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FREE TO STRIKERS

Wildcat

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“THINGS 'LL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN”

Although most of this issue of Wildcat was written before the call to end the miners' strike, its contents are still highly relevant. We have written about the strengths and weaknesses of the strike. Many militant miners we have spoken to in the course of the strike have agreed with a lot of what we have said. This advance in political consciousness has been too little and too late to prevent the miners' strike from ending in defeat. It is now vital that other workers take up the lessons of the miners' strike if future struggles are to have any chance of success.

There have been many gains in the course of the strike. The British miners now see themselves as part of the international working class, and workers in other countries have been inspired to fight back against the attacks of their own bosses. Women from the mining communities have been in the forefront of the struggle. Militant workers now know that the

state - the police, courts, media and government - are not 'neutral': it is the enemy of the working class. Whole communities - employed and unemployed, men and women, young and old - have learnt that the violence of the state must be met with collective working class violence. In many places there will be no 'return to normality': no reconciliation with the pigs, nor with management.

The economic crisis will continue to force the state to attack more and more workers head on. The government expects workers to think that since one of the strongest unions has now been beaten, any attempt to fight back would be futile. However, the real lesson for the future is that the trade unions are dead as far as organising militant struggle is concerned. One of the most powerful and well-disciplined unions in the country has been shown to be an ineffective means of struggle, to say the least. Workers must now follow the example of the most

militant miners who have been forced to develop new forms of organisation which go against union divisions and against union bureaucracy (see pages 2 and 5).

In all our leaflets and newspapers we have stressed the point that unless other workers joined in the struggle with the miners, there was no way the strike could succeed. New forms of organisation are vital if this essential class solidarity is to be organised in future struggles.

Militant miners who agree with these lessons should form groups to discuss and develop further the ideas they have learnt during the strike and to spread them among other groups of workers. They should continue to support all workers who have been sacked or imprisoned for supporting the strike. The reinstatement of all sacked miners and the release of all class war prisoners should be taken up as a demand by other groups of workers in future struggles.

The violence and determination of the most militant mining communities has forced the state to dismantle the facade of 'democracy' and police 'neutrality'. The realisation by thousands of workers that capitalist democracy is nothing more than a meaningless ritual covering the violent rule of one class over another is one of the lasting gains of the miners' strike. It is no exaggeration to describe some of the coalfields as "police states". We don't need to detail here the surveillance, frame-ups, routine beatings, imprisonment and exile of working class people involved

in the strike. The other side of the story is the resistance of workers to police occupation of the Yorkshire coalfield.

Since the uprising in Fitzwilliam on 9 July last year, when the entire village drove out the police and built barricades with cranes to prevent the arrest of a miner, there have been no arrests in the village. The police don't like coming into Fitzwilliam or villages like it. They had to come in to protect the one scab at the local pit, and they were greeted with abuse and frequently, barricades and bricks.

The local community policeman's life has been made a misery; his attempts to ingratiate himself with the children at the local lower school have failed. Children as young as 7 hate the pigs in a way which was unknown in Yorkshire villages one year ago. The brutality of the state has sown the seeds of insurrection in the hearts of the younger generation. The most common remark we heard in Yorkshire was "things will never be the same again". Whatever the outcome of the miners' strike, the gradual emergence of class consciousness is irreversible. The class war has returned to Britain.

'the day we beat the pigs'

It was -6°C with a freezing East wind as we arrived to join the mass picket of Carrington power station in Manchester, on Monday 11 February. We were among the first there and the police were telling us exactly where we could stand to avoid being arrested. It looked like it was going to be as frustrating as most of the pickets outside the pits, where police heavily outnumber pickets every morning. So that we get surrounded, threatened, and end up watching the scabs go into work.

More pickets arrive at Carrington. It really is a good change from the start of the strike when 'outsiders' were viewed with suspicion by many miners. Wildcat argued from the very start of the strike that all miners' supporters should be on the picket lines, not only so that the pickets were more powerful in numbers, but so that the arguments for solidarity could go beyond the miners to other workers. The whole working class has a stake in this strike. If the miners lose, the government and the bosses will feel confident to attack the working and living conditions of us all. It is too important to leave the fight just to the miners. Now Lancashire miners welcome their supporters on the picket lines. Regular busloads go from the university and the polytechnic, and other people go out in carloads. The Gay and Lesbian Miners' Support Group has its own fortnightly picket which is welcomed by the miners and has done a lot to spread mutual acceptance and class solidarity.

