

Thatcher Vindictive in Victory, NUM Defiant in Defeat

Bloody Thatcher Beats Back Heroic British Miners

MARCH 5 1985 —The British miners' strike has been defeated but the union has not been broken. For one full year, twelve long and bitter months, the coal miners fought valiantly against the British bosses and the bloodthirsty Thatcher regime. It was the sharpest and most deep-going conflict of British labor since the turn of the century. The Thatcher regime and the rotten edifice of British capitalism was profoundly shaken by the miners union who fought for all of labor and the oppressed. Isolated and betrayed by the scabherding tops of the trade unions and Labour Party, the miners and their wives resisted heroically against tremendous odds. Their pickets were arrested and beaten, even murdered; martial law was instituted in the coal fields; mining villages were devastated by Thatcher's occupation army of cops and thugs. Hardship conditions rivaling those of the period of the General Strike of 1926 were imposed on the miners' families."

On March 3, a delegates conference of the National Union of Mineworkers voted narrowly to call off the strike. Hundreds of miners fervently lobbied to continue the strike. Even after the vote, Kent and Scottish areas of the NUM vowed to hold out while negotiating for amnesty. There is widespread comradely solidarity for the 700 sacked miners, effectively blacklisted, unable to move or obtain retraining, some facing jail sentences. But defeated and bloodied, the miners union is not broken. Assured of her coal stockpiles with the collaboration of her swinish labor lieutenants of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Thatcher cruelly stretched out the strike. She yearned to smash the NUM and watch the workers crawl back in disarray. But in this she failed. In numerous places this morning, the entire community came out—men, women, children and dogs—as they proudly marched back to the pits, the sacked miners with them, bagpipes playing and banners flying. Even then many mines were picketed and workers stayed out.

The rabid bosses' press, from the Tory Times to the liberal Guardian, glorified committed anti-union scabs like Silver Birch. But especially at the very end many strikers were driven back in desperation by „Iron Lady“ Thatcher. Despite this defeat, the miners must above all preserve their fighting capacity. They ought to go back cohesively, not split up. However understandable it is to want to continue the strike or to want to carry out individual reprisals, the immediate task must be to keep their army as intact as possible, to retreat in good order.

The Iron Lady, who vowed to be „vindictive in victory,“ is itching for new victimizations of militants. But all reports indicate that the miners are defiant in defeat. The existing sackings must be fought, intelligently and collectively, and new ones avoided as much as possible. The way must be prepared for a new workers' offensive. Union martyrs like David Jones and Joe Green, cut down on the picket line, have not died in vain! Down with the despot Thatcher, unpopular even in her own circles for the cover-up of her cowardly butchery of the Belgrano's Argentine sailors in the squalid Falklands/Malvinas war.

Thatcher has taken aim at the entire trade-union movement. Remember the traitors! In the hands of the reformist misleaders of all stripes the unions were criminally misused to stab the NUM, to discipline the workers in the interests of the strikebreaking capitalist state. It is necessary to expose the base cowardice and treachery of the „lefts,“ who kowtowed to their big brothers in the TUC at every decisive point. The Labour Party politically scabherded and now its head Kinnock says he's against amnesty for strikers! Above all the lesson must be driven home of the burning importance of constructing a genuinely revolutionary party to mobilize the working masses in struggle. Without that the struggles of the workers, no matter how militant and courageous, are prey to the sabotage of the reformist traitors. As the great communist revolutionist Leon Trotsky reiterated after the 1926 General Strike: „Without a party... the proletarian revolution cannot conquer.“

The courageous miners' strike inspired unusual support internationally among all those fighting capitalist oppression. Food and financial support flooded in from all corners of the world, including black miners in South Africa fighting racist apartheid rule. Miners in France, dockers in Scandinavia fought to „hot-cargo“ scab coal. In this country the Partisan Defense Committee initiated an Aid to Striking British Miners' Families fund drive among local unions that has collected over \$20,000 for the coal strikers, despite the treachery of the Cold War AFL-CIO tops. The bonds of international workers solidarity will triumph over the war drive of the bosses and their labor lieutenants.

