

# DIRECT ACTION

MONTHLY PAPER OF THE DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT/INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION...THE VOICE OF ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM. OCTOBER NO 19 20p.

## WHOSE STRIKE?

SO IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, EH?

There's been a lot of nonsense talked by people who have refused to aid the Miners' Strike this summer because it's 'political'. They won't extend solidarity because they say they don't want to be a pawn in Arthur Scargill's war.

The strike is "political", we make no bones about that. But then workers have had to struggle for everything we have gained as a class over the years. In this sense every strike is political. Otherwise why are strikes necessary at all? Why doesn't the system give the workers their rights without the need to struggle? The politics behind the strike certainly don't embarrass Thatcher's mob, that's why they're prepared to sink billions of pounds

and thousands of boys in blue into defeating the strike.

The myth that the Miners' Strike is just wrecker Scargill's personal war with the system has its source in the Establishment and their friends on Fleet Street. Unfortunately, many working people have swallowed hook line and sinker the lie that Scargill has pressured the Miners' out on strike, and is keeping them out by denying them a National Ballot so beloved of those great democrats Thatcher and McGregor (or for that matter Kinnock). But the facts of the strike tell a different story. The strike was not the work of NUM Generals, but was built by rank and file miners and has been sustained by ordinary miners and their families up and down the country ever since. The



vast majority of miners are behind the strike. Ordinary working people don't suffer real hardship for over seven months unless they feel an issue is worth the sacrifice.

This isn't Arthur Scargill's war. This is a fight by the miners and their families to protect their livelihoods and communities. And it's also a fight for all the working class. A victory for the miners against the Government will be a victory also for over four million unemployed, dockers, steelworkers, engineers, healthworkers, housewives - all of us. A defeat will make things for us all harder in 1985. A victory against the miners will give the Govt. the confidence to launch an offensive on jobs, workers and union rights that will make the last five years seem tame by comparison. That is why the Miners' Strike is political. That's why we are all political.

## DOCKERS'

At the time of going to press the 2nd dockers strike of this summer has been called off with an agreement which gives the union nothing. The TGWU claim a moral victory in winning informal acceptance of a quota for coal supplies to the Ravenscraig steelworks. This is meaningless when it is realised that the quota will yield 22,500 tonnes a week, after 8 weeks, exactly what British Steel had demanded. The Union have also failed to get any assurances on the Docks Scheme, and have failed to do anything about several employers who have ignored the scheme. The employers may use this to further erode the National Docks Labour Scheme, and to press for its abolition. This they want in order to be able to worsen working conditions in the docks, so as to increase their profit.

## BBC - LOW PAY

### BBC SECRETARIAL CAMPAIGN

Secretarial and clerical members of the ABS will be campaigning against low pay in the BBC towards the end of October. Most BBC staff in these categories earn under £6,000 pa and although the campaign is being organised centrally

branches are being asked to engage in their own direct actions. Some members will be putting up notices on their doors 'You are now entering a low pay area'. For more information contact your local BBC unit or ring Liz Verran on 01 262 0162.



# STEEL YARD BLUES

The British Steel Corporation has announced that its Ayrton works in Middlesbrough will be shut down in January, with the loss of 140 jobs. Trade Unionists at the plant say it's making money and were shocked by the announcement, though there had been runours. The closure of the works, profitable though it is, could herald a plan by BSC to privatise the associated products group of which the Ayrton works is a part. Work will be transferred to a South Wales plant as part of

BSC's rationalisation, workers not entering into their calculations.

The Ayrton works began production in 1871 and has made everything from tin suitcases to lighting columns.

There is a promised fight to save the works, but then there was supposed to be a fight to save the Cargo Fleet works (400 odd jobs) which closed in Boro last year. Middlesbrough "poor millionaire" Labour MP, Stuart Bell, is apparently going to lend a hand in the struggle. If the workers sink their redundancies into keeping the plant going Mr Bell has probably got his eyes on the Managing Director's job.