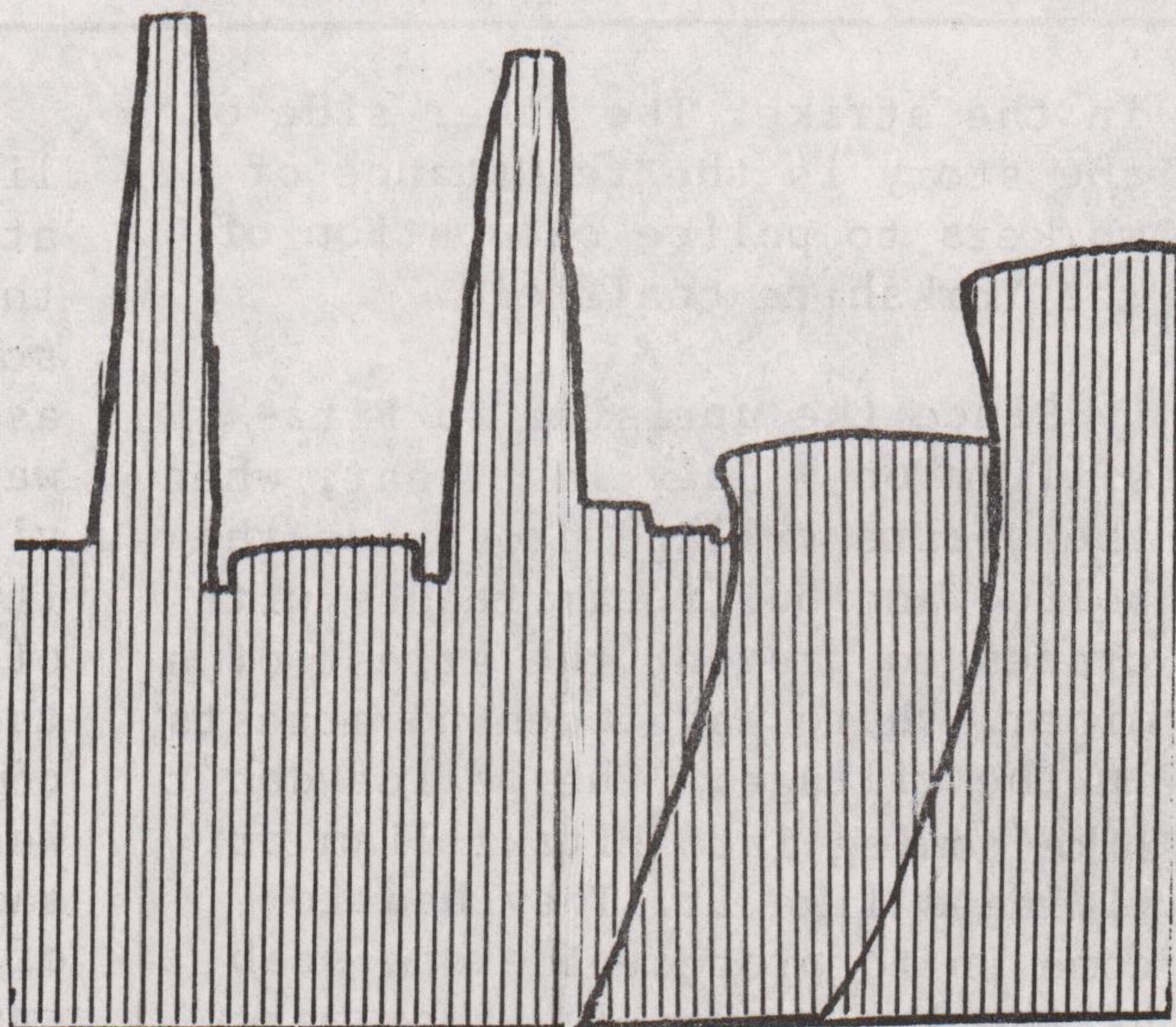
There were not many workers from other industries on the picket line this morning. The picket has been 'called' by the North West TUC. But the TUC had not even tried to mobilise its members to attend.

By 7 am we pickets outnumbered the police. The TUC official stewards joined the police in ordering us onto one side of the pavement to make sure the picket was ineffective. The first two coal lorries went through. But when the third coal wagon arrived

people surged across to block the road. The police tried to let the lorry through, grabbing individual

pickets and hurling them to the ground but pickets protected each other, so no-one was arrested. We defended ourselves and stood firm. At the start of the strike, on many picket lines, police and miners were quite friendly towards each other. Now the miners know the police are their enemies. They know that the only way to picket effectively is to meet police violence with workers' class violence. The TUC had announced that this was to be a peaceful picket, but it was obvious that no-one wanted to peacefully stand by as the coal lorries went in. At last, for the first time in a long while, we had the strength to take on the police and win. We made the most of our opportunity.

One policeman was squashed between the lorry and the pickets. The local press claimed later that he was kicked by 'thugs' as he lay on the ground. This wasn't true. We did what was necessary to stop the coal going through, but no more. Miners are no longer shocked at the lies in the papers and on TV... they take it for granted that while their own limited use of violence is blown up out of all proportion, attacks by scabs on strikers won't even get a mention. In Burnley recently, a striker was smashed in the face with a beer glass by a scab and needed 48 stitches. No-one was surprised that the press wasn't interested.



Back on the picket line, the TUC officials appealed through their megaphones to clear the road to let an ambulance through for the injured policeman. In fact the ambulance was stuck several miles back in the traffic jam we had caused, along with a coachload of fully-armed police riot squad reinforcements! We hesitated. We should have seized the megaphones from the TUC officials and given them to miners who could have used them to organise the picket instead of sabotage it. But the decision was made - we would clear the road, if the coal wagon turned back. The police ordered the lorry driver to turn round. We had won, it was a real morale booster.

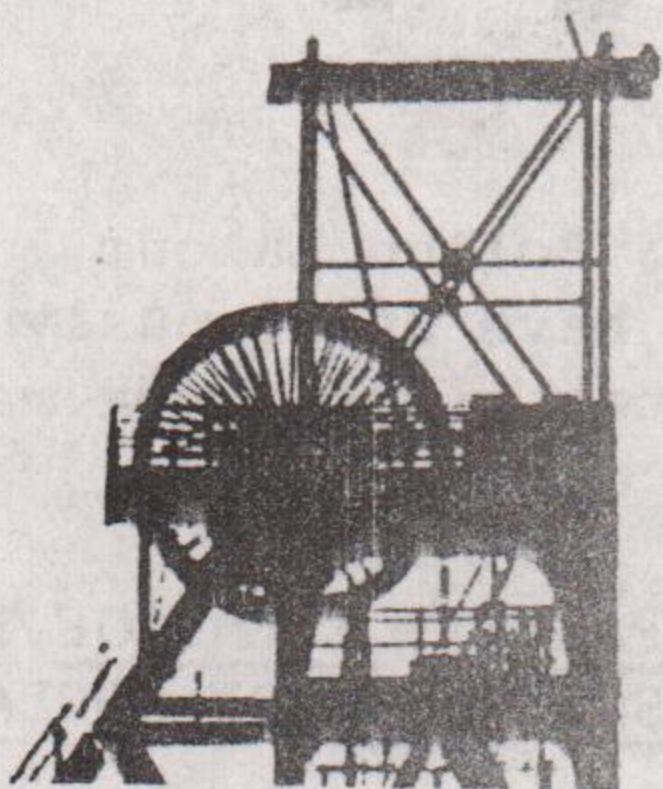
MORE ACTION NEEDED!

The miners had won a symbolic victory in a show of strength. But actions like this on their own are not enough to win the strike. What is needed is for workers in the power stations - and other workplaces - to take strike action with the miners. After 11 months, miners are aware that they can expect nothing from the trade union leaders - except sabotage. Scargill's calls to other union leaders for solidarity actions in support of the miners have come to nothing. A striker from Agecroft pit said: "The executives of every union have done the same thing, they don't care about the rank and file". A miner from Bold went further: "We need to get shot of union leaders capitalists, that's all they are. They betray the working class time and again". Miners have no confidence left in the TUC, which has shown its true colours during the strike.

