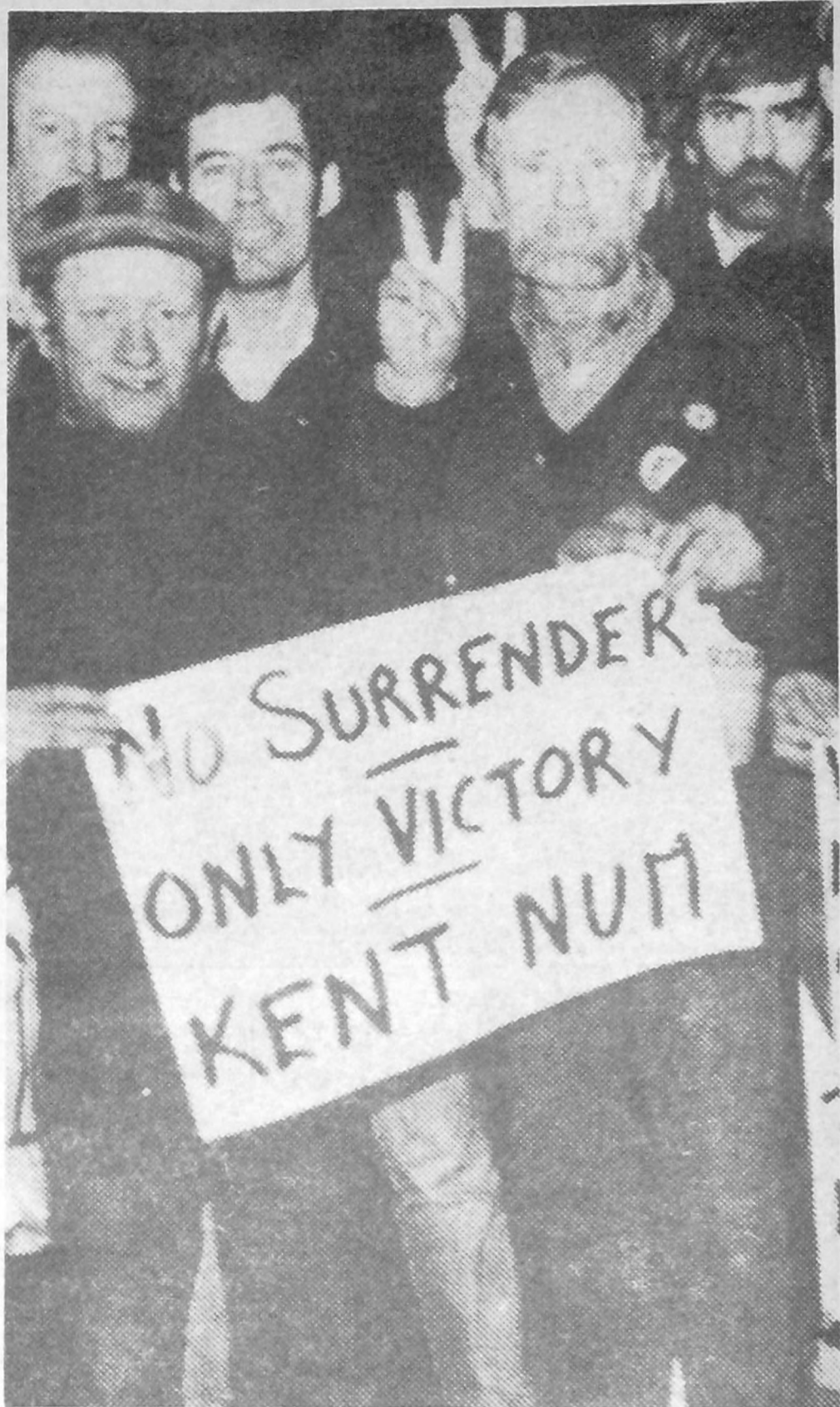
We say that a central plank for militants in the union during this period of rising combativeness is not simply to quietly bury the issue of the class collaborationist approach of the Plan For Coal, but to actively battle to break the men from its poisonous embrace. To do this requires more than the electoral Miners' Broad Left. Miners must adopt the position that they fight for what they and their families need to lead a full life, not what the system or the industry can afford to pay! Their profitability is their problem: our lives, jobs and futures are ours.

● Build rank and file Miners' Action Committees in all areas and link them up nationally.

● No to Plans for Coal, tribunals or conciliation bodies. The bosses are only prepared to 'give' what we are strong enough to take from them.

● Carefully build again towards national strike action on pay, jobs, the jailed and victimised men and solidarity with the South African miners.

Ian Mahoney



Kent miners: the most militant in the Great Strike have a gut reaction against closures

BACK AND FIGHTING

SCOTLAND

For many decades Scotland has had a communist leadership. Unfortunately this now advocates defeatism. Yet when we spoke to a leading five militant at Seafield he had good news:

George Mc Kenzie

In my pit we are actually on a 24 hour strike right now. It's our second 24 hour strike in as

many weeks. The first was about management's attitude towards the men. The miners at Seafield had two or three minor grievances, but things came to a head one day and resulted in a 24 hour strike. Now yesterday, we had lorries from the scab company Ewan Dodds in Seafield. That was enough.

One of the difficulties is that the mood in my area of Fife is not a good one amongst the men. We're living in such uncertain times within the coal industry that nobody can say we've got a guaranteed future. The high redundancy payments stop next March, so a lot of people

are of the opinion that should we be going out of the industry, it would be preferable to go out with a substantial payment as opposed to having to go out next March with nothing at all.

That, maybe, is why Comrie closure isn't being fought. The men at the moment just aren't in the mood to fight these closures in particular, as long as Tourness is there and likely to come on stream in the near future there is no way we can feel secure about our futures.

Albert Wheeler's famous words throughout the strike were "There are so many alternatives to coal in Scotland." And I think that is an idea that is always at the back of the minds of the men and which makes them less willing to fight at the present time.

In Yorkshire, for example, you have high production pits. They know that as long as they have these high production pits, they'll have a future. In Scotland, the coal has been harder to reach, therefore it costs more. So as long as British Coal keep hammering home the points about cost efficiency, as long as we are up against that type of language and as long as Tourness is there, Scottish miners will always feel threatened. When you're insecure, it is very difficult to maintain a militancy.

Having said that, the two token strikes that we have had over the last few weeks have shown that although we were beaten during the strike, and British Coal is at the moment holding all the aces, at the same time, if we're going to work, we're going to work with dignity. We will not accept just being crushed into the ground.

The leadership in Scotland are only following the mood of the men. I think the Scottish miners have still got a lot of faith in the Scottish leadership.

YORKSHIRE

Dave Douglass, the Hatfield Main delegate to the Yorkshire NUM Area Council, started by telling us about its meeting which took place on September 15. Dave underlined the key point about this meeting:

Dave Douglass

I have never known so many resolutions coming to one meeting calling for one form of industrial action or another. I think that illustrates the combativity of miners even after we suffered defeat at the end of our twelve month strike.

There were calls for action from Hatfield, Woolley, Armthorpe, Silverwood and Shafton Workshop. In fact, Shafton Workshop is an overhead installation where most men are obliged to work overtime in order to get a living wage and the fact that there is a call for an overtime ban from that quarter shows the depth of feeling amongst the men.

The area officials didn't seem to be very pleased by all these calls for action. I think they were hoping that the call would come from somewhere else apart from this area. Although the allegation that was made at the Area Council, that Yorkshire has been pushed to the foreground, is clearly wrong, because the Durham mechanics have already had a ballot and decided to implement guerilla action. In fact collieries have already struck in this guerilla action.

