

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

and thousands of boys in
blue into defeating the
strike.

The myth that the Miners'
Strike is just wrecked



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

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

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

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" industry.

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.

I would like to know more about the DAM/IWA. Please send more information.

"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

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 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.

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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.

accidental 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 monetaryism ever expect to change the nature of English workers.

What is clear is that

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

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' demo s. 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.