Some miners are realising that the problem is not simply that union leaders have no interest at all in furthering the miners' strike. The divisions caused by the very existence of trade unions are a barrier to workers' solidarity. A Bold miner told us how there are 7 different unions in the power stations, all arguing amongst themselves, so the miners feel there is no way they can approach the power workers as a group.

Only united working class action will show the bosses our real strength. We think miners must approach power workers directly, as workers, regardless of union membership.

THE PIT STRIKE IN SCOTLAND ³



Edinburgh 24.2.85

The heartland of the Scottish coalfield, Fife, is still solidly on strike. No coal is being produced at any of the Fife pits, which employ over 5000 of Scotland's 12000 miners.

In January and February, Wheeler, the NCB boss in Scotland, tried to use fires at Frances and Seafield collieries to blackmail the Fife miners back to work, but his threat of closures and redundancies didn't break the strike. Despite the announced closure of the Frances colliery, due to fire, Fife miners are determined that no compulsory redundancies will result from this, and they're campaigning for the redevelopment of the Frances/Seafield complex.

One Fife miner told us that the feeling for the strike was so strong that police are reluctant to venture into certain areas, such as High Valleyfield near Dunfermline. Police vehicles here have come under attack.

Elsewhere in Scotland the picture is mixed. Monktonhall, one of the two Lothians pits, still has a fair majority on strike. An extra effort has been put into picketing recently, and weekly busloads of other workers, students and unemployed from Edinburgh have been joining the pickets.

This activity has helped to persuade the NACODS men to continue to refuse to cross the picket lines - despite threats by management that they won't be paid unless they work. Once more the NCB are showing that they will break any agreement wherever they think they can get away with it. When will NACODS members nationally realise this and join them in all-out strike?

With NACODS not working, it seems that no coal production can be taking place at Monktonhall - despite NCB claims to the contrary.

The other Lothian pit, Bilston Glen, has been renamed Belsen Glen by strikers. Surrounded by new fences and rolls of barbed wire, security guards with dogs stand guard not only outside but INSIDE the colliery buildings.

Belsen was the scene of fierce clashes between pickets and police in the summer. But then the Scottish NUM leadership called off the mass pickets. In November scabbing suddenly shot up from under 100 to around 400. Local strikers urged the Scottish NUM to organise mass pickets to stop the rot. McGahey and co refused and the strikers seemingly lacked the confidence to organise mass picketing themselves, against their leaders' wishes.

Now around half the miners are working at Bilston, and coal is being taken out regularly. Nevertheless production is reportedly less than a quarter of the normal level. Strikers have received a

boost recently when workers at the local engineering firm of McTaggart Scott refused to work on a pump motor from Bilston Glen.

The strike is far from over in the Lothians, despite what the NCB propaganda machine claims, in full page adverts in the local press.

On 13 Feb around 400 miners demonstrated at the NCB Scottish HQ in Edinburgh, resisting police efforts to shove them away from the entrance. Police snatch squads acted in their usual despicable manner - even using passing school children as a shield to make their arrests. Many of the 16 lifted were specially picked out as known activists.

The 2 Ayrshire pits are about 50-50. Rowell, the manager at Killock, attempted to force SMT bus drivers to break picket lines by issuing an ultimatum about losing their contract. He was heavily defeated on this when the drivers overwhelmingly rejected this proposal from their management.

In January there existed in Ayrshire an excellent situation for extending the strike's effects beyond the coalfield. Over 100 schools had to shut because of lack of coal for heating. But the NUM has a policy of granting dispensations for coal deliveries to schools, and after a few days the schools were able to re-open.

If miners disregard this self-defeating policy, in certain regions the majority of schools could quickly be closed down. Having an impact like this beyond the coalfields is vital. It's absurd to place schools - places that condition and prepare us to be office, factory and dole queue fodder - in the same category as hospitals and pensioners. And hitting schools makes even more sense when teachers themselves are taking industrial action.

Police harassment of striking miners in Ayrshire continues. Strikers from Auchinleck were recently arrested for following a scab bus. Their bail conditions forbid them to picket in the area and they've been sacked by the NCB. In this they join around 50 other sacked Ayrshire miners, a similar number in Fife and around 30 in the Lothians.

A total of 207 miners have been sacked in Scotland as we go to press, including 100 (approx) in the Lothians.

Lothian police excelled themselves at Blinkbonny private mine (near Edinburgh) in early January. Striking miners succeeded in persuading 6 Blinkbonny men not to go into work. As they walked away from the picket line 2 of them were stopped by the police and asked where they were going. "Back to our bus" they replied - whereupon the police promptly arrested them. Can anyone still believe the police are neutral?

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

WORKING CLASS SOLIDARITY is not limited to Britain. One of the great gains of the strike is that many British miners now see themselves as part of the international working class. Lancashire miners have sent delegations to several European countries. Trips abroad by miners and their families have done more than just raised large amounts of money. They have helped to inspire workers abroad to fight back against their own bosses and rulers. And ideas have been spread about how to struggle effectively. Miners have been telling workers abroad about flying pickets, women's actions, and hit squads. described his recent visit to France: "We were enthusiastically received by miners at Bahren-Les-Forbach who formed a strike support committee ... these miners, the shipyard workers at Marseilles and aircraft workers at Nantes all wanted US to win because they face

the same problem of closures. They see our fight as one on three fronts: for the British miners, for the British workers, and for workers internationally".

In Amsterdam a large number of people occupied the office of the Dutch Trade Union Congress (FNU), stating that they would remain there until a 100% boycott of the transport of coal to Britain was achieved. Among those supporting the action were some miners from South Yorkshire. FNU president, Mr. Kok, called the police. 61 people were arrested. All refused to give the police their names, and after 7 hours they were released.