Comrade Jon Brule of the Workers Vanguard editorial board spent ten months in Britain during the strike. We print below an edited version of a speech he gave at a New York City forum on February 26.

Twelve Bitter Months of Class War

I had the privilege of spending ten months in Britain during the miners' strike. It's a strike in which two miners have been murdered on picket lines, several other miners and members of their families have been killed, something like 10,000 strikers have been arrested, over 600 have been fired from their jobs. And a strike that has

gone on now almost one full year, reflecting the grim determination of the miners to fight against great odds against Reagan's best ally, union-buster Margaret Thatcher.

The immediate thing that kicked the strike off was the announcement of the Thatcher government that they were going to close down 20.000 mining jobs. which was only the first drop in the bucket. What it means is not only busting the union, but wiping out whole mining areas in Britain, particularly in Scotland and Wales, in Yorkshire, in areas where the official unemployment rate is something like 18 to 20 percent, areas where if you walk through these villages you find men who are 20 or 21 years of age and have never worked a day in their lives. And because they leave schools roughly at the age of 15. it means that they've been completely out of work for their entire adult life.

I had the opportunity to look at the pay stubs of an older. South Wales miner, who's a skilled craftsman in the mines, and his take-home every week was £65, which is roughly that number of dollars. Britain is a particular example of the advanced decay of capitalist society in which there is no possibility of even maintaining the substandard existence for the working masses in that country under capitalism. What is starkly posed in Britain is the alternative between a barbaric solution under capitalism and socialist revolution.

If you look at England, or Britain, it's essentially an island built on coal. It's the motor force of the economy in that country, and therefore the struggles of the miners have become time and time again the clarion call for the working masses as a whole. And the fate of the miners has frequently proven to be the fate of the British working masses. The alternatives in this struggle are either a massive defeat and further leveling of everyone's living standards, or else opening the road forward to the possibility of a workers government.

Among the miners there's a deep historic memory of some of these past battles, going back to the period of the 1920s and the miners' strike at that time which led briefly to a general strike that was betrayed by the labor bureaucracy. One South Wales miner told me about what it was like after that defeat: about his grandfather who was killed in an industrial accident in the mines and never received any compensation. About his father, who lost his leg in a mining accident and received £50 compensation. About his uncle who was blacklisted after the 1926 General Strike and was never able to get work until World War II—for 14 years he was blacklisted from the mines.

And on the other side, the bourgeoisie also has a certain memory. There's a reason why the miners are Number One on Thatcher's hit list. They remember as well that it was the miners who in 1974 toppled the previous Tory government under Edward Heath. So there's a deep gulf and class bitterness on both sides of this strike.

Thatcher also has a particular hatred for the leader of the union, Arthur Scargill. Scargill was the only labor leader within the union movement in Britain to call Thatcher to order for her support for Reagan's anti-Soviet Cold War. When he came back somewhat over a year ago from a trip to Russia, he denounced „Ronald Ray-Gun“ and the „Plutonium Blonde,“ Margaret Thatcher. And he denounced the CIA union in

Poland, Solidarnosc, as anti-socialist. That not only earned Scargill the hatred of Thatcher, but also of the pro-capitalist trade-union and Labour Party bureaucrats in Britain, who led a redbaiting attack on Scargill at a conference of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in September 1983. Not a single delegate rose to defend Scargill. It was at that point that Thatcher determined that Scargill was isolated and she could undertake an assault on the miners.

Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross

When the pit closures were announced, there was a walkout in the mining area of Yorkshire at a pit called Cortonwood, which was the first target. And from there they set up flying pickets, or roving pickets, that went out to the other mines and shut down the coal fields. The strike was not actually called by the union leadership. They were presented with an accomplished fact. At this point Thatcher and the ruling class set up a huge hue and cry about how there was no ballot taken by the miners. This was picked up also by such people as Neil Kinnock, the head of the Labour Party. But the miners didn't play by the bosses' rules. They voted... with their feet!