Throughout the Miners' Strike steelworkers have turned their backs on fellow workers fighting

to save their jobs and co-operated with the BSC to keep steel production going. They've been sold down the myth that their jobs are safer with the likes of McGregor (who really butchered the steel industry in his period as BSC Chairman) than if they make common cause with the miners to save jobs in coal and steel. The fate of the Ayrton works and those that closed before it shows what the reward is for siding with class enemies. Ravenscraig will go the same way (and BSC won't hesitate to use the Miners' Strike as an excuse) unless steelworkers take the wool from their eyes and learn to recognise their real friends and enemies.

-Teessider

## TUC 1984 HOT AIR AND COMPROMISE

by Philip Kane

"If there is going to be social disorder then we're not going to let other groups lead it over our heads", said the then secretary of the Wales TUC, George Wright, in November 1980. As this years TUC Congress progressed it became ever clearer that the official trade union leadership still clings to the same perspective. The result was a certain amount of overblown rhetoric amid the usual fudging on all the major issues that confronted them.

The most crucial of these was of course, the miners' strike. Faced with calls for a General Strike against the Tories from the Left and rumblings of hostility from the Right, the General Council opted for a desperate bid to placate both sides. They were able to come out of the situation with at least a little credibility. Congress predictably voted overwhelmingly in favour of an agreement that ties the NUM to the TUC's apron strings in the name of unity. The miners must now have the permission of both the General Council and the officials of the unions in the power industry before they can even picket a power station. Meanwhile the leaders of the AUEW and EETPU, upon whose support implementation of the agreement

depends, made certain that it is not worth the paper that it is written on by stating that they would not even consider showing solidarity with the miners.

A similar approach was obvious in other debates. For instance, Congress voted in favour of nuclear disarmament but declared its support for the NATO alliance. The Tories were roundly condemned for the banning of trade unions at GCHQ yet the option of a "no disruption" agreement with the Government was retained. A further motion described anti-union legislation as an attack on democracy, while a move that would have committed the TUC to supporting unions in conflict with existing laws was voted down.

A frenzied compromise culminated in the selection of a new TUC General Secretary to replace the outgoing Len Murray. The contest was between non-entity Norman Willis and David Lea, best known for his involvement with the anti-working class Concordat in 1978. Given that the present Government has little use for even such ardent collaborationists as Lea, the non-entity was duly elected by a wide margin.

The General Council have every reason to hedge their bets. Four years ago the Tories had pushed the leading officials of the trade unions out of the "consultative" machinery and into political wilderness. The result was utter confusion among senior officials who had grown used to being a formal part

of the state. Now their disarray is being compounded by a widening division between "left" bureaucrats who call for active opposition to Tory rule - with workers acting as a stage army - and "right" bureaucrats who see the future of their members as being linked to the profitability of "their" industries. Hence the present split between Scargill on the one hand and Sirs, Duffy and Chapple on the other.

Anyone who managed to follow the Congress from start to finish would have realised how desperate the TUC leadership were to bring about a reconciliation. The General Council's authority is more dependent than ever on their ability to appease the more powerful union bureaucracies. The result of all the internal political manoeuvres was the appalling chronicle of compromise in Brighton.

What of the working class that the TUC supposedly represents? When the hot air is dissipated from the conference hall, we find that we are left with the same old formula. As far as the bureaucrats are concerned, our well being depends on increased profits and competitiveness for Britain's bosses. The reformist unions will attempt to further both by trying to keep us all on a tight leash. Their 1984 Congress reaffirms the fact that workers in struggle will have to fight against their union bureaucrats as hard as they fight the employers.

DIRECT  
Action  
movement



AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT

(1) The Direct Action Movement is a working class organisation.

(2) Our aim is the creation of a free and classless society.

(3) We are fighting to abolish the state, capitalism and wage slavery in all their forms and replace them by self-managed production for need not profit.

(4) In order to bring about the new social order, the workers must take over the means of production and distribution. We are the sworn enemies of those who would take over on behalf of the workers.