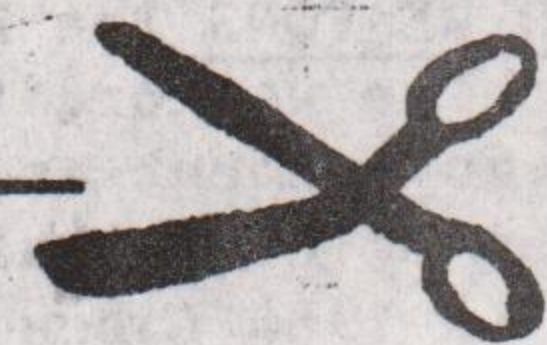
The miners' strike is part of a WORLD-WIDE resistance to attacks on living standards. Already this year sailors on French ferries and Spanish shipyard workers have taken militant direct action against redundancies. In Bolivia in January

workers demanding back-pay occupied 29 factories and held the executives hostage. And also in Bolivia, workers staged a 24-hour general strike for a wage increase. In Jamaica the poor have hit back against price rises with several days of rioting and looting.

It's not only in Britain that coal miners have been opposing cut-backs. Within the last year miners in Belgium and Spain have been striking against pit closures, while 'left-wing' governments in France and Australia have also been trying to sack coal miners. Militant workers all over the world need to set their sights on linking and co-ordinating their struggles internationally, if we are to halt the international bosses' offensive.

(Info. from COUNTER INFORMATION, a regular bulletin of news of miners' and other workers' resistance. Available from: Box 81, First of May Bookshop, 43 Candlemakers Row, Edinburgh).

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LABOURING IN VAIN!

The following leaflet was handed out by members of Wildcat at a "women's demonstration" in Manchester on 19th January. The demo was organised by the Labour Party with the aim of recruiting women activists. We think that people who join the Labour Party with the aim of changing it are wasting their time.

Radicals could never win control from the MPs and union leaders, with their massive block votes and stranglehold over the party's finances. Experience has shown all too clearly that it is the radicals themselves who are forced to compromise their ideas in order gain influence within the party. In any case, how could anyone think that a party with the anti-working class, anti-strike, pro-capitalist record we detail below could ever be 'won over to socialism'?

DOES LABOUR REALLY SUPPORT THE MINERS?

Labour politicians say they support the miners and other workers in struggle. But words are cheap. The actions of the Labour Party, in and out of government, tell a different story.

LABOUR IN GOVERNMENT

WAGES Under the Social Contract imposed by the last Labour government, wages fell more sharply than at any time since the 19th century. In two years, workers' real wages fell by real wages were cut by 10%.

UNEMPLOYMENT more than doubled under the last Labour government.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION Thatcher's public spending cuts are a continuation of the policy of the last Labour government which cut school and hospital building programmes almost to zero.

HOUSING Under the last Labour government fewer council houses were built than in any year since 1945.

THE POLICE IN 1977 Blair Peach was killed by Labour-controlled SPG riot police while on a demonstration. The Labour government continued to use the SPG against workers picketing at Grunwicks, and during

other industrial disputes.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS The British nuclear war machine was created by the 1945 Labour government and has been built on by every Labour government since. In 1964 Labour came to power committed to abolishing nuclear weapons in Britain. The cabinet took a secret decision to spend £1 billion on modernising the Polaris missile. The last Labour government increased commitment to NATO by raising defence spending by 3% per year, while it cut £4 billion off other areas of public spending in 1976 alone.

EQUALITY OF SACRIFICE?



VOTE LABOUR

LABOUR AND THE MINERS

The 1964 Labour government shut one pit almost every week for 4 years. More than 150,000 jobs in the pits were lost.

The 1974 'Plan for Coal' introduced by the new Labour government called for productivity rises of 4% per year at the expense of jobs.

In 1977, Tony Benn, Minister of Energy, combined with the NCB and NUM leaders to force the productivity scheme on to miners who had previously voted to reject it. This has led to big wage differences between areas, destroying the miners' national unity in struggle. Tony Benn says he supports the miners. But he bears a large share of the blame for the present weakness of the strike.

The 1974-79 Labour government reduced coal output, shut 23 pits, and cut 11,000 jobs.

LABOUR AND STRIKES

How do Labour governments react to workers on strike? What would they do if they were in government during the miners' strike?

"I control public spending in this country, and so long as I control it you cannot win. In short, gentlemen, the situation is this: I must destroy you."

This wasn't said by Thatcher to the miners, but by Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan in 1977, to a meeting of firemen during their strike. The Labour government went on to break the strike with the help of the army.

In 1979, Callaghan's government again used troops to break the tanker drivers' strike in Northern Ireland.

This wasn't the first time a Labour government had used troops to break a strike. In 1945, five days after the election of the Labour government, troops were sent in against London dockers on strike for a pay rise. The same government used troops against striking dockers again, lorry drivers, power workers, gas workers and ... boiler stokers at Buckingham Palace.

Some people say that this kind of thing couldn't happen again. But is today's Labour Party any better?

In 1983 Labour-controlled Southwark council called in paramilitary riot police against striking residential social workers.

In 1984 workers were forced to take strike action against redundancies, speed-ups and victimisations, imposed on them by Labour councils at St Helens, Hackney, Bolton, Liverpool, Sheffield, South Tyneside, Newcastle, Southwark, Islington, Tower Hamlets, Camden, Lambeth...

In many cases, strikers have had to face smear campaigns mounted by their Labour Party bosses.

And make no mistake, Left-wing councils such as Sheffield and St Helens are among the worst offenders.

STOP PRESS : Bolton Labour councillors have unanimously elected a scab miner to be mayor. Need we say more!

THE LABOUR PARTY : ENEMY OF THE WORKING CLASS, ENEMY OF SOCIALISM!

The Labour Party says the miners should fight for the election of a Labour government to solve their problems. The examples in this leaflet are overwhelming evidence against workers putting their trust in the Labour Party.

The miners must look, not to the Labour Party, but to MASS WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE to win their fight.

We can only bring about socialism by organising independently of all capitalist parties, right and left.

FOR SOCIALISM! DOWN WITH THE LABOUR PARTY!

Class War Prisoners Aid

The political war being waged against the working class has resulted in more than 9500 arrests (up to 15 Feb), 709 dismissals (Guardian 28 Feb), and numerous prison sentences (145 miners have been jailed so far, and 25 sent to detention centres). In addition, hundreds of miners have lost their jobs as a result of convictions arising from the dispute, and some have been forced to live miles from their homes as part of their bail conditions, in internal exile. Those who have been arrested for alleged crimes committed off the picket lines have been condemned by the national leadership of the NUM.