The bourgeoisie and its labor lieutenants were miffed. They wanted a ballot all right, because they wanted to know where, when and how the strike was going to begin, so they could get their cops, their soldiers and everyone else there beforehand. Well, it didn't work. There were actually areas that voted to remain at work, and when they saw the pickets they came out on strike because they knew the union was determined. That's a -fundamental lesson that we had better understand in .the trade-union movement in this country—the power of class solidarity and the power of the picket line to mold this strike. And the capitalists have taken dead aim at the picket line: they have made it clear that if they win they will enforce Taft-Hartley type laws requiring secret ballots before any strike, outlawing secondary picketing and crippling the unions.

One of the more obscene things that Labour Party head Neil Kinnock and the labor bureaucrats have ranted about throughout the strike is the „violence“ of the pickets toward scabs and cops. According to them, picketing is all right ... as long as it's „peaceful.“ But what a picket line means is the right to have a conflict, the right to have a

battle. We are for picket lines that nobody crosses! Now sometimes you'll find picket lines, like on the New York docks, where it's usually pretty peaceful. You see one guy there and nobody crosses that picket line. The reason why nobody crosses the picket line is because they know something unhealthy will happen to them if they do. But that kind of peaceful picket line has to be earned in the class struggle. Not by dismantling the class struggle, but by mobilizing the power of labor so that the bosses respect your picket lines and the scabs think twice. In this country we put out a very nice supplement, „Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win,“ where we publicized a slogan that the coal miners in this country have—which is popular among the British miners now—that says: „Scabbing Is Dangerous To Your Health.“

I want to convey the attitude that these miners have toward those who have scabbed on their strike. One story I heard was about a guy who had scabbed in 1926. And he still lived in the same mining village that he lived in at that time. When he died at the age of 85, nobody had spoken to him for 60 years, and nobody went to his funeral. In some of the marginal areas of the coal fields, where there was a fair amount of scabbing, you run into the situation of sharp divisions within a family itself. When I asked this guy what his family was doing, he said, „Well, I've got one brother who's on strike in the northeast and I've got another brother who's scabbing.“ Then he said, „Let me correct that—I have an ex-brother who's scabbing.“ So it's a real bitter blood line.

Program for Power

We sought to put forward a program that could lead to victory in this great battle. The problem confronting the miners is that you can't defeat the capitalist state alone. The Thatcher government has marshaled a massive amount of police power. You have 400 cops from Sunday to Sunday occupying a small mining village. If you're on strike they follow you to the store, they follow your kids to school, you can't go to a neighboring village a mile and a half away. If you try to ride a bus to that village, the police get on the bus and throw you off.

So it was abundantly clear that in order for Thatcher to be defeated, the key task was to mobilize other sections of the working class. From a trade-union standpoint, it would seem to be a relatively simple question. The British economy is fundamentally based on coal. If the steel workers, rail workers, longshoremen and power workers refused to handle coal, the country would quickly grind to a halt. And in Britain these kinds of actions are not all that strange to the trade-union movement. It is a union movement that is far less straitjacketed than the American trade-union movement has been within the past two or three decades.

The problem is that it is fundamentally a political question which is posed: once the country is shut down, who is going to start it up again? In short, which class is going to rule this country? Will it be the working class or will it be the capitalist class?

„That fundamental question has been posed in any number of miners' strikes in Britain. In 1919 for example, there was an alliance between the miners, rail workers and transport workers called the Triple Alliance. The bourgeoisie was sweating it out, so they called in the three top union leaders. The prime minister Lloyd George told them he was at their mercy—they had the power to shut down the country. But he asked them what they would do next: „If a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state or withdraw.“ They had no answer to that. One of the trade-union leaders remarked that from that time on they knew they were beaten, because they were not prepared to exercise power. It's a little highlight on a statement that Marx made well over 100 years ago in the Communist Manifesto, that every class struggle is a political struggle.

And despite the sabotage of the labor bureaucracy, the question of power was raised sharply by this strike. The courageous example of the miners' hard class struggle displaced the normal mechanisms of bourgeois society. This was palpably evident in terms of 1) key trade unions, 2) general social relationships between the oppressed layers of the country and the miners, and 3) the loss of self-confidence by the bourgeoisie itself. At least in the ranks of several strategic unions—dockers, rail workers, seamen—there was determination to bypass the established TUC to defend this strike. Had these unions gone on strike alongside the miners, it would be effectively a general strike. What was missing was a leadership willing to have an all-out confrontation with Thatcher.