We needed to move towards some sort of coherent policy, which was coming from the national leadership by the way. The sort of policy that emerged was the idea that we had to struggle to make the pits profitable, because if you didn't you were on the chopping block. If you were in a vulnerable position then you had to hold back from taking action, but as soon as you got into a position of profitability you could then take action.

This was illustrated by the fact that Silverwood, which is the most profitable pit in Europe, as soon as it started to break the records, then went on strike for a week over the sacked men. Rossington colliery, as soon as it started to break national records, they went on strike over the sacked men and similarly Hatfield, which had made a consistent loss since 1962, in the first month that it achieved a profit, it had a day of action for the sacked lads.

So it's what I term a policy of 'production plus disruption'. I like to think of it as being similar to the ballot box and the bullet idea. You have to give a little of what they want, but then take it back again. I don't think there's any danger in that sense of becoming entangled in the logic of British Coal's capitalist profitability, because we're doing it on our terms. You have to be able to do it and then undo it. That's the test.

We need a victory. What British Coal has tried to do since the end of the strike is rub our noses in the dirt: well, we're not taking it anymore.



Dave Douglass: "our terms"

ARMTHORPE

When the management in the Armthorpe pit in Yorkshire tried to clamp down on what they saw as 'skiving', they adopted such a heavy-handed approach that the men began protesting. Just 73 of them went underground for one afternoon shift and 30 or 40 went home. The manager however, began sending men not directly involved in the dispute home because of the 'disruption'. Alan Bailey, an NUM official in the pit, told him exactly what he thought of that idea:

Alan Bailey

I said 'there's no chance of that — I'm going to pull the pit out'. I went to the phone and pulled out the 73 men who had gone underground. I cleared the pit top and everybody, every NUM member came out to a man. The other two shifts also came out when I saw them.

Once it had been established that the branch were behind what I had done, we decided that in future, if the manager did anything like this, we would allow him to send men home, then contact the area and fight it as a lockout. And the manager's been told that if he wants to pick and choose whose going to work and who's not, he'll be picking from amongst his own men, because there'll be no NUM men there.

In the Doncaster area, we didn't even have 1% scabbing at the end of the strike; we were 99.25% solid. When the rest of the pits in the country went back, we stopped out another week for the sacked miners. We had a hard struggle getting the men back to work. We've no UDM, we've no scabs at the pit because they've all been shifted out.

We're in a strong position in this pit, but that in itself creates problems. When we put in our resolution calling for an overtime ban it is hard to explain to the men or the branch that other pits don't think about overtime bans, other pits aren't thinking about action.

I'd like to see more of a lead coming from the national leadership on the question of industrial action. You can't blame Scargill, it's the executive and area leaders that are backing off. They're too ready to take it to court instead of fight. We've had tribunal, tribunal appeal, the appeal on the tribunal appeal and in the end the board may make 'concessions' out of the 'goodness of their heart', so they win the propaganda battle anyway. It's the same with the back money.

I think if we don't move fast in Yorkshire, the union's going to have boot marks all the way up its back from the rank and file walking straight over it and taking action into their own hands. Because there's a hell of a lot of frustrations building up in the pits. The will for action is there in Yorkshire. It's a question of channelling it and bypassing the area officials who seem content to leave it to the NEC. I'd say that every area must do something. The South Wales action is limited, but at least they're doing something. Any victory, however small, will build up morale.

KENT

The management in the Kent coalfield has attempted to trample over the NUM in the area. The men are tired of being pushed around, but have no stomach for a fight at the moment. We spoke to Neil Harrop, branch committee member at the threatened Tilmanstone pit and a leading militant in Kent. He pointed out some of the problems facing miners in the area and how they are facing up to the challenge.

Neil Harrop

The overwhelming majority of the men are very disillusioned. They've had enough of being pushed about by the management and they want out.

As you've pointed out, that mood is a

product of the defeat of the miners' strike and the tough regime the bosses then imposed. There's been an erosion of working conditions and safety in the pits due to the onslaught of the bosses.

The feeling in Kent about your article in *The Leninist* (see No.37 'Miners: Fight in a New Way') was positive. Militants were saying "Yes, that is true; but the trouble is, given the mood amongst the majority of men and in the union, that we just can't put these ideas into practice."

The management have kept the men right on a tightrope, first they threaten the men, 'right, your pit is going to close, you're going into the review procedure', you win that and the men think they've got a future, but then they threaten they're going to close the pit anyway. British Coal have really done a good job; they've worn the morale of the men right down.

At the moment all of us in the union are involved in a 'holding' operation. This is one of the weaknesses on our side. Since Tilmanstone colliery was reprieved, the union has been pushing the line that we've got to keep profits up and costs down. There hasn't been much else in terms of a lead coming out of it. And really, when you think about it, that's falling in with what management want, what they think is important.

Because of the weakness of that approach there have been times when we have let things slip; there have been opportunities to fight that have been lost.

There have been some good signs of a fightback lifting off up in Yorkshire, especially in the Doncaster Panel. There has to be a push to build on this.

An overtime ban is not ideal, but it does give us some scope to build on the action of South Wales and Durham. An overtime ban is not the best thing, but it is a starting point to build from.

If national action does lift off again, we must approach the dispute in different way. Relying on the Labour Party and the TUC for action was always a mistake, because it was obvious they were going to sell us out. Scargill's own politics trapped him in the bureaucratic machine. When Scargill says that there wasn't a defeat at the end of the miners' Great Strike, what he is saying is that the official apparatus of the union is still intact. He is not looking at the function that the official apparatus should be carrying out — fighting to protect the jobs and livelihoods of the men.

NOTTS

Being an NUM militant in the Notts coalfield is hard and dangerous business. Paul Whetton, NUM branch secretary of Bevercoates pit was sacked for displaying NUM literature. The men who stay loyal to the strike face a battle to overcome the scab UDM organisation with its vastly superior finances and resources and with its backup from the pit management and the government itself. Yet, as we have pointed out before, the potential is there to smash the UDM as a scab union precisely because it has workers in it; workers whose interests at the end of the day run counter to those of the British Coal and the ruling class. Mick McGinty of Ollerton lodge gave us report of the current balance of forces in this frontline area.

Mick McGinty

There is still a lot of tension up here. British Coal is just as determined as ever that they are not going to recognise the NUM and they're doing their best to try and stop us acting effectively. I'm under threat of the sack at the moment in my pit; they are picking out leaders and victimising them, trying to make examples of them to stem the tide of people going back to the NUM. Paul Whetton is an example of that. They sacked him and stopped all recruitment at Bevercoates. Whether they're going to do the same at Ollerton I don't know.

Of course, now we've got the Hucknall pit closure in this area. Obviously, the NUM is in a minority there, but we are going to do our best to organise a fight.

The NUM's been recruiting members, there's been a steady stream in our direction, not to the UDM. They are losing members daily and quite frankly I can't see a future for them. In particular, with the closure of Hucknall and the fact that the area manager said he's looking for another 2,000 redundancies, in other words another pit, all of that will speed up their decline.

Since we lost the strike, the board have tried to screw us to the ground. But miners around the country are getting fed up with their attitude and they're saying 'Enough is enough'. We've been having that sort of hassle in a particularly sharp form in Notts. We can't go

into the canteen and discuss union business; I'm even banned from carrying NUM lit on me! I can't walk into the pit with an NUM leaflet in my pocket! People are getting sick of that type of attitude. We were short of money when we went back to work, we've kept our noses clean, but how long can it go on?

If an overtime ban lifts off nationally, I think that would have a good effect on our position in Notts as the union would be seen to be doing something. People are thinking that the NUM is dead and that there's no fight left and all that type of nonsense. But if the union moves it could really shake things up.