Class War Prisoners' Aid has been set up by a small number of revolutionaries with the aim of doing what we can to support miners and other workers criminalised in the strike. We are organised independently of any trade union body by people who emphasise the fact that the prisoners are casualties in a class war. We support the use of violence in defence of the working class, and we support all prisoners in the miners' strike whatever they have been charged with, and whether they are guilty or not.

Although we intend to emphasise the political nature of the struggle, and its connection with workers' struggles elsewhere, we are trying to practically aid the prisoners as much as we can. We are collecting information on the prisoners' names and their whereabouts, and will produce an up-to-date list on request from our London address. We urge supporters to keep collecting money for the CWPA, and send messages of solidarity to prisoners and their families. We are also compiling

information on the very limited rights prisoners have, such as what can be given to them in prison. Since the authorities have started using the old tactic of moving prisoners far from their homes, we hope to aid families with travelling expenses. Cheques should be made out to: Max Holz Committee, and sent to the address below.

AMNESTY

Charges have been dropped against striking miners if they return to work. On the other hand working miners have been arrested for the 'crime' of having been persuaded not to cross the picket lines. The way the law is being used in this strike is blatantly political. However we oppose the demand for political status for prisoners which some support groups have put forward, since we believe that this would divide miners from other prisoners, most of whom are working class people inside for petty crimes against capitalist property. We are for solidarity inside and across the prison walls. We also say that a return to work without an amnesty for class war prisoners will be a defeat: a movement can be judged by how well it defends its imprisoned comrades. They're inside for us; we're outside for them.

We are currently trying to set up groups in Edinburgh, Bradford, Stoke and Manchester. If you are interested in joining, write to: CWPA, 355 HOLLOWAY RD, LONDON N7. Tel: 01 607 8272.

* Use RECORDED DELIVERY post.

ORGANISE!

Right from the start miners in Lancashire have had to take action against attempts by Area NUM officials to sabotage the strike. In May last year 30 militant miners occupied NUM offices in Bolton to stop Sid Vincent, Lancs NUM President, calling off the strike. Vincent is renowned for saying whatever his audience wants to hear. But when it comes to action, militant miners know what to expect. A striker from Bold pit said recently: "if we want anything from Sid we'll have to occupy his offices to get it". Striking miners say they are being let down by their leaders. "The leadership is doing us more than anything," said a striker from Agecroft pit in January. Another striker told us how "it's the grassroots that's running things in Lancashire, not the union executive at Bolton".

The strike HQ is based at the most militant pit, Bold. Picketing is controlled from there by a committee of branch officials and militants. In addition the most active pickets meet regularly to discuss strategy, tactics, and the state of the strike. The divisions between the striking miners and the Area NUM run deep. The strike committee is allowed no representation on Lancs Area NUM Executive meetings - although they can send 'observers'.

Most strikers in Lancashire think that the strike has been weakened by the conflict between them and the Area leadership. In some ways this is true. Miners who want to return to work know they have the tacit support of the union leadership. But in many ways the strike is stronger - because, to a limited extent at least, militant miners are running it themselves.

Take the example of sequestration. The powerful Yorkshire NUM claims it no longer has funds to pay for transport for flying pickets. But the NUM had enough foresight to transfer money out of the country prior to sequestration. Why couldn't it make arrangements in advance to ensure that funds were available for the flying pickets? This is what happened in Lancashire. The strike organisers saw what was going to happen with sequestration. So they disposed of all the money held officially by Bold Branch NUM, distributing it to individuals and other bodies to keep. As a result they are able to

carry on running their "battle buses", taking pickets about, and going to meetings and making collections.

The truth is that the giant Area NUMs in Yorkshire and South Wales are more concerned about protecting their millions than winning the strike. They won't support militant actions that might lead to legal actions against them and fines. In Lancashire the strike committee has no funds to protect. It exists for only one reason - to win the strike. It has nothing to lose, and everything to gain, by calling for, and organising, illegal picketing.

We think that the unofficial organisation of the strike has not gone far enough. Strikers from Agecroft are now 'part of the Bold branch' because all their branch officials oppose the strike. But strikers in other pits meet separately in their local branches. This makes them very vulnerable to attempts by the NCB or union leaders to end the strike on a pit-by-pit basis. The lack of a unified organisation for all the pits in Lancashire is a major weakness. Nationally, this disunity is even more serious. Most miners simply don't know what is happening outside their area. Lancashire miners have had to organise mass delegations to other areas to find out what is going on. Scottish strikers visiting Lancashire recently were amazed to find how high morale is here.

Given the experience of this strike, how can anyone still claim that unions unite the workers? The unions are based on the division between the leaders and the rank and file, which means workers have no effective control over their own struggles.

None of these divisions can be overcome by working through the unions to reform them. A new form of organisation is required. We advocate control of strikes by mass assemblies, meeting every day, or in permanent session, which unite all those involved in the struggle, from every union and from no union. These assemblies would also solve the problem of treacherous leaders by making all members of strike committees etc recallable at any time by the workers who elected them.

MICHELIN LAYOFFS

The all-too familiar call from today's 'realistic' unions is for workers to accept lower pay and poor conditions in exchange for job security or under threat of redundancies. What this really means can be seen from the experience of workers at the Michelin factory in Stoke-on-Trent.

Last summer the union effectively sabotaged a growing strike against new working conditions. With over a thousand workers joining the strike even as the sellout was being negotiated, and with an almost identical dispute taking place at the nearby Simplex G.E. works. At the time works convenor Howle - who should be made to - justified accepting the inhuman continuous shift system, by claiming that the company had given a promise of job security until the year 2000 for the Stoke workforce. Such promises are obviously worth nothing. In fact the company now thinks the Stoke workforce will accept anything.

Now Michelin have announced a further 2400 redundancies and the union proposes no fight. They claim that by abandoning thousands of workers to a life of poverty on the dole they are protecting jobs! As the crisis bites deeper the role of the unions as mediators, who do not represent the interests of the working class but serve only to confuse and divide us, is being made clearer and clearer.

The workers at Michelin will have to organise themselves if they are to resist these savage attacks. They can expect no help from their union, but they can expect help from other workers. Most workers in Stoke realise that if the Michelin goes it will affect the whole community.