(5) We believe that the only way for the working class to achieve this is for independent organisation in the workplace and community and federation with others in the same industry and locality, independent of, and opposed to all political parties and trade union bureaucracies. All such workers organisations must be controlled by workers themselves and must unite rather than divide the workers movement. Any and all delegates of such workers organisations must be subject to immediate recall by the workers.

(6) We are opposed to all States and State institutions. The working class has no country. The class struggle is worldwide and recognises no artificial boundaries. The armies and police of all States do not exist to protect the workers of those States, they exist only as the repressive arm of the ruling class.

(7) We oppose racism, sexism, militarism and all attitudes and institutions that stand in the way of equality and the right of all people everywhere to control their own lives and the environment.

(8) The Direct Action Movement is a federation of groups and individuals who believe in the principles of anarcho-syndicalism; a system where the workers alone control industry and the community without the dictates of politicians, bureaucrats, bosses and so-called experts.

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PUBLISHED: LEEDS DAM.

PRINTED: ALDGATE PRESS.

DISTRIBUTION: A DIST., 84b

WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET,

LONDON E1.



# SCABS IN KENT- THE MCGIBBONS

The following article is an edited version of a leaflet we received at DA, which is circulating in Kent - it does not say who it was published by. Who are THEY?

The McGibbons' first appearance was at British Leylands Cowley Plant in 1974. They led a victimisation campaign against a TGWU shop steward. It was a successful campaign which led to his removal from office. The main thrust of that campaign, led by Irene McGibbon, involved collecting signatures, and agitating amongst the wives of striking men. Robert McGibbon said then "the time has come for responsible people to do something, anything, to end this stupid and wasteful destruction" (Oxford Mail 25.4.74)...sounds familiar..?

In 1976 Robert McGibbon moved to Betteshanger Colliery in Kent.

WHY ARE THEY IN KENT AND WHAT ARE THEIR MOTIVES? Betteshanger Colliery has always had, and is proud to have, a long tradition of strong effective unionism. What better place for a right wing extremist such as McGibbon to attempt his disruption 'tactics'? Since this dispute began he

has been doing just that. McGibbon seized upon the NCB's timely announcement that Betteshanger Pit was in danger and unsafe, and said he would return to work. In anticipation of his return and to ascertain the state of the pit themselves, miners occupied the pit. The NCB obtained an injunction but the police refused to enforce it, knowing that an agreement was imminent. That day McGibbon, in the presence of his solicitor, and witnessed by Terry Harrison (NUM), Frank Redman and John Keenan (NACODS), signed the following agreement: "In view of arguments put to us by individual members of unions which would be affected by any closure of the Colliery, we have agreed as a gesture to help keep the peace, not to return to Betteshanger Colliery while the present strike lasts."

The NCB also signed an agreement subsequently that: "There would be no inherent danger to the pit".

McGibbon lied, he cares nothing for the long term survival of the pit, nor for miners' jobs, or communities. When he and three others reported for work on 3 September, he knew this provocative gesture would ensure:

- \*the immediate withdrawal of 300 officials in NACODS, COSA and APEX, depriving the pit of effective safety cover;
- \*the loss of coal deliveries to the retired, elderly, sick and disabled;
- \*and a massive police presence in the pit villages.

100 men have already been arrested, 8 remained in custody for a week and 29 have been sacked.

Mrs. McGibbon meanwhile, true to form, agitates amongst the miners wives, with offers of help, providing you can convince your man to cross picketlines.

SO WHO IS BEHIND THEM?

The Freedom Association is known to be actively involved, and they have a long record of such intervention. In 1976 they helped Notts. miner Will Richards take the NUM to an Industrial Tribunal. They have undermined strikes and broken closed shops in British Rail, Grunwicks, Local Government, the Post Office, Hotels in Oxford, Rank Toshiba in

Plymouth, and are notorious in the construction industry.

On 26 July this year Tony Cook interviewed both Norris McWhirter, Chairman of the Freedom Association, and McGibbon, on Radio 4's 'Decision Makers' programme.