People here were listening to Lynk and Prendergast when they were saying "The Notts coalfield made a £101 million profit last year, your jobs are safe." Now all of a sudden they announce that they're going to lose 1,500 jobs at Hucknall and they're talking about 400-500 jobs at Nestead, people are starting to say "They weren't telling us the truth."

A big militant push by the national union could bring a lot of men back into the NUM.

THE JAILED

Recently, the prison authorities imposed a vindictive punishment on jailed Kent miner Terry French in revenge for him speaking at a fringe meeting at this year's TUC while on weekend parole. He was moved from an open prison to Wandsworth, where he is now locked up for 23 hours out of every 24 and where 'privileges' like library access or letters out are severely restricted. The official reason given for the action against Terry was his "violent attitude" against other prisoners: why such a man, who was such a danger to other prisoners that he had to be moved to a more secure prison, was granted 48 hours parole in the first place has not been made clear. We spoke to Liz French: Terry's wife and a militant activist in her own right. She had a message for all miners:

Liz French



Liz French: "start fighting"

The attitude of the men at the pit ought to be to stand up and fight and not to have the attitude 'Oh, we can't win.' I hope the men at work get some guts in them again and start fighting, for the sake of everybody. They're the ones at the end of the day who will keep a pit open or shut. It isn't going to be a British Coal decision, it will be the men.

Terry is going for the job of vice-president of the NUM, McGahey's job. It'll be difficult and I shall have to do most of the campaigning for him, but he feels he could do the job and put some fighting spirit back into the union. Terry's sole aim, as a man who's worked at the pit for 20 years, is what is best for his union and for his community. And he'll do a good campaign, even from where he is.

A lot of the rank and file lads are pleased that Terry has decided to do this. Terry doesn't belong to a political party: he's solid NUM and everyone knows he is.

ORDER NOW

This pamphlet has been reprinted by militant miners and their supporters who believe the miners' strike illustrated the limitations of old-fashioned industrial militancy. Now is the time to think afresh.

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Did anyone else notice the Healyite WRP banner outside the TUC? Well not only did it, in true to cloud cuckoo land form, call for the TUC to "Organise the General Strike" and for the TUC to "Arm the African Workers" (sic) but it also demanded the TUC "Expel EETPU". Eric Hammond of the EETPU had no need to worry, did he, about getting arms into the hands of workers in South Africa. We think they will get better service from what News Line calls the "counterrevolutionary leadership" in the Soviet Union than genuinely counterrevolutionary fat cats like Willis.

September's since of Anti-Apartheid News featured in its centre pages a photo montage of the recent! Clapham Common pop concert in aid of the AA Movement. One notable absentee from the spread was Boy George, a young man who got himself into a spot of bother over drugs a while back. Surely the AAM leadership is not so obsessed with respectability that it deliberately censored the unhappy lad from its pages. Now really, would we suggest anything like that ...?

The official communists who run the Turkish Halkevi community centre in London seem to be taking their commitment to religion and male chauvinism to yet new heights (depths). Not content with segregating women, recent celebrations of Bayram (the Muslim equivalent of Easter and Christmas combined) saw their centre displaying a silhouette of a mosque and decked out in traditional green. As if this were not bad enough, the male chair of the centre stood on the steps and, acting like some Sultan, proudly waited for the women to bow and kiss his hand.

Remember our report on how Scottish AAM secretary and leading supporter of Straight Left, comrade Brian Filling, joined in an anti-boycott appeal to save the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh? Well although the Straight Leftist dominated Scottish AAM approached just about every organisation across the political spectrum in Scotland to join the anti-boycott appeal the Communist Party in Scotland was ignored. Why was this Brian? Anyway to our comrades' credit they say that they do not agree with the attempt to stop the Nigerian and Ghanaian initiated boycott and if approached they would not have scabbed.

TEACHERS



HARD LESSONS

THE strikes and other industrial action which has affected schools on and off over the past two years have arrived at an inconclusive halt. In the long running Scottish teachers dispute, the teachers union — the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) — passively awaited the recently issued government report on pay, duties and conditions. South of the border things are even more hazy. In England and Wales the largest teachers' union, the National Union of Teachers (NUT), is attempting to sell its members a rotten deal that makes Maxwell's look a dream.

The last two years have seen a growing wave of resentment by teachers over their Victorian conditions of work and deteriorating pay. Just about every school has been affected. This has been unprecedented for teachers. At the last election the majority of teachers voted Tory. Now it is difficult to find one to publicly admit to being an admirer of Mrs Thatcher.

In May the English and Welsh employers, the local education authorities, and the majority of trade union reps agreed to work through Acas to set up negotiations not only on pay but also on working conditions. Its four committees set up to deal with various aspects of teachers' pay and conditions will report before January 1987.

At the time the NUT opposed any moves to link pay and conditions. It therefore sanctioned continued industrial action; but an interim agreement was signed during the summer in Coventry by which teachers got a few 'sweeteners' in return for concessions on conditions. This effectively represented the NUT's capitulation before the employers.

The Coventry deal paves the way for greater control by local education authorities over teachers. There will be a small increase for low paid teachers and this is the justification the NUT executive is

using in its attempt to sell it to the rank and file. Yet restructured salary scales will in no way meet the needs of the majority of teachers, least of all the lowest paid.

In inner London and some other areas one effect will be five days lost holiday. The employers, Labour as well as Tory and Alliance, have also forced through a new two year entry grade for teachers, which can be extended if management so desires. All in all the overall effect is that many of the conditions accepted over the years by teachers as rights have been given away with very little in exchange. No wonder so many delegates to the NUT's Easter 1985 conference regard the whole deal agreed by the executive as overturning conference decisions. In fact there can be little doubt that the NUT have treated the membership with contempt.

Cover

For the employers the major point of contention has been the refusal by teachers to cover for absent colleagues. This no cover action has proved a very popular tactic and has created problems for the authorities. Last term many primary schools operated one day, no cover, while secondary schools operated no day, no cover. Under the Coventry deal teachers will now have to go back to abiding by previously agreed arrangements whereby teachers could end up covering for unlimited periods of time.

In return for this the employers agreed to provide additional supply teachers to cover for absentees. Given rate capping there seems little likelihood of this happening to any great extent. In practice the balance of forces has shifted to the employers. This can be seen in London. In London many teachers were refusing to cover long before the present dispute started. Now despite having no previous agreement they have been told that they must now provide unlimited

cover.

This retreat on cover has provoked the wrath of many teachers. Already in inner London NUT, the unions' biggest concentration of membership, there has been a refusal to call off the industrial action and that means a refusal to provide cover. Traditionally moderate areas have told the NUT executive they will be doing likewise, such is the groundswell of anger against the Coventry deal.

It comes as little wonder therefore that the NUT leadership will not hold a ballot on the Coventry deal. So although it balloted time and time again for even the most trivial form of action during the dispute, it will not even organise a special conference on the question.

A year ago it looked as if the employers were on the run. The majority of teachers had found a new sense of militancy, and with this sense of militancy a sense of their power. Yet the half-day and three-day actions organised by the NUT were never and could never have been a serious challenge to the employers, let alone the government.

All the teachers' unions were determined to keep things respectable. Industrial actions were staged as PR stunts, not as serious mobilisations. As a result, the NUT executive even ignored its conference's call for a one day national strike — moderate enough but not to the executive's liking. It has been this sort of conservative approach that has landed teachers in their present mess.

Like the UDM, the second largest teachers' union, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, is led by 'moderates'. Even the NUT's 'left' leaders are more like Eric Hammond than Arthur Scargill. Because of this, from the outset none of the teachers' unions had a strategy which had any hope of winning.