Michelin workers should organise meetings now to make plans for the fight. A first step in this fight would be to occupy the factory at Stoke and send delegates to the other Michelin factories in Ireland, and France, to put the case for spreading the dispute throughout the company. French workers have sent thousands of pounds to aid striking British miners. We must not accept the bosses attempts to divide us into competing countries. The workers of the world are facing a common enemy and must unite

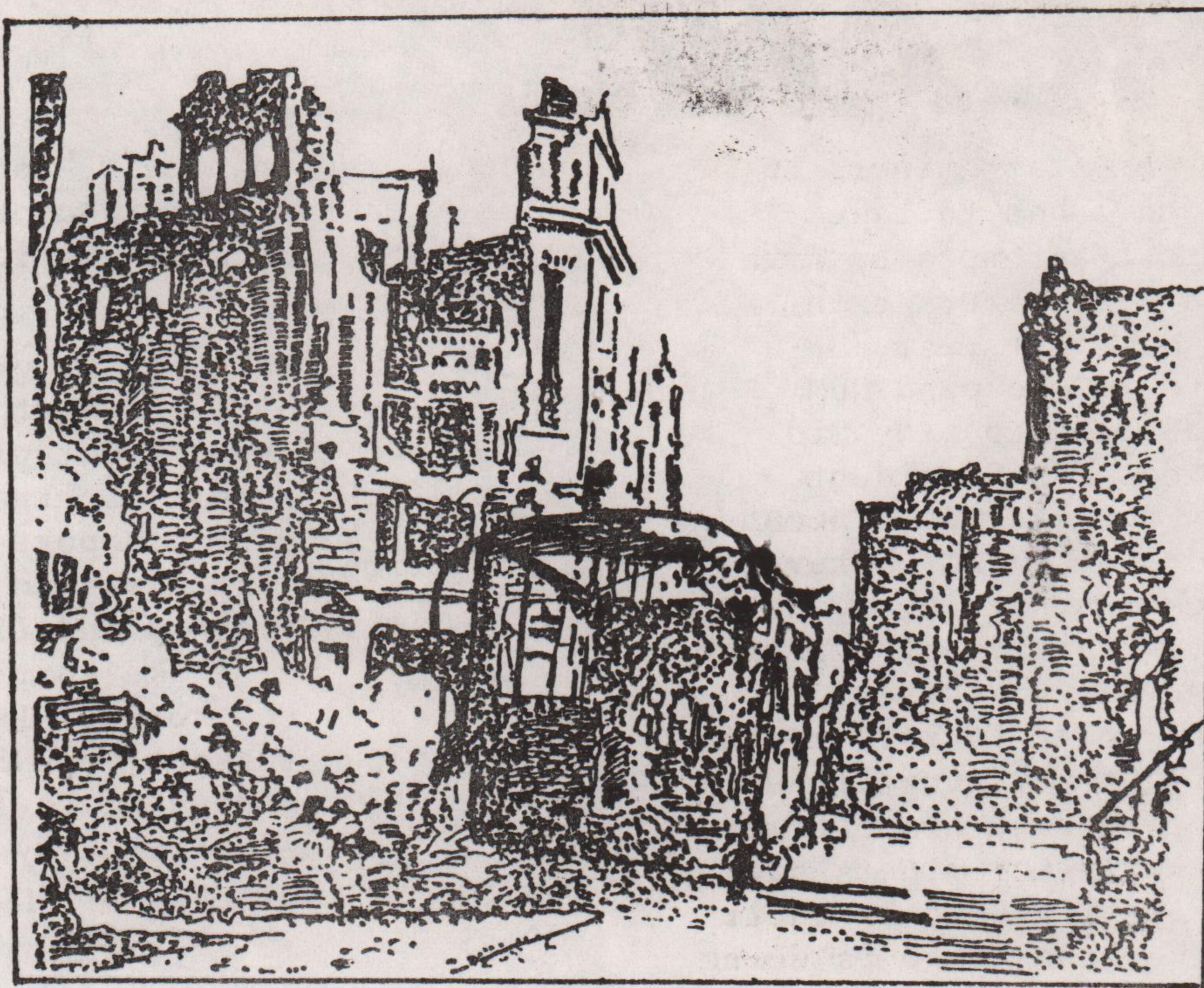
DRESDEN HOLOCAUST FOR DEMOCRACY

In the next few months, the ruling classes of East and West are going to try to make their populations believe that 40 years ago a war was won for the benefit of humanity, for freedom and socialism. The anniversary of the destruction of the German city of Dresden by the bombers of Britain and the USA on 14 February this year, reminds us that this is a lie.

From what you read in the papers, you would think Dresden was not a 'justified' target. But though it had no economic value to the German state, its destruction was fully justified in terms of the war aims of the democratic powers. It achieved its aim: demoralising and terrorising the working class population of Germany.

Churchill wanted a defeated working class. He didn't want a repeat of 1918, when Germany's defeat led to attempted revolution. By 1944 there was already the beginning of a movement of strikes and passive resistance by German and Italian workers. Dresden was packed with refugees fleeing from the marauding Russian army, and numerous forced labourers from all over Europe. It was attacked because it held so many people in such a small area, and because many of its buildings were made of wood, so it would burn well. The type of bombs used, as well as the timing (the Americans 3 hours behind the British, to wipe out the fire brigades) were calculated to cause maximum civilian casualties. Approximately 135,000 people died in the fire-storm. Capitalist democracy doesn't hesitate to take measures every bit as barbaric as fascism, and workers should be equally opposed to both. The left-wing parties who supported the Second World War are every bit as culpable as Hitler and Churchill.

From the origins of the Allied bombing offensive, the Chiefs of Staff were clear that killing civilians was just as important as destroying railways, factories and dams. Although they initially singled out the towns of the industrial Ruhr for destruction, this was because they "lie in congested industrial towns, where the psychological effect will be the greatest". (Air Vic-Marshall Bottomley, 9 July 41, quoted in Irving, The Destruction of Dresden



page 32)..And on 30 March 42, Professor Lindemann advised Churchill that it would be possible to break the Germans' spirit by aiming at "the working class areas of 58 German towns .." (page 35).