When instructions were issued by the leadership of the rail union to its members not to carry coal during the strike, the ranks were steadfast, with the exception of two or three areas. These workers have braved considerable numbers of victimizations and in some instances firings in order to carry out this policy of solidarity. There's one area called Leicester, a heavily scab area where out of some 2,000 miners, there are only 30 on strike—they're nicknamed the „Dirty 30,“ I believe. But in the rail depot adjoining that mining area, called Coalville, for ten months the rail workers have refused to carry coal and have been sent home every day without pay. The leadership refused to back them up with nationwide strike action. And twice the dockers went out, fed up with the government using scab labor to unload imported scab coal into that country. In an island economy like Britain, if

you stop what comes in and out of that country, you grind that country to a halt. It was only due to the cowardice of the leadership, which in both instances called off the strike, that the Thatcher government was not toppled.

Secondly, I want to talk about something that's even more startling in certain respects. In normal capitalist society there are numerous divisions promoted by the ruling class. In England there are racial divisions between the white population and the minority of blacks and Asians. And also national hatreds, particularly directed at the Irish in that country. Here you have a union that's predominantly white miners, and not only that, they come from the backwaters. Yet in the course of the strike, there was an amazing social radicalization of the miners. At the same time, those layers of the population which are generally those whose needs are least addressed by the trade-union bureaucracy have rallied most strongly to the cause of the miners.

For example, at demonstrations in Belfast initiated by the Irish Republican movement, there were actually—and this was not reported in the press—large contingents of striking British miners who marched with the Irish Catholics. Throughout these very poor Catholic ghettos, hanging over the streets were large banners that said, „Victory to the Miners!“ It was similar in Dublin where large food and money collections have been taken up for the coal miners. And this is very unusual, that the Irish populace supports any struggle of the British proletariat.

You have to understand the impact of this stuff on the miners. You will hear many miners basically say the following thing: that until this strike I never knew what it was like to be an Irishman in Ulster, I never knew what it was to be like a black or an Asian, mistreated by

the police: In London, the miners organized collections on the streets in order to finance food for their families. And there's quite a bit of competition among the different lodges to get down to Brixton first and to get a good street corner. Now, Brixton is the West Indian ghetto in London, and it's an area of the city which is far poorer than many other working-class areas of the city. But the miners go down there because proportionately the support they get from the blacks and the Asians is much greater. One miner told me a story, that on one occasion on his picket line the police attacked the strikers and arrested 54 miners. Fifty-two miners were charged with disturbing the peace. Two miners were charged with malicious wounding of a police officer. The two miners charged with assaulting a police officer were both black miners. The striking miners learned something from that.

Then there is the magnificent role played by the miners' wives who have in many ways become the real backbone of the strike. While at the beginning their activities were centered around the food kitchens, it wasn't very long until they pushed their way onto the picket line and took their place beside their class brothers and husbands in fighting against Thatcher's police. I've heard many a story where you've had demoralized miners who were considering returning to work, and it's the wife who has put some backbone into these guys.

You also have a loss of self-confidence in the ruling class itself which continues to this day. The pound has hit rock bottom. Even at the time I went over there in March last year, I think it was \$1.40 to one pound, whereas now it's something like \$ 1.10, and going down. Every time that there was a threatened mobilization of the working class, for example during the dock strike, or when the foremen's union in the mines threatened to go out on strike along with the miners, the stock market would shoot down. In the second instance it shot down by a record 30 points in one day. And just recently, Thatcher couldn't even get a vetted [screened] jury to hand down a conviction of a senior official in the defense ministry who had leaked documents about Thatcher's premeditated butchery of 300 Argentine sailors aboard the battleship *Belgrano*.

All of this has happened within a year or two after Thatcher was re-elected with overwhelming majorities on the basis of the Falklands/Malvinas bloody little war. A wave of chauvinism swept over the British populace and her reactionary government was the beneficiary of that. The soldiers who came back from the Falklands had a big banner on the aircraft carrier. At the time there was a railroad strike in England, and the banner read, „Call off the rail strike or we'll call an air strike.“ But much of this anti-trade unionism and chauvinist prejudice that engulfed the working masses of Britain largely evaporated during the miners' strike.