When asked about his involvement with the Freedom Association McGibbon said: "Yes...during the Cowley dispute they used to phone, and have regularly been in touch in the present situation to ask how things are going; they suggested I put an answering machine on my phone to record conversations". McWhirter admitted that he had "personally talked with people involved", that he believed the situation in Kent was "...the worst in the country", and said "...we want to know more about it so we can be more EFFECTIVE in helping an extremely courageous man".

McGibbon is a man who has turned his back on his Union, has willingly acted as a tool of MacGregor, broken signed agreements and the trust of his workmates, and acted as a provocateur in providing the police with the excuse to place his neighbourhood and community under curfew

HE IS THE REAL ENEMY WITHIN.

Source: Leaflet.

## KEWAL

In Birmingham Asian workers, predominantly women, are still out on strike - the dispute began on 15th May 1984. The workers employed by Kewal Brothers, a textile factory, came out on strike when three workers were sacked for joining the Transport and General Workers Union. The dispute started when the union was in the process of negotiating improved rates of pay and conditions for the workers. This was agreed at an increase from £35 to £65 for a 40 hour week, and an increase on the piece rate. The T&G was also seeking an agreement that a transfer/increase on the piece rate, eg moving from fitting zippers to buttons, would not result in a loss of pay.

However, Kewal Brothers used this as a ploy

and sacked the workers who asked for these basic rights. The strike is part of an intensified struggle against bad working conditions in many sweat shops.

In the West Midlands alone about 450 textile factories employ 20,000 women; of these 99% are Asian.

One of the owners of Kewal's is a leading light of a local gurdwara(sic). Solidarity is needed from other workers to enforce decent conditions at Kewal's and others yet to be unionised.

The use of police in industrial disputes has been given much coverage in the miners' strike and the Barking hospital strike. In this strike the police have acted as allies of the bosses - showing their role as lackeys of the ruling class. The strikers face continual abuse from the owners as well as constant police harassment.

On August the 14th the pickets were attacked by

the owners and their friends with crowbars. Three pickets were injured but none of the management thugs was charged.

The pickets have had support from striking miners from South Wales and Nottinghamshire. They

need more support.

For more information ring the strike committee on 021-236 8323.

Donations to; Kewal Bros. Strike Fund, c/o Shahid Udhem Singh Centre, 360 Soho Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B20.

## AUSTIN ROVER

Austin Rover management continues to be concerned at the tradition of wildcat strikes at Cowley assembly. There have been 130 stoppages this year.

A recent stoppage was caused by 22 painters trying to impose a plant-wide overtime ban, in order to force the company to pay higher bonus under the production-linked incentive scheme. The union officials, advised the workers not to support the painters but meetings voted to support the painters and reject the officials advise.

After more than a week, the officials (who had never supported the action), negotiated a settlement of the strike which had stopped production of the Maestro and Montego models; that seems to amount to a redefinition of overtime!

The union leadership is tied to a policy of class collaboration. According to the Financial Times of September 19: "Both national union leaders and the management recognise the need to restructure the shop stewards movement in order to create harmony. But every attempt at reform is undermined by unofficial stoppages such as that provoked by the paint workers."



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OCTOBER 1984, NO 19, 20p.

## TUC - CAN THEY DELIVER?

T.U.C. - Pragmatists v. Perverts.

TRADE UNIONISM is a funny church.

Most of its members, most of the time, are non-practicing believers. The issue now is can they deliver? Indeed could they ever deliver these members? In the past the union bosses could never make firm promises to the Governments, whether Labour or Tory, and be sure their members would keep to them. Nor could they be sure the rank and file would uphold union deals with employers.

Now, just as the union bosses couldn't always carry their members in their collaboration with the State and the boss; in this more combative era they can't guarantee to muster their troops to take on the authorities.

Why should we expect it to be otherwise?

In 1969, the TUC proved muscle-bound as an arm of the Corporate State, when it agreed to vet wage claims of member unions, and act to mediate in unofficial strikes. Why now should it be any better as a 'threat' to Government?