Having shattered the German workers' faith in the Nazi regime's ability to defend them, the Allies had to make sure they wouldn't arm to defend themselves, as they had done in 1918. They had to be totally terrorised; they had to realise that resistance was useless. When some German workers struck in 1947 in the Ruhr, the occupying forces left them in no doubt of the fate which awaited them if their resistance continued:

"Strikes which endanger the policies of occupying powers, or interfere with their plans, will not be tolerated. Any person who behaves in such a manner will be punished, and do not forget that under the laws of the military, the guilty can be punished with the death sentence. I have the power to cut the rations of anyone involved in work unrest ... this would be drastic, and would extend for an indefinite period of time." (Broadcast by US governor of occupied Germany 1947).

In other words, go back to work or we'll starve you to death!

WAR AND PACIFISM

For the CND, World War Two was justified. They want to ban

nuclear weapons, so that British imperialism is restricted to weapons like TNT and napalm when it razes enemy cities in a future crusade for democracy. People like the Greenham Common women think you can defeat imperialism by expressing moral outrage, and by "non-violent direct action".

To destroy capitalism and exterminate the butchers of Dresden will require "the mightiest civil war humanity has ever seen, where the proletariat seizes supreme power in its calloused fist to use it, as the god Thor used his hammer, to smash the heads of the ruling classes", as Rosa Luxemburg, the German revolutionary, put it in 1919.

As the ruling classes prepare to celebrate their victory, the class struggle continues. Let's spoil the celebrations!

IRAN-IRAQ WAR

Following our article on 'The Middle East: Imperialist War and Class War' in Wildcat 2, we read in the press of the International Communist Group that there have recently been mutinies against the Iran-Iraq war in the Iraqi army. In The Times (26 October 1984) the Red Cross reports riots amongst Iraqi prisoners of war in Iran.

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Support Class War Prisoners!

This was the title of a public meeting held in Manchester on 7th February, organised jointly by Fitzwilliam Prisoners Aid Committee, Class War Prisoners Aid, and Wildcat. The meeting was opened by a speaker from Wildcat who said that the new union laws make all effective activity during strikes illegal and force every militant worker to become a criminal. These laws have been used as the legal justification

for the reorganisation of the police force along military lines, in order to 'defend the law' during the miners' strike. Violent confrontation between workers and the state is now an inevitable feature of class struggle in Britain as it is internationally. Support for class war prisoners is inseparable from unconditional support for whatever actions miners and other workers in struggle consider are needed to resist and counter police violence.

Police State

Our posters for the meeting had urged people to "come along and hear the truth about the police state in Yorkshire". Anyone who thought this was an exaggeration was soon put right by Brendan Conway, the first speaker from FPAC. He described events leading to the riot in Fitzwilliam on 9th July - a story of provocation, community resistance, and finally a ferocious full-scale assault by the boys in blue. The miners in Yorkshire have seen their leading fighters imprisoned, exiled and placed under curfew, all for 'crimes' which would normally only merit a small fine.

The second speaker from FPAC, Pete Doody, had been savagely beaten by the pigs after his arrest during the riot. In a passionate speech he warned that no militant worker would be safe from the same treatment, and worse, if the working class did not rally to support all the class war prisoners taken during the miners' strike.

Much of the discussion which followed was about organising practical support for imprisoned miners. Following a question from the floor there was also a discussion on the role of the union leadership during the strike. The speakers from FPAC said that the unity of the strike was paramount. Although none of the miners' leaders were above criticism, this should be left to the miners themselves. Criticism 'from the outside' plays into the hands of the government and weakens the strike. Wildcat's view is that all supporters of the miners should give their 100% active support. But the strike is not strengthened, but fatally weakened by refusing to confront the fact that these efforts are being sabotaged by the union leaders. Every miner and all supporters of the strike should be fully involved in discussions about the weaknesses of the strike and how to overcome them.



Dear Wildcat,
Thank you for the papers. They sold instantly. Could you send 40 of the next edition.

... It is important to comment on leadership 'sell-outs' but you seem to be suggesting workers should not build the unions, but should build 'amongst themselves'. I hope that this is not the case, because the place that workers do grow in strength, and the place where we can argue and relate to class struggle, is the union meeting. Having said that, we agree totally, that union leaders have different interests to their members. Unions do act as an organ for social control but they also fight to improve working conditions and save jobs. To promote distrust of the unions and to suggest independent action is quite right. We do not, although, believe that workers, at the present moment, should completely dissociate themselves from the unions. Unions do act as a focus.

Yours fraternally,

C.K. (on behalf of York Anarchist Group)

Wildcat Reply: Thank you for your help in selling Wildcat. One of our main aims is to provoke discussion and debate, and we are eager to read and publish readers' comments.

We try to use every opportunity to put our views forward, and this certainly includes speaking at union meetings. Members of Wildcat also attend union 'general meetings' at their workplaces, and argue for militant action. But we don't get involved in the regular 'branch meetings', dominated by members of left groups and aspiring bureaucrats.

The problem with the trade unions is not simply that the leaders sabotage strikes. Trade union organisation divides workers into separate trades and industries. Trade union traditions teach their members compromise, moderation, reliance on leaders, and respect for bureaucratic procedures designed to stifle individual initiative. This is why we call for workers in struggle to break

Wildcat⁷

Basic Principles

Pamphlets

Thanks to all our readers who have sent donations towards our forthcoming pamphlet of articles from Solidarity, the newspaper published by the 'Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation' during the Second World War. This pamphlet is now ready to produce, but production has been delayed because of our involvement in the miners' strike. Maybe someone with some spare time and access to a good typewriter or a word processor could help us out with the typing ...

The revised editions of pamphlets on the Labour Party and the Socialist Workers Party have been delayed for the same reason. Apologies to readers who have written for them and not yet received them. Both pamphlets will be out soon.

STILL AVAILABLE: 'Front Line News From the Class War' (Analysis of recent strikes in Britain and Europe) - price 30p inc postage.



If you like the paper and want it to continue to appear regularly, we urgently need your help.

Take out a subscription.

Take bundles of the paper to sell to workmates and friends.

Place it in your local left bookshop if it is not already there.

Send us articles for the paper (short, no jargon) about class struggle in your area.

Wildcat is produced at present by a small group based mainly in Manchester. But we don't aim to stay that way! We would like new members to join our group, from any part of the country. If you agree with what we say, contact us to find out more.

from trade unionism.