There was a particular incident that illuminated this social realignment. In October the IRA set off a bomb in the Grand Hotel in Brighton where the Tories were holding their conference. The responses were quite interesting. The common joke in the mining areas and among other working-class areas was the IRA ought to be shot... because they missed Thatcher. A comrade in a car plant in Birmingham reported that somebody there made the observation that the police had better start rounding up their suspects now because there are 50 million of them.

This is a plant where ten years earlier, after a bomb blast attributed by the press to the IRA killed a number of people in a local pub, the Irish workers were physically driven out of the plant. The reaction this time was much, much different. Even among the bourgeoisie, where one could imagine them whipping up an anti-terrorist crusade, the response was more outrage at the lousy security preparations and the police incompetence.

Cold War Split in the Workers Movement

So when we talk about a program of power and of mobilizing the workers movement to bring this government down in struggle, that makes sense. Because significant sections both of the trade unions and the oppressed populace are thirsting for a fight. The problem here is the leadership within the workers movement. And in Britain the official leadership of the labor movement, like the AFL-CIO in this country, is dead-set against class struggle of any kind, let alone a class struggle that would actually drive out the Thatcher government.

At the same TUC conference where Scargill was rebaited for having told the truth about Solidarnosc, the TUC adopted a policy called „new realism.“ It was like the AFL-CIO which just issued a self-criticism saying they'd been too hard on the bosses! Thatcher took this as an invitation to go out and bust unions. One significant thing that happened was at this spy operation at a place called Cheltenham in England. It turned out that the unionized clerks there were known to take union action on occasion. One of the times they walked off the job was during the KAL 007 provocation that Reagan initiated. That strike was fine with us—but not with the CIA and Thatcher. Under Reagan's orders, Thatcher declared that henceforth there would be no unions at Cheltenham, and the TUC basically sat on its ass and did nothing. This was only, I think, a month before the miners' strike began and it was a premonition of what was going to come. The TUC's been in Thatcher's camp, and has been rewarded for services rendered. In the midst of the strike, the former head of the TUC, Len Murray, and the head of the power workers union, Frank Chappie, a vicious right-winger, were both elevated to peers of the realm. They don't have a lot of money there. Whereas here you can buy off union leaders by giving them big salaries, in England, because it's a very poor country, you make them into lords.

This is a very, very political strike where the trade unions have lined up, not simply on union positions, but on the basis of their attitude to the Soviet Union. Those people in the British trade-union movement who most hate the strike and instruct their members to cross picket lines are those that most rebaited Scargill and hate Russia. You can't defend the unions unless you defend the Soviet Union. Despite the political degeneration in the Soviet Union under Stalinism, we defend the revolutionary gains that were made in October of 1917: the booting out of the landlords and the capitalists, and the establishment of a planned economy. And we seek to extend this to the capitalist countries. Conversely, the social democrats and labor traitors hate with a passion this idea of social revolution and don't want to see it happen at home. So when you raise the question of power, you also raise the question of, politically, where does an organization within the working-class movement stand in terms of its duty to defend the Soviet Union against imperialism?

On this question there's not only a division within the workers movement in Britain, but internationally. In particular, the bitterly anti-communist trade-union movements in the United States and Germany have done nothing to assist the miners. In Germany when collections were taken up for the miners, they were actually sent to the Steelworkers union in Britain, which is scabbing on the miners' strike. The AFL-CIO doesn't even make a pretense. When I came back I called up the AFL-CIO, and just for the record asked what they were doing about this strike. They put me on hold and about two minutes later a woman got back on the line and said: nothing, we haven't given any money. That's fairly well known among active strikers in Britain, so there's a real appreciation there for the solidarity campaign initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee. And let's not forget Lech Walesa & Co. During the PATCO strike, this CIA company union was the only so-called union in the world that refused to defend the air traffic controllers, because they wanted to be buddy-buddy with Reagan. Same thing this time around. Lech Walesa issued statements saying that Thatcher is a wise and brave woman, and welcomed a delegation of scab miners from Britain.