The left

So what of the left? Well the *Morning Star's* supporters could only find praise for the 'sensible' way the NUT leadership were conducting the dispute. As to Communist Party members they have actually in the main supported the deal. Party members on the executive have therefore been used as left cover by the right wing majority. Others around the New Communist Party, *Straight Left* and *Militant* have been little better.

It was obvious that the low level of real action would lead to defeat. This had to be challenged by rank and file militants. Yet throughout the last eighteen months it was impossible to organise widespread unofficial action simply because there has not existed any serious opposition to the right in the NUT leadership, let alone opposition to the right moving lefts who sit on the executive. This gave the executive the confidence to sign the Coventry deal.

In retrospect the most important turning point in the struggle came when the EIS announced it was going to organise a march to parliament in November 1985. Morale amongst teachers at this time was very high. It would have been the ideal time to escalate the whole struggle. Yet the NUT and the EIS did not even want a joint demonstration. The EIS was determined to keep the whole question 'Scottish' and the NUT simply wanted to run down the growing feeling of militancy that existed at the time.

The London region of the NUT, the Inner London Teachers Association, is controlled by the Socialist Teachers Alliance. It is a group of Trotskyite ex-IMGers, now waving Labour Party cards, and wallowers in defeatism in the SWP. Increasingly, especially in London, the STA has taken on the role of the old Broad Lefts of channelling militancy into electioneering and pressuring the leadership.

At first the STA opted for a half-day strike to support the EIS. But as the day approached the London STA leaders lost their nerve and after some hesitation actually told members not to strike. A number of branches ignored this call and marched with the EIS. But they only consisted of a few hundred militants — an important opportunity was missed and the initiative was passed to the right.

Strikes, like wars, can be lost at decisive moments. The STA, the largest left grouping in the NUT, was responsible for the defeat of the teachers just as much as the executive, the right wing and the EIS and the NAS/UWT. The STA was always ready to pontificate about militant action but it never had the bottle to organise it.

This could be seen at the Local Pay Action Conference. The LAPAC was established at the beginning of the teachers' dispute by left wing NUT branches in an attempt to organise action in a coordinated fashion. The STA had from the beginning no intention of working to make it a fighting body. Instead it saw its role to tame what it called the 'maverick left'. Time and time again STA undermined all attempts to escalate the low level of action by teachers.

The next few months and the rearguard action to throw out the Coventry deal will further expose the STA. Of course opposition to the Coventry deal is not confined to militant areas. But while STA members were the only ones on the executive to reject the deal can they give a convincing lead? Given their performance so far it is unlikely.

Tony Coughlin



The Kitson struggle

Norma Kitson, *Where Sixpence Lives*, Chatto and Windus, September 1986, pp. 326, £9.95

WHERE *Sixpence Lives* provides a fascinating account about how from 18, a white woman threw in her lot with the blacks of her country by joining the white section of the African National Congress. This not only flung Norma Kitson into conflict with the white establishment and the apartheid system, as we all know she has not been without her problems with leading elements in the liberation movement. Indeed she tells how almost straight away, at her first meeting of the illegal mixed race discussion club in Johannesburg, she came into conflict with "some white so-called communists" by advocating the view that whites should serve the liberation movement (p.91).

This did not stop Norma Kitson being drawn to communism "despite" the arrogance of these white Communist Party members.

In fact Norma joined the CPGB while on an extended visit to Britain in the early 1950s. Here she met, fell in love with and married David Kitson. Although he was extremely active in the CPGB they both saw their prime duty as being back in South Africa with the cause of black liberation.

And in June 1959 they returned to South Africa and underground work in the South African CP and then in Umkhonto we Sizwe. After the arrest of Nelson Mandela David was put onto the MK high command. On June 22 1964 security police raided the Kitson's home and detained David under the 90 day law.

Norma demonstrated along with their two small children against David's detention. For this she was arrested and held in solitary confinement for four weeks.

He was eventually charged with sabotage and sent for trial. Norma describes how he used the trial in exemplary communist fashion as a political platform to denounce apartheid. He defended the armed struggle and outlined why he had joined the Communist Party: "It was natural in view of my past to find a home in the South African Communist Party" he defiantly declared. During the course of the proceedings he also set aside time to write to Data (now Tass) recording his thanks "to the EC, for its financial support to my family, and all members of Data who took up the cudgels for me and for the scale of support it had generated."

At the end of his trial the *Draughtsman* featured a letter from his lawyer. It read: "Mr Kitson was not willing to compromise either on his political beliefs nor on his opposition to the Nationalist government."

"Mr Kitson accepted the verdict (20 years) with great courage and fortitude and asked us to express to you his great appreciation for the generous financial assistance which you gave."

Prison did not break the bond

between the Kitson's. Norma relates with disarming frankness the stresses and strains of being the wife of a political prisoner in South Africa. Somehow David, no doubt because of his deep humanity, lived prison life to the full: its horrors could not blunt his political convictions nor his intellect. He studied Marxism, learnt Zulu and took 53 courses in various subjects and added to his degree in mechanical engineering ones in economics and political science along with a BSc in mathematics.

Meanwhile Norma, Amanda and Steve Kitson had come to Britain with the help of Data, which also financed visits to South Africa to see David. As Norma Kitson vividly describes, after being left isolated for ten years by the London leadership of the ANC (through the dead-hand of those she calls the 'chevra'), they all became extremely active in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. And how in 1982 they worked with the hyper-active City of London group in organising an 86 day picket of the South African Embassy in Trafalgar Square demanding the release of David and all other political prisoners in South Africa. Despite many arrests and a growing tension with an AAM leadership obsessed with the need for respectability, the picket attracted massive support and ended in partial success.

David and many other political prisoners were in Pretoria's Death Row prison. Norma tells how, faced with a non-stop picket involving the likes of Stanley Clinton Davis (now an EEC commissioner), Bob Hughes, chair of the AAM and Roy Hattersley, the South African authorities, wanting to dampen down criticism, agreed to a transfer.

At last in 1984 David was released. He came to Britain and was given a hero's welcome by the City Group, the ANC and Tass. Yet today he has been deserted by the union and suspended by the ANC (of which he was never directly a member). After only 18 months the Tass EC decided to end their sponsorship of him at Ruskin. Why? According to Tass Assistant Secretary, John Jones, it is because "Dave Kitson is now at odds with the ANC and has been suspended."

Although the London ANC will not go into the reasons for this suspension, insisting it is an "internal matter", Norma makes it clear that the root cause lies with David's refusal to denounce the City of London AA group in which she and her children have been active members. Norma maintains they have no political differences with the ANC and despite efforts they have been unable to get the London ANC to respond to pleas for a meeting to overcome the differences.

Certainly whatever the rights and wrongs of the Kitsons' activity since David was released, no evidence has been produced which remotely justifies the behaviour of the Tass leadership. Instead of presenting a reasoned case, rumour and innuendo have been the weapons used to try Kitson for a second time.

Ken Gill in particular bears heavy responsibility for the sorry state of affairs. Eager to flout his 'friendship' with his fellow communist after he was released, Gill now maintains Tass can have nothing to do with "an individual who has been suspended from and is in conflict with the ANC".

Of course Gill complains about the bureaucratic method of our Party leadership. Clearly this doyen of the CCG and TUC big wig is nothing but a bureaucratic hypocrite. Faced with protests from the students and staff of Ruskin, rumblings of discontent within Tass itself, he has offered Kitson £12,000 in an effort to bury the whole affair.