There is an alternative. The miners' strike has shown how the crisis of capitalist society forces workers into all-out confrontation with the state, even in struggles for limited demands. The actions of militant workers in the miners strike, like the riots in 1981, show how new, radical forms of struggle develop as a practical necessity. Just as importantly, through these experiences, radical ideas become more widespread. We think that this radicalisation, occurring in the heat of the struggle, will lead to new forms of organisation arising, uniting ever-greater sections of the working class in a struggle which, finally, can seize power from capitalism. The next issue of Wildcat will go into this question in detail.

1) Opposition to capitalist society which exists in every country in the world; both in the form of 'private capitalism' and the 'mixed economy' as in the American bloc, and in the form of 'state capitalism' as in the Russian bloc, China, and much of the 'third world'.

2) Commitment to the communist objective - abolition of nation states and the money/market/wages system and its replacement by a classless society, common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources.

3) Rejection of nationalisation and other state capitalist economic measures as any solution to working class problems, or to the world crisis caused by capitalism.

4) Rejection of all expressions of nationalism, including 'national liberation' organisations such as the IRA, PLO etc. For the internationalisation of class struggle.

5) Opposition to all capitalist and nationalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. Opposition to all joint work with these organisations, including participation in front organisations such as CND.

6) Support and encouragement for independent working class struggle, outside the control of the trade unions (including the shop stewards and 'rank and file' movements), and all political parties.

7) Rejection of the use of parliament. For the active participation of the whole working class in its own emancipation through social revolution which overthrows all governments, bosses and leaders.

8) Active opposition to all forms of sexism, racism, and cultural and institutionalised barriers to working class solidarity.

9) Opposition to religion, pacifism and all other ideological mystifications.

10) Support for principled co-operation among revolutionaries, and opposition to sectarianism.

DEMO VIOLENCE

The press played down the violence at the massive Support the Miners demonstration in London on 24th February. Things started to hot up when courageous action by miners and demonstrators forced the pigs to release two miners who had been arrested. Later pitched battles raged for more than two hours in Whitehall and Trafalgar Square between police and demonstrators.



MINERS! LEARN FROM YOUR WIVES!

Thousands of women are playing a vital supporting role in mining areas. Without this involvement, initiated by the women themselves, miners would have been in a far weaker position to fight. As a woman canteen worker at Parkside pit said: "It mustn't be forgotten that this strike wouldn't have lasted more than three months without the self-sacrifice of miners' wives and the participation of thousands of women in support groups".

However, many NUM branches have refused to give money to the kitchens. Women from Fitzwilliam in Yorkshire say that they haven't had a penny from the union. Other branches have tried to impose strict conditions on the way money is used in the kitchens, to make sure the women know who's boss. Women from Upton Miners' Support Group refused NUM money. They said "They wanted to give a donation on condition that they had a say in the menu! But we're answerable to nobody". At Tower Lodge in Hirwaun, Wales, NUM officials insisted that £100 collected by the women had to go to them instead. A miners wife told how "its like working with the Mafia. Terry Thomas (Vice-President of South Wales NUM) came chasing after the money, and I wouldn't have been surprised if Neil Kinnock wasn't far behind".

When women want to go beyond the kitchen sink, and go picketing, they have had an even harder time of it. At Wistow colliery miners themselves organised a picket of a local power station, inviting all their supporters along. A miner described what happened: "The NUM officials came down and told us to leave because the pickets had not been organised by the NUM and not all the pickets were NUM members. They also told the female pickets to get back to the soup kitchens where they belonged! One official went over to the police lines inviting them to deal with us as they wished

because we were nothing to do with the NUM". This shows which side the NUM is on!

Militant women want more than to be allowed on the picket line. They want a say in running the strike. But despite their support and involvement, the wives and families of miners are not allowed into meetings to discuss the strike strategy and tactics. It is vital that everyone who is actively supporting the strike is treated as equal in taking decisions about what to do and how to conduct it. Women from a Welsh pit village told why they were banned from strike committee meetings - they had criticised the running of the strike, whereas the men were afraid to criticise 'their own' leaders.

Why are union officials so hostile to women becoming more actively involved in the strike? This demand challenges the very heart of trade unionism. For once you let miners' wives into the branch meetings, and elect them onto strike committees, a precedent is established. Once non-miners are allowed to fully participate in the strike, the way is open for more and more people to be drawn into the struggle - until what you have is no longer a trade union dispute, but a mass strike. In this situation, union leaders would lose any special claim to authority. They recognise this threat to their power. They are afraid of women activists who bluntly refuse to do what they tell them. No wonder they tell the women to 'get back to the kitchens'.

Women Pickets

Women who want to go picketing have met other problems. If they are the wives of militant miners who have already been arrested, they are reluctant to risk arrest as well, especially with children to look after. There is no reason why this should be organised by women. Men on strike should take their share of caring for children and let the women go picketing. Not just because everyone should be involved. But also, women make very good pickets. For many, it is their first experience of a picket line, but they know what to do.

A women's picket of Sutton Manor pit in Lancashire where I was present, stood out in contrast to the usual picket line ritual of a few shouts and people generally not knowing what's going on. We discussed beforehand what we wanted to do, and despite being heavily outnumbered by the police, we did give them a run for their money. And they hated it. They just couldn't think of enough sexist insults to fling at us. There was a feeling of solidarity and collectivity that comes from struggling together. Without the union leaders and union traditions to tell them how to behave, which the men have, women are able to simply do what they decide needs to be done.

Wildcat does not support the aims of the Greenham movement, but pickets can learn from their organisation. The women at Greenham Common in 1982 and 1983 had no officials to say what they could do. They organised several hundred people round an eleven-mile perimeter fence at night, keeping one step ahead of the police by using walkie-talkie radios, organising actions through group delegates to a small central planning meeting, making sure that all participants knew what was going on and everyone was playing their part, however small. What people involved in the miners' strike have learnt, that the Greenham women never did, is the need to respond to state violence with our own violence. As one miner's wife put it: "I've always respected the police, but I'll tell you what, I'll watch a bobby being kicked to death in the street in the future and I'll walk across to the other side. They've shown their true colours now".

Far from being the weakest section of the working class, unable to fight back against the bosses' onslaught because they are unorganised, women have shown time and again that it is their very lack of involvement in the organisations that hold men back, that enables them to organise themselves and carry out their own decisions and actions. This puts them at the forefront of the working class's struggle. If miners are to win, they must learn from their wives and mothers, girlfriends and daughters.