At the same time, one of the nice things about the strike is that there are actually some sections of the proletariat internationally where defense of the Soviet Union and hatred of imperialism is a virtue. In France, where a good section of the proletariat is pro-Soviet, the large CGT union, tied to the Communist Party, has organized an extensive campaign of fundraising and food shipments. French miners had dumped a series of truckloads of coal that were destined for Britain. And this (lew right in the face of the usual protectionist practices of not only the conservative AFL-CIO bureaucrats but also the French Stalinists and British „lefts.“ They have a program that the way to save your own job is by keeping out imports from foreign countries—that is, blaming foreign workers for the absence of jobs. This was an instance where French workers destroyed their own coal shipments in order to side with their British class brothers. It reflected an understanding that if the British miners could win a major battle against a government that wants to smash their union and eliminate their jobs—the same problems faced by workers not only in Britain but in France, the United States, and throughout the capitalist world—then the struggles could much more easily be fought at home.

And there was the £ 1,000,000 donation collected by Soviet trade unions for the British miners. That drove the anti-Soviet left in Britain nuts: they couldn't handle it, so they refused to mention it. It is well known among the Russian miners and the Ukrainian miners that Scargill stuck his neck out to defend the Soviet Union against Reagan and Thatcher. And they appreciate it. And when the Soviets sent this aid, they said we remember what the

British working class did for us after the civil war when the imperialists tried to invade our country. We remember that the British workers went out on strike and the dockers refused to load munitions for our enemies.

Now, one of the great crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy has been to gut that sense of internationalism. A typical example is the conduct of the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy under Jaruzelski which has scabbed on the British miners by sending massive shiploads of coal to Britain. But in Russia this time it was somewhat different: the miners' strike demonstrates in embryo how militant class struggle in the West linked to defense of the Soviet Union can crack the nationalist stranglehold of the Stalinist bureaucracies on the working masses. What is necessary to carry this perspective through consistently is the building of Trotskyist parties internationally.

Strike with the Miners!

That was the political context of the strike: on the one hand a considerable section of the British working people that are eager to fight. On the other hand, a Cold War division within the trade-union leadership—the right wing is openly scabbing, and the left wing is talking solidarity, but when anything decisive happens, they retreat in disorder. What kind of program do you put forward in such a situation in order to give the most conscious militants in the workers movement a program to fight around?

We knew there's no point in approaching the TUC. If you want to shut down the country, to call on these guys to do it is the kiss of death. The left groups who shared the TUC's anti-Sovietism felt perfectly at home appealing to their social-democratic brothers for action. They were miles to the right of the miners themselves. I remember when the new head of the TUC, Willis, was invited to speak at a miners' rally in South Wales last fall. One of the strikers climbed a 50-foot pole and dropped a noose about two inches from this guy's head. It was an unambiguous message.

So instead we singled out a number of strategic unions that claimed to back the miners—the seamen's union, the Transport and General Workers (which includes the dockers and the truck drivers), the rail unions—to break with the TUC scab policy and go out on strike together with the miners around a program of demands that could unite the working class in struggle: no layoffs, a 10-percent wage hike with full cost-of-living protection, an end to Thatcher's policies of privatizing—or selling the nationalized industries back to the private sector. We demanded no victimizations of anybody by the government and the bosses. It was a fighting program that addressed itself to those sections of the class that were prepared to struggle, it put the left union leaders on the spot, and would effectively mean a general strike.

We raised some other demands that are equally crucial. One is that we wanted to incorporate the most militant pro-miner elements among even those who are not represented formally by the trade unions. We wanted the women's committees in the coal fields to have representatives on the strike committees, and delegates from the unemployed and minorities who have been the most militant supporters of the miners' strike. We said bring the women in and kick the scabs out of the union, who still to this day have not been expelled from the NUM.

Now, we are a fairly small organization in Britain. But when we talked about class solidarity, unlike countless left groups waiting on the TUC or crossing picket lines, we meant business. We had a supporter in a Rovers car plant in Birmingham. Now, they had been running a real dirty operation there. Basically, they'd been sneaking in large quantities of scab coal. The union leadership. Communist Party members, were pretending to back the strike and giving money to the miners, but they were collaborating with this scab operation. So we found out about it and our supporter, Patrick, initiated a campaign against this scab coal.