### 'Syndicalist'?

Scargill's "syndicalist" shortcomings.

None of this can reassure central Government. It simply means the rank and file will go its own way; no matter if the TUC is run by 'realists' and pragmatists of the like of Duffy and Basnett or the so-called syndicalist perversions like Scargill.

The shopfloor spirit of sectionalism and selfishness ensures that sacrifices and solidarity are out. None of this makes the British any less easy to govern. A people devoted to sectional self interest is hardly likely to produce less chaotic labour relations.

Mr. Scargill's perversity, his rejection of some standard trade union practices, lies in his innocence - his belief that he is right. Unlike other union leaders he likes to lead from the front. Yet his very innocence stands him in good stead in the current strike. While a more reflective man, or woman, may have had self doubts, Scargill sails on leaving the more cynical, calculating and clever pundits, politicians and bosses, looking as if they can hardly hold their water.

The result has been the longest national strike in our history. An incidental consequence has been that the dockers have proof, if it were needed, that by a national strike (like the first one of this summer) they can put a choke on the Government in no time.

No General Strike of course! English workers are too bound up with their own short term self interest for that.



Yet the Government hope that mass unemployment would put a stop to these sectional struggles has also not been fulfilled. In the present climate neither of these events were remotely likely.

No amount of faith in the words of Marx could produce a General Strike for Mr. Scargill. Nor could Mrs. Thatcher, through unlimited doses of monetarism ever expect to change the nature of English workers.

What is clear is that

the workers are using tougher tactics, and this month the Financial Times warned: "As has been seen in riots in France, and in a long and --- uncharacteristic strike in Germany, high unemployment hardens militancy rather than undermining it!"

The facts are the striking miners are fighting for their jobs and communities. And the Notts miners (with some honourable exceptions) could n't give a shit.

Who gives a shit for the unemployed anyway?

The dockers were out in a demarcation dispute, and to keep for themselves the dirty job of shoveling up the slack. What to Government and middle class may look like a necessary structural change, to these victims looks like wanton demolition.

Nothing much has changed since in 1972, when Richard Hyman wrote (1);

'workers...will continue to react to situations rather than exercising positive control over their industrial destinies.'

My main criticism of Mr. Scargill's perverse syndicalism is that though he has transformed the tactics of traditional trade unionism, he has no syndicalist strategy. He offers us no vision of the future. No social change. No program for extending workers' control. No anarcho-syndicalism, just the syndicalism of sectional self-interest.

In so far as the Scargill strategy offers us anything it offers us business as usual. A rerun

of state control and more state investment. His response is militant, but his solution is not radical. It represents an appeal to the state.

## Realist Retreat?

On the other hand, the pragmatists in the TUC - Basnett, Duffy, Hammond, and even Moss Evans - are there to react to the actions of Government and the bosses. To work within the system, and not to change society. Some Unions are even making no-strike agreements - SWEETHEART DEALS - in exchange for sole negotiating rights.

One delegate at this year's TUC called such deals the signposts to the slave society. The Electricians union has been pioneering such deals.

Yet any retreat by the 'realists' on the TUC, is unlikely to be any more orderly than the present attack by the militants. Quite apart from the possibility of splitting the TUC in two, any accommodations by the unions with the bosses and Government will certainly lead to a return of the widespread unofficial strikes of the 1950's and 60's.

## What can we do?

The Direct Actionist has to work within the context this sectional self-interest on the shop-floor. Our industrial policy provides a guide for industrial democracy and workers' control. Direct Actionists are backing the miners' support groups up and down the country. In the North, they have been active on picket lines and in miners' demos. While the socialists just want to replace the rule of businessmen with that of politicians and civil servants; the direct actionists want to do away with all middlemen, with all bosses. 'New bosses for old' is not our slogan. All we want is what most English people want anyway; that is to be our own boss through the collective control of workplaces by workers themselves.

B. Bamford (Rochdale DAM)

(1) Richard Hyman - Strikes. Fontana.