We would suggest Tass should

honour its commitment to Kitson (39 years a member of Tass and 20 years a prisoner in apartheid's jails). He is now 67, he has no savings or pension. Tass members should support the petition circulating in the union demanding justice. And what about CCG members? Surely they should bring their comrade Gill to account. They should demand to know why he is prepared to embrace scab Willis but spits in the face of David Kitson, who as Norma Kitson's moving and marvellous book brilliantly shows is a courageous, warm man who is dedicated communist with a proven record of internationalism and militancy.

Chris Doyle



Norma Kitson with Amanda just after Dave's arrest in 1964

Fighting communities

Dave Douglass, *Come and Wet This Truncheon*, Aldgate Press 1986, pp.36 £0.80p

A Year Out of Our Lives, (compiled by Dave Douglass), Hooligan Press 1986, £3.50.

Both available from (£1 p&p incl.) Dave Douglas, 16 Abbeyfield Road, Dunscroft, Doncaster, South Yorks.

"SOME PEOPLE" writes Dave Douglass in the introduction to the first of these two pamphlets, "will not allow (themselves) to believe that the police in Britain acted like this and are about to carry on acting like this as a matter of course. To those people I can only say, there were some in our community who thought that way too, about the blacks, about the Irish about the youth and the way the police dealt with them."

The sharp lessons that ordinary miners and their families learned during the twelve month battle about the nature of the police and their systematic, violent assault on the pit communities are vividly described. The vicious assault from the agents of the class enemy had the effect in many instances of healing sectional, sexual or racial divides between the workers as they faced up to the onslaught together:

"Black miners were especially singled out by the Met for the normal torrent of racial abuse, ape-like gestures and monkey like cries." This open racial hostility for the first time brought home to many ordinary folk the class meaning of racism. Those miners standing with their black mates, many of them having been guilty of similar remarks in the past, albeit in a 'friendly' way, began

to have second thoughts about their language. "Seeing the class enemy display a shocking example of it led many miners to realise it wasn't a joke."

The police were not 'joking' about beating the miners in general. Douglass describes the Armthorpe siege of August 22, 1984. They "sealed off the village, banned journalists from entering and halted bus services"; trapped pickets between rows of houses and "indiscriminately beat anyone in the area not in police uniform"; not content with this they broke into the houses of miners and non-miners alike, where they damaged property and threatened and injured householders including the elderly and disabled. The police even forced pickets to lie on the ground before kicking and beating them in true Six Counties fashion. And according to Douglass there is also evidence once again that "troops were involved in the exercise."

Crucially, what Douglass also brings out in his account of the role of the police was the way that miners were basically undefended against the states' onslaught. The miners were shocked by the array of repressive hardware thrown against them. The pamphlet quotes one elderly miner reacting to the use of mounted police against unarmed pickets. "Hey up" he shouted. "That's not fair!"

The naive attitude that prompted that militant to call for the state's scum in blue to play the class struggle according to the polite rules of cricket quickly evaporated and today there remains a deep and undying hatred of the police in many pit villages.

The breadth of the struggle and the determination of the ruling class to crush the miners meant that workers on picket lines were forced by the reality of the fight to begin to form hit squads, to begin to coordinate their attacks on the

police ranks, to begin in other words the first faltering steps on the road of military organisation that will one day enable them to take on everything the state can throw against them and still come out on top.

The second of the pamphlets consists of a series of contributions from some of the people of the communities around the Yorkshire pit of Hatfield Main. This is probably the best of the community accounts of the strike as it avoids some of the rather gushy sentimentality of others in the same genre.

Instead we have the intensely practical and down-to-earth contributions of a group of people who contributed to writing a very proud chapter in the history of workers' struggles in Britain. Not that the pamphlet does not have the power to move. Perhaps best in this context are the contributions from miners' children, young people who will live with the memory of that huge confrontation:

"When I went on demos" says one 12 year old, "I felt proud to march with the miners. Glad that my dad never scabbed. I think it was demonstrations that made me realise just how many people were on strike. Marching with the band... getting to the top of the hill and looking back gave me, and everyone else, I expect, a sort of happy feeling, even though we went through hardship I felt that I (a child) was one of the community, I felt that I was contributing by being there. I think that being on demos were my happiest moments and will stick in my mind for ages."

In struggle a small part of the potential collective strength of the British working class was revealed and important lessons grasped by advanced elements of the class. And thus, as Douglass points out in the final few lines, the miners will be back.

Jonathan Knight

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SUBSCRIBE

THE LENINIST has always held to the concept that open ideological struggle in the Communist Party of Great Britain and the workers' movement as a whole is a prerequisite for reforging our Party. Towards this we have carried our struggle outside the CPGB and posed questions to other revolutionary groups. One such has been the Revolutionary Communist Group. In the past they have refused to answer our *Call to all Communists* in number three of our journal and a subsequent two page review of their manifesto. Indeed, they have yet to acknowledge the existence of these documents.

However, September's issue of their paper, *Fight Racism Fight Imperialism*, presents us with another opportunity to take them up again and, if they so choose, for the RCG to give long awaited answers. The article in question is penned by their leading theoretician, David Reed, and is an analysis of a speech given by comrade Joe Slovo, chair of the South African Communist Party, to a SACP public meeting in July. Some of Reed's points we would agree with, some we would not. We will leave the SACP to make its own defence on this occasion should it so choose.

The very fact that Reed is now criticising a section of a liberation movement, however, is of no little surprise to those who have studied his organisation's political positions. The RCG has in the past labelled organisations on the British left as 'racist' and 'chauvinist' for daring to criticise liberation movements. This was the justification for the RCG's expulsion of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency (now Party) from its ranks; that they had raised criticisms of the ANC. "Comrades JH and CD" wrote the RCG, in response to the future RCP, "not only want to tell the South African movement what to adopt, but also express a complete lack of confidence in the South African left." (cited in *Revolutionary Communist Papers*, No.1)

Is this not what Reed is doing through his criticisms of the SACP? Is he then, through the logic of his own arguments, a chauvinist and racist, as the RCG has wrongly labelled others in the past? Dear comrade Reed, let us defend you from yourself.

In Britain the workers' movement has an internationalist duty to aid the anti-imperialist struggles of the peoples oppressed by imperialism, especially that of our own imperialists. This, however, does not entail an uncritical attitude to these movements. The working class internationally must have an unclouded, objective, view of its allies.

It is neither 'chauvinist' nor 'racist' to raise criticisms of petty-bourgeois national liberation movements which clearly delineate their interests from the interests of their proletarian allies. For instance, in Reed's article he criticises comrade Slovo's speech for "offering a political standpoint which did not go, in any serious sense, beyond the ANC's Freedom Charter," yet he does not, and has not, provided us with any view of the Freedom Charter which indicates the pitfalls of this approach. To do so would entail criticisms of the Charter — criticisms which he has in the past denounced as 'chauvinist'.

In the editorial of their old journal *Revolutionary Communist* (No. 9) the RCG accused the RCT of 'national chauvinism' for issuing a leaflet stating that "the ANC stands

compromised with the South African working class." But the same criticism is implicit in Reed's argument. However, after coming out with rabid denunciations of 'chauvinism' and 'racism' for such criticisms, the RCG can hardly come clean in one fell swoop and make a mockery of the past decade of its history.