At one particular miners' support demonstration that Scargill addressed in Birmingham, Patrick had a sign that said, „No Scab Coal in British Ley-lands!“ The miners there remarked on this sign—they were shocked and furious at the scabbing. Then afterwards, one of the trade-union leaders, the equivalent of a Teamsters leader here, came up and said, „You know, I've been reading the Spartacist paper, and we're going to do something about this scab coal.“ An article appeared for the first time in the bourgeois press on this scab operation. And miners and lorry drivers actually organized a small picket line outside the plant. It wasn't enough—it didn't shut out the scab operation. But it polarized the local trade-union movement.

Unfortunately Patrick, like many other militants who have fought to defend the miners, was victimized. He was fired for putting out a statement that when the car workers' pay claim came up they ought to go out on strike alongside the miners. The striking miners themselves organized a contingent from at least two lodges in the surrounding area to demonstrate at the plant gates in defense of this man who had stood up for them. That showed the potential for establishing unity in struggle among diverse sections of the British masses, if you have principle and determination.

For a Revolutionary Trotskyist Party!

This points to the need for a revolutionary political party of the working class. But what the British working class has got is the Labour Party, which we characterize, in the words of comrade Lenin, as a „bourgeois workers party.“

While organizationally based on the unions, its policies in practice are to administer the rotten capitalist system. The last Labour Party government closed more mines than Thatcher and the Tories. They called out the troops against striking firemen. They sent the army into Ireland. You name it—they're stewards of the British ruling class.

On the road to the British socialist revolution the Labour Party must be split, its working-class base split from the pro-capitalist tops and regrouped in a revolutionary Trotskyist party. For almost the entire British left, however, the Labour Party is sacrosanct. The Labour Party can be reformed, they claim, into an instrument to achieve socialism through nice, polite discussion and debate, while maintaining it as a party that encompasses every element of the class. This Kautskyan conception of the „party of the whole class“ has proven utterly bankrupt during this strike.

„Judas“ Kinnock, as the miners call him, is widely reviled throughout the coal fields. Middle-aged strike leaders were resigning their long-time memberships because their local Labour Party branches were run by scabs. Kinnock's own branch in South Wales passed a motion endorsing his expulsion. At a time when class struggle was threatening to blow the Labour Party apart, the Labour „lefts“ and their apologists were closing ranks behind Kinnock. The group that publishes Socialist Action, which is loosely affiliated with the SWP here, wrote an anguished editorial denouncing the very idea of expulsion as treason.

Well, we'd like to see the CIA-loving right-wingers driven out of the Labour Party. Not because we trust the „lefts,“ but because we want to make these pseudo-socialists responsible for their treacherous policies before their working-class base. But what these guys want to do is hide behind the coattails of Kinnock & Co. This was graphically demonstrated at the Labour Party conference in October, where there was a partial revolt against Kinnock and his bootlicking. They voted down Kinnock's motion to condemn the violence of the pickets as well as the violence of the cops. They voted to authorize local councils to defy Thatcher's spending limits. Yet nothing came of it. No one wanted to take up Kinnock's challenge which he laid out in his address: if you want to change the government, you do it through the ballot box and Parliament and not by picketing and defying the law. Prominent „lefts“ like Tony Benn and Scargill himself did nothing. Even a feeble call for a one-day strike was rejected. Kinnock was unanimously reelected as head of the Labour Party. Later Benn explicitly justified this by claiming that „unity“ is necessary and you can't criticize even Neil Kinnock at a time like this.

Even those like Scargill, despite their militancy and gut desire to win, are chained to reformism and Labourism, which means ultimately subordinating themselves to the class traitors. By refusing to break openly and sharply with the Labour/TUC misleaders, particularly the „lefts,“ the NUM leaders have greatly weakened the strike. Futile back room negotiations with Kinnock and the TUC scabherders have taken the place of the necessary appeals to the key transport and rail unions for joint strike action. To this phony scab unity with the class traitors we counterpose unity in action on the picket line.

The Labour Party with its millions of members is impotent to defeat Thatcher. It's impotent because the trade-union fakers and Neil Kinnocks who run it don't want to fight capitalism. We seek to forge a different kind of party—a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party which will serve as the general staff of the working class. Such a party has no room for this fifth column of scabherders, racists, pro-imperialists and their left apologists. We seek to forge a party that would embrace the tens of thousands of militants who have been struggling today with all their power to see the miners victorious—a party that consciously will lead the working masses to crush capitalism for good through the road of the class struggle. ■

PDC Miners' Fund Tops \$20,000

MARCH 6—The fund drive initiated in November by the Partisan Defense Committee to appeal to American unionists on behalf of the British miners has now raised over \$20,000. The PDC's Aid to Striking British Miners' Families fund campaign was warmly received February 16 at UAW Local 719 in La Grange, Illinois near Chicago. There, workers at the huge General Motors ElectroMotive Diesel plant donated \$ 148.26 altera PDC spokesman, recently returned from Britain, gave an eyewitness account of the hard-fought strike. A UAW International representative had intervened to squash a donation from the local treasury, but one worker rose to demand that a collection be immediately taken up: „Don't you watch television and see what Thatcher is doing to those miners?“ The PDC speaker had emphasized that „Iron Lady“ Thatcher was bent on giving the embattled miners the union- busting „PATCO treatment“ that Reagan & Co. aim to use against labor struggle here in the U.S.

In addition to raising money through its own campaign for the miners, the PDC, in keeping with its announced policy of assisting others involved in parallel fundraising efforts, has also helped secure donations for the NUM's Miners' Solidarity Fund or for particular collieries. PDC representatives have assisted striking miners from Nottinghamshire touring Detroit. At UAW Local 303 outside Toronto, almost \$1,000 has been raised for a Northumberland mine after the PDC assisted a visiting miner in appealing to the local. And a miner from the NUM Armthorpe Branch in Doncaster (Yorkshire) spent four weeks in Toronto and spoke before the Metro Labor Council and at a Steelworkers meeting, after contacting the PDC. An unexpected dividend from the Doncaster striker's trip came when he forced the fake-leftist Revolutionary Workers League to back down from their three-year policy of cowardly anti- Spartacist exclusionism at a meeting where he was speaking.

The PDC drive has had to combat opposition from right-wing exec board members who, taking their cue from the do-nothing line of the AFL-CIO, have tried to derail the PDC's efforts to enlist American unions on the side of the miners. Among the union locals that have asked the PDC not to publicize their contributions are postal workers and other government employees, uneasily aware of the redbaiting emanating from such union „leaders“ as the CWA and American Postal Workers Union tops. Sometimes the obstruction has come from ostensible „leftist“ spokesmen. For example, the PDC made an appeal at AFSCME Local 444, representing Bay Area waterworks employees, on February 14. After local members raised over \$80 by passing the hat and voted to send another \$100 from the treasury, a supporter of the British „Militant“ group opposed sending the money through the PDC's fund. This sectarian ploy was spiked when the local voted to split the donation, sending half through the PDC fund, half via the „Militant“ backer. A local member rose to challenge the latter: would he be able to give the members as good an accounting of how this money reached the miners as the PDC has scrupulously done for every penny?

Over the past month, the Aid to Striking British Miners' Families fund has collected over \$5,000. Chicago transit workers (ATU Local 241) contributed \$300; Carpenters Local 67 in Dorchester, Massachusetts, \$500; and Los Angeles freight drivers (IBT Local 208), \$250. In Northern California, locals contributing included public employees (SEIU Local 18), butchers (UFCW Local 120) and Teamsters Local 70. Donations were also received from CWA Public Employees Local 4512 in Cleveland and AFSCME Local 171 representing University of Wisconsin employees.

Funds were also raised by passing the hat at union meetings: \$136.05 from UAW Local 148 in Lakewood, California; \$114.75 from Typographers Union Local 21 in SF. Smaller sums were raised from collections in numerous other locals including Molders Union Local 164 in Oakland, UAW Local 600 M&C Unit in Detroit, as well as SF longshoremen, machinists from IAM Lodge 68 in Daly City, California, Chicago steel workers and Boston area restaurant workers.

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