Is it permissible to criticise a national liberation movement? What criticisms can be made and under what circumstances? We Leninists have little time for such groups as the Socialist Workers Party, which claims to unconditionally support liberation movements such as the IRA — until that is, the IRA carries out a military action. Such 'support' is no support at all, and it is quite justified to label this as chauvinist. A movement's tactics are secondary. However, the question does not rest there. It is necessary to take an objective view of the principles, and therefore the class stand-point underlying those tactics. The proletariat everywhere has its own independent class interests to guard, and to guard them it must be aware of the nature of its allies. The consequences of failing to do this were illustrated in the bloody massacre of the Chinese communists by their erstwhile allies of the Kuomintang in 1926-7. Those in the communist movement who claim that 'it is not our place to interfere' would by the same logic be content to see a friend walk over a cliff because it is their business which way they walk.

Recently a Leninist comrade who intervened at an RCG public meeting to relaunch their South Africa pamphlet was accused of giving preferential treatment to sections of the South African liberation movement. Apparently, if we are to believe the RCG, this also is 'chauvinist'; nay, more 'near racism'. This assertion, for any that have even a bare minimum knowledge, is ludicrous. To the charge that we single out sections of the liberation movement, we plead guilty. The war in Angola vindicates us here.

Before the revolution two sections of the liberation movement, the MPLA and Unita, vied for the leadership of the struggle. Quite clearly it was a necessity for communists everywhere to take sides in this conflict. The MPLA won, and took the country into a close alliance with the socialist states, and introduced many progressive reforms. The losing party, Unita, has set itself up against this, acting as the hired thugs of the racist South African regime.

Obviously no one calling themselves socialist or communist would now defend Unita, but such a 'wise after the fact' attitude leaves you open and defenseless until the guillotine blade of your own 'even handedness' is falling. Odd, too, that an organisation which professes such indiscriminacy should then turn round and single out the SACP for special treatment. Why not also the ANC, Azapo or IRA?

Reed accuses comrade Slovo of failing to assert "the primacy of the working class" in the liberation struggle, that is, the need for the SACP to assert its political hegemony and organisational independence from its allies. Interesting then that at the RCG meeting referred to above our comrade should be accused of 'chauvinism' by both David Reed and leading RCGer Eddie Abrahams. So it is 'chauvinist' when our comrade defends such a position, and 'principled Marxism'



COMMUNISTS AND NATIONAL LIBERATION

when Reed does. It seems that the RCG has mastered the Gerry Healy school of dialectics — the ability to hold two mutually contradictory positions at the same time.

For us it is vital to defend the political and organisational independence of the communist party against all comers; no matter what allies the Party takes it cannot dilute its programme and principles to do so. In this we find we concur with Reed in his September *FRFI* article, although unlike Reed we can claim to have defended such principles consistently. In this we share Lenin's position:

"...the Social Democrats (communists — AM) will always single out workers from the rest, they will always point out that solidarity is temporary and conditional, they will always emphasise the independent class identity of the proletariat, who tomorrow may find themselves in opposition to their allies of today. We shall be told that 'such actions will weaken the fighters for political liberty at the present time.' We shall reply that such action will strengthen all the fighters for political liberty. Only those fighters are strong who rely on the consciously recognised real interests of certain classes, and any attempt to obscure these class interests, which already play a predominant role in cotemporary society, will only weaken these fighters." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.2, pp334-5)

To just talk of 'the people' and leave it there plays an obscurantist, objectively reactionary role. It is not

only the concern of the South African workers to watch their allies in the liberation movement for any sign of vacillation or equivocation, and to fight to win the leadership of the oppressed masses as a whole, but also of the proletariat worldwide. The defeat of South African imperialism will be a mighty blow against British and world imperialism. We are not just concerned by-standers; we have a definite stake in the South African revolution. We therefore not only have a right but indeed a duty to raise our criticisms openly, for, as Lenin states further in the same article, "The proletariat alone can be the vanguard fighter for political liberty and for democratic institutions." (*Ibid*, p336)

We have always stated these positions openly. In the international class struggle there can be no 'taboo' subject, no fear of treading on other parties' territory. The right to point out the class nature and principles of liberation movements, and the dangers therein, extends to communist parties: "The old International used the method of referring such questions for decision to the individual parties in the countries concerned. This was a grave error. We may not be fully familiar with the conditions in one country or another, but in this case we are dealing with the principles underlying a Communist Party's tactics. This is very important and, in the name of the Third International, we must clearly state the communist

point of view." (VI Lenin, *CW* Vol.31, p257)

Today, those who have abandoned such a stand will never forge a revolutionary international this time round. Reed and the RCG have every right to raise the criticisms of the SACP that they do. The problem for them arises in that they do not do so with any degree of consistency. We have raised questions of the programmes of the South African and Irish liberation movements, and will continue to do so whenever and wherever the necessity for this arises.

This does not undermine solidarity with such movements; on the contrary, such a line can only strengthen this work. To use Lenin's maxim, 'publicity is a sword that heals the wound it itself makes'. To extend the non-criticism of a movement's tactics to its principles is to effectively liquidate an independent class line on national liberation. The consequences can be seen today in Zimbabwe.

The more open style of criticism that the RCG has adopted in Reed's article can therefore only be welcomed. However, it remains to be seen whether such a stand will be retained with regard to other sections of the liberation movement, and to honest debate in the revolutionary movement in Britain. If not, *The Leninist* will find it not too much of a burden to defend a more consistent revolutionary position alone.

Alan Merrik

Fight back with the



UNEMPLOYED WORKERS CHARTER

- Work at trade union rates or full maintenance.
- Abolish the YTS — real training at trade union rates.
- Stop harassment of the unemployed. No to the Community Programme, New Workers' Scheme and all government and MSC measures which exploit or harass the unemployed. Claiming benefit is a right, not a crime.
- End all unnecessary overtime work with no loss of pay.
- Unemployed workers' groups should have representation on trades councils. They should be the voice of the unemployed.

ORGANISE TO FIGHT

THE TORIES fought the 1979 election using the slogan: Get Britain Working. Since their coming to power unemployment has more than doubled. Despite numerous statistical revisions of the figures — downwards of course — and the removal of hundreds of thousands from claiming Unemployment Benefit through schemes like the YTS, TOPS and Action for Jobs, every year has seen the numbers on the dole rise.

No wonder the problem of unemployment promises to become the dominant issue at the next general election. Unemployment has become a spectre haunting establishment politicians.

It certainly concerns all workers and their families. Not only the millions who have had direct experience of unemployment over the last six or seven years, but also those who have escaped it, yet have been constantly plagued by the fear that at any moment they might be flung onto the scrap heap.

The Tories have, true to form, sought to blame 'high' wages for unemployment, rather than blame their policies, let alone their system. They have even attempted to get the unemployed to blame themselves for being unemployed. 'You are feckless, lazy or simply too well off on social security,' they say to us.

That is why the Unemployed Workers' Charter exists. We stand for direct action to fight for unemployed workers' rights, not idle talk.

We, the unemployed, will organise ourselves. In this way we will gain self-respect and become strong. In this way we can secure what we and our families need — not what the system can afford.

If you would like to get in touch with the Unemployed Workers' Charter — then phone Mark Fischer on 01-431 3135, or write to the address below.

I would like to become a supporter of the Unemployed Workers' Charter

I would like to set up an Unemployed Workers' Charter group

I would like to join the Unemployed Workers' Charter contingent on the November 2 demonstration in London

Name

Address

Tel:

Send to UWC BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX or phone 01-431 3135



No Harassment

FAR FROM alleviating the plight of the unemployed, the Tories are doing their damndest to force the unemployed onto cheap labour schemes by keeping benefit increases below the rate of inflation (Supplementary Benefit rose by a mere 30p in July) and introducing measures such as Action for Jobs, New Workers' Scheme and Restart to force people out of claiming benefit.

Restart was started with the blessing of the TUC. It is designed to remove 10% of all unemployed workers from the books by intimidating them.

Restart drives workers into schemes like Jobstart which subsidises employers. Workers on less than £80 get a £20 a week top-up allowance — but only for six months. After this if they can't afford to stay working they will be deemed to have made themselves unemployed, and this will mean losing 40% of benefit for the first 13 weeks of a new claim.

Alternatively Restart offers the unemployed 12 months work on one of the MSC's various community programmes which are little more than useless work on lousy wages. Training is non-existent and wages average a mere £50 per week.

The most notorious form of harassment, though, is suffered by young workers. The cooked official unemployment rate for those under 25 is well over twice the average. The Tories want their parents to support them, not the state. They want young workers as cheap labour.

In July they removed young workers under 21 from the scope of the wages councils — which set minimum rates for the lowest paid. In August they announced the extension of the MSC Technical and Vocational Initiative to all 14-18 year olds. This has the aim of preparing a whole generation for the YTS when they leave school.

Nearly half a million young

workers suffer under YTS which now lasts two years. According to the Tories it has 'solved' youth unemployment. This is a lie. It is a form of slave labour. It is also, according to the bosses' paper *The Times*, a way of "maintaining social peace". The YTS is, it says, "an anti-riot device keeping 16-year olds off the unemployment register and off the streets". (September 2 1983).

Already over 1,000 young workers have been seriously injured on YTS work and 31 have died. In the first year the young conscripts get £27.30 for a 40 hour week and 18 days annual holiday. In the second year wages rise to the princely sum of £35 — not surprisingly many drop out from this scheme. After all not only are the wages a pittance but the so-called training is laughable.

For 20 weeks in the year YTS workers are trained — not in socially useful skills but how to have the 'right attitude'. In other words how to accept low wages, dangerous conditions and dictatorial bosses.

The two year YTS was launched on April 1 (yes it was a sick joke) by a panel which included Norman Willis, general secretary of the TUC. Willis was quoted by the press as saying: "Our overwhelming conclusion is that in the real world, in which so many young people are faced with unemployment or no-skill, dead-end jobs, we have to face up to that challenge and carry the responsibility of supporting and building up YTS."

By "supporting and building up YTS," Willis and the TUC support no-skill employment for young workers, and build up the number trapped in dead-end jobs and the sack at the age of 20 — when greedy bosses no longer get a government subsidy.

That's why the Unemployed Workers' Charter fights to smash the YTS and end trade union cooperation with it.

Labour

KINNOCK and the Labour Party, as we all know, have promised that within two years of their being elected there will be one million new jobs. This will of course leave the little matter of around three million still unemployed — even if Kinnock ever managed to deliver his promise.

We remember the last Labour government introducing YOPs, the forerunner of YTS. It also saw unemployment double. So what about their job creation programme they now promise if elected? Can they deliver the goods?

If they do, it can only be because the bosses find it profitable. Kinnock makes no pretence of ushering in the socialist millenium. The present state of the economy in Britain means Kinnock will — if Labour gains a parliamentary majority — take further measures relegating women and young workers to a source of cheap labour. This is an economic fact of life which flows directly from the politics of Labour's leadership.

Kinnock is out to manage, not fight, the system — just as all previous Labour governments have. And today that system is rotten and crisis ridden.

The more the bosses get rich the more they introduce new technology to replace workers with machines. Capitalist development therefore creates what is called a "relative surplus population" or a "reserve army of labour". Under capitalism Kinnock's wish to take on board the most advanced technology so as to compete with the Japanese can only be at the expense of workers' interests, even if they are, like the printers, highly paid.

As to Labourite integrity, even when they say they are going to introduce socialist measures, the truth is that the very nature of the system and the Labour Party itself means that such talk is nothing more than talk.

Given that Labour is now firmly in the hands of the openly pro-capitalist right, why should Labour's recipe for getting Britain back to work be any more successful than that promised by the Tories in the 1979 election? After all, similar policies to those proposed by Kinnock and Hattersley were tried by the last Labour government back in the 1970s. What happened? YOPs and double the number on the dole.

So there is no reason to believe that if Kinnock was sitting pretty in No. 10 things would really improve for the unemployed. Labour is committed to managing the capitalist system.

The capitalist system, dying and decaying while still alive, dooms millions of workers to unprecedented tortures. Unemployment has reached monstrous proportions under the last Labour government and has continued to grow ever

r No Answer



Kinnock promises one million jobs - but that still leaves three million out of work



Jarrow 1936

OCTOBER 5 1936 saw 200 men who had been thrown out of work by the closure of Palmer's shipyard begin their famous four week march from Jarrow to London. Unemployment had risen to 51% of the workforce in a town murdered by the destruction of industry after industry. The Jarrow Crusade set out to highlight the town's plight.

Surprisingly the Labour Party and the TUC refused their support. Why was this? Although initiated by Jarrow's Labour MP, Ellen Wilkinson, they feared being seen to associate with the militancy of the unemployed organised in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. The Labour Party and TUC advised their local organisations not to give any assistance.

But they need not have worried. The organisers of the 1936 Jarrow Crusade wanted, and got, a well publicised, highly respectable begging bowl march. They dissociated it from the NUWM simply because they wanted charity for Jarrow, not a militant struggle against the evil of unemployment in Britain as a whole. To avoid being tainted by the NUWM and its communist leadership, with Special Branch cooperation, they even expelled a marcher from the 'Crusade' simply because he was a

member of the Communist Party.

The Jarrow Crusade was eminently safe. Its organisers sent the divisional agents of both the Labour and Tory parties ahead to prepare the receptions. Because of this they were cared for by the Territorial Army, Tory businessmen and the Rotary Club en route. The march as a whole was explicitly 'non-political' — which meant it was class collaborationist to the core.

In reward for this, when it arrived in London it was greeted with tea on the lawns of the House of Commons and middle class sympathy, where the huge Hunger Marches organised by the NUWM were greeted with police truncheon and media hysteria.

Predictably it left nothing in its wake; no unemployed workers' groups, no follow up actions. Whereas the Hunger Marches had a militant character, the 1936 Crusade was, just like Jarrow 86, carefully tailored for class consensus, not class conflict.

No wonder the media smiles on the 1936 Jarrow Crusade with such tenderness. That is why Kinnock and Willis felt safe with the Jarrow Crusade as the model for Jarrow 86. After all, they only want to use the unemployed as cannon fodder to enhance the Labour Party's pre-election propaganda.

Jarrow 1986

TODAY unemployment in Jarrow is up to 1930s levels. Shipbuilding, steel and other traditional areas of employment have again been decimated. To highlight this and to mark the 50th anniversary of the Jarrow Crusade, Jarrow 86 was set up. Its plan is to get 30 unemployed workers to retrace the original route. And in all of the 23 towns and cities they pass through, they will be joined by two more marchers, and when they reach London on November 2 they will be led by Norman Willis and be greeted by a large demonstration.

According to the publicity material, sent to trades councils and other labour movement bodies, the aim of Jarrow 86 is to use the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Jarrow Crusade to "actively campaign for the unemployed of the 1980s."

Unfortunately, in the Jarrow 86 propaganda this does not seem to include building an unemployed

workers' organisation. No, the organisers of Jarrow 86 are quite clear that their march is designed to be a pre-election bid to boost the standing of Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party.

In fact the only hope offered to the unemployed by Jarrow 86 and its "high profile touring theatre show", *Brookside* script writer and all, is to trust in the 'next Labour government'.

They do have at least the virtue of being honest about this. "Jarrow 86 will provide a massive public platform for the presentation of Labour Party policy", "demonstrate only Labour has the will to solve the twin evils of mass unemployment and social deprivation" and "make a major contribution to the election of a Labour government".

The timing of the march is also very much tied to improving the electoral chances of the Labourites. "Jarrow 86 happens less than a year before a general election", it will

continued overleaf...

deprivation", that all we have to do is to vote Labour at the next general election, are simply perpetrating a cruel con trick on the unemployed. Capitalism produces unemployment; it is part of its very nature to have a reserve army of labour. And yet the Labour leadership does not even now talk of ending capitalism. Indeed Labour's Kinnock, Hattersley, Healey et al objectively seek to perpetuate the capitalist system — and that means, whether they like it or not, perpetuating unemployment.

Kinnock's politics are not revolutionary but as much part of capitalism as unemployment. They are tied and tie workers to the system. This is proved by every Labour government there has ever been and by the simple fact that Kinnock is committed to the capitalist state. Flowing from this, most of the militant left Labourite anti-capitalist rhetoric is left to impotently blow itself out within the safe confines of the House of Commons, simply because of loyalty to Kinnock.

That is why the Unemployed Workers' Charter does not look to the next general election but to action in the here and now.

since.

And we must not forget the vast army of low paid workers, mostly women, who were forced to stage a whole series of strikes in the winter of 1979. They desperately attempted to claw back some of the losses they suffered in their real wages under Labour's Wilson/Callaghan governments.

All Labour's promises today rest on its ability to restore the profitability and competitiveness of British bosses. And in the real world this can only be done by replacing yet more workers by machines and again trying to force down real wages in an effort to reverse Britain's decline as a big power.

The fact is that Britain has inexorably declined over the last 50 years at least. More than that, all other major capitalist countries are suffering from deep economic problems. So if truth be told all the fancy plans Labour has announced about a massive increase in public spending to boost the domestic economy would be unceremoniously junked with the first run on the pound or stock market downturn.

Those who insist that "Labour has the will to solve the twin evils of mass unemployment and social

....continued

pass through "a number of key marginals", it will coincide with the "Tory Party conference".

While no one should doubt the sincerity of the 1986 Jarrow marchers, all workers, above all the marchers themselves, should question the sincerity of the organisers.

They will encourage anti-Tory slogans (banned on the People's March for Jobs) but will they allow democratic control of the march by the marchers? You must be kidding. They want a tug-at-the-heart-strings march for the benefit of the middle class charity mongers and to promote Kinnock's image as

a caring politician.

Of course, given Labour's past record and its commitment to the bosses' system, it is unlikely to say the least that a Kinnock government can rid our country of the scourge of unemployment. The last Labour government saw unemployment double, just as it has under the Tories. Did Jarrow do any better under Labour? The truth is that it did not.

So should we simply ignore Jarrow 86? Some trades councils and union branches have adopted this attitude. Many an honest rank and file Labourite cannot stomach the sheer cynicism of using the

unemployed. They quite rightly smell the slick PR rats of Walworth Road behind the whole jamboree. Nonetheless we think militants should use every opportunity.

The Unemployed Workers' Charter will expose the TUC and Labour Party sponsors of Jarrow 86. But more importantly set up Unemployed Workers' Charter groups in each and every one of the 23 towns and cities the march passes through.

That is why we say: Fight for work, not Kinnock. The unemployed have no interest in being used as cannon fodder for the 'next Labour government'.

Organising



BY setting up local groups of the Unemployed Workers' Charter, the first foundations can be laid for a national organisation of the unemployed. Such a body would seek to mobilise the mass of unemployed workers alongside all workers in struggle. Organised, the unemployed could prove to be a tremendous ally to those like the Wapping printers, the Silentnight strikers and those fighting for workers' sanctions against apartheid.

This means unemployed workers being allowed to remain members of their unions, but it also means sending unemployed workers' representatives to bodies like trades councils. Eventually it would also mean seeing an unemployed workers' organisation with a seat on the TUC general council.

The unemployed must be organised to fight alongside their employed brothers and sisters. Just imagine what a difference the mass mobilisation of the unemployed would make to a struggle like Wapping. Some trade union officials are, of course, afraid of such a prospect.

They want the unemployed drafted onto YTS, MSC schemes and other slave labour measures to keep us "off the streets". To these fat cats we say we'll go with you if you'll come with us, but we'll go without you if we must. We certainly don't need your People's Marches for Jobs nor your re-run of the ever so respectable Jarrow Crusade. We will improve our conditions by organising ourselves.

Because we see the struggle of the unemployed directly linked to the struggle of all workers fighting for the right to work, we are not out for sympathy — the unemployed have had enough of being made the objects of pity. We are now going to organise to fight.

The Unemployed Workers' Charter lays the foundation for a national unemployed workers' movement. It will be run by the unemployed themselves and its officers will be elected and recallable.

We have had enough of non-political tea and sympathy labour movement unemployment centres run by government paid appointees. Now we are going to take things into our own hands.



1934 Hunger March - the NUWM organised 100,000 in its ranks

Past Lessons

WHAT DO the organisers of Jarrow 86 propose the unemployed do if Labour does not win the next general election? Should we simply endure another four or five years of poverty and degradation until another general election is called? We get no answer.

To us the whole of working class history proves that nothing has been gained by way of improved living standards, liberties and democratic rights, without persistent organisation and struggle. The bosses, even with the Labour Party in office, have not given concessions to the subject class out of good-heartedness or human consideration.

Right down the ages all rights have had to be wrung from the ruling class by the organised strength and action of the workers. Every item of boasted legislation, the NHS, education, the vote, unemployment benefit — has been preceded by intense and protracted agitation.

When unemployment reaches dimensions such as we have witnessed in this country since the late 1970s and increases from year to year — despite fiddling the figures, YTS and cheap labour schemes — the organisation of the unemployed becomes an imperative necessity.

Of course the task of organising the unemployed is not a simple one.

The unemployed are atomised, often dispirited and most of those under 25 (who make up around 50% of the unemployed) have little or no experience of working class or any disciplined organisation.

The ideal model for organising the unemployed must be the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, which rallied up to 100,000 to join its ranks.

In April 1921 the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement (after 1929 known as the NUWM) held its founding conference. Once off the ground, the NUWM went about winning the unemployed to action with flare and imagination. The NUWM fought long and hard to unite unemployed with employed workers.

Definitely the most famous actions of the NUWM were the Hunger Marches. Six were held between 1922 and 1936. They all had specific demands. In 1922 it was "full maintenance or work at trade union rates", the central NUWM slogan. The first contingent set out from Glasgow on October 17 and arrived in London one month and one day later to a huge reception.

The second Hunger March of winter 1929, which again started from Scotland, was an even greater success, indirectly leading to the fall of the Tory government and its

replacement by a Labour one. After fierce battles and several more national Hunger Marches against the Labour government of MacDonald and then his National Government, the unemployed made some real gains.

This was not because the NUWM was respectable. It organised factory raids to stop excessive overtime work, it occupied buildings from which to organise the unemployed, it fought side by side with workers in struggle, not least the heroic miners of 1926. A testament of this can be seen by the fact that its leader, Wal Hannington, served five terms in jail between 1922 and 1932.

Members of the NUWM were admitted after swearing this oath:

"I, a member of the great army of the unemployed, being without work and compelled to suffer through no fault of my own, do hereby abide by, and carry out, the instructions of the National Unemployed Workers Committee Movement, with the deliberate intention of pressing forward the claims of the unemployed so that no man, woman or child suffers hunger or want this winter.

"Further, realising that only by the abolition of this hideous capitalist system can the horror of unemployment be removed from our midst, I here and now take myself a binding oath, to never cease from active strife against this system until capitalism is abolished from our country and all its resources truly belong to the people."