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TOWARDS A WINTER^{OF} DISCONTENT

The Miners strike has now been going on for over six months and although victory has not yet been achieved many positive developments have already taken place. Despite the states efforts to smash the miners through the starvation tactics employed by the DHSS, the victimisation by the Courts, the lies of the media and the unprecedented use of force by the police, the fight to defend the mining communities has not weakened but grown stronger!

PITTED AGAINST THE STATE

The violence seen at the Hemheath and Markham Main collieries, and only yesterday at Maltby demonstrates that the miners are not prepared to fight on their Knees but are fighting to win. The role that women have been playing in this dispute through support groups and through the communities (as activists organising public meetings, fundraising, marching on demonstrations to publicise their cause in the scab coalfields and turning out on picket lines) is a positive indication of growing strength and unity. At the same time, the success of the hit squads in their attack on the NCB and its allies demonstrates the power of working class initiative and self-organisation. Despite these developments, the press is still trying to convince us that there is a return to work, and that the strike is beginning to crumble due to lack of support. THIS IS A LIE! Even the Financial Times acknowledges that since the beginning of the strike, the 'drift' back to work has been less than 1%! The claims of the media and the government to the contrary are purely to sow confusion and despair.

POWER IN THE DARKNESS...?!

Well on the road to winter the impact of the strike can now only increase. While the government claims that there will be no power cuts for a long time if at all, a recent report states that with coal stocks down to a less than a quarter of what they were this time last year the first power cuts could begin as early as October... assuming some solidarity from the power workers or the complete stoppage of coal production. With NACODS (the union that carries out safety and maintenance work at the pits) having a strike ballot next week this could soon become a reality, since all pits would have to cease production. Even if they don't strike there are reasons to doubt the governments coal stocks estimates...the removal of slurry from the Chatterly Whitfield Mining Museum is hardly the act of a confident NCB! With unrest again erupting into violence in the inner cities (mini riots in St Pauls and Brixton which weren't covered in the media) The state has a vested interest in playing down the possibility of the streets being plunged into darkness just when the shops are filling up with christmas goodies! Linking with the 4million un-employed who have already experienced some of the hardships now hitting the miners is an important step forwards. Some unemployed workers have already taken action in support of the miners, occupying the SWEB offices in Bristol, and in Glasgow, the offices of the govt. appointed sequesters of S.Wales NUM funds. Like those unemployed, the miners are no strangers to hardship. Hardened to life below the bread line it is unlikely that a return to work will come about due to material deprivation, but the essential question still remains, how can the strike be won?

NO COMPENSATION WITHOUT AN ESCALATION!..?

Unless the strike spreads it cannot be won. It may come to an end, but that end would just be another compromise with the government and the NCB. There is now more at stake than just the closure of the pits originally threatened. Coal board rhetoric suggests that the NCB would like to use this strike as an excuse for closing more pits due to their degeneration during the strike. Thousands have been arrested at picket lines and even in their homes! Many of these miners have received heavy fines (some around £200 for obstruction offences which are normally under £20) while others have been sacked or/and face prison sentences. Can these people be abandoned. (The NUM have disowned miners arrested for "unofficial" actions) after they have given so much for the strike? And what of the thousands injured by police brutality on the picket lines? Can a settlement that does not include the dropping of all charges, payment of compensation for injury and lost wages be considered a victory? NO! The longer the strike goes on, the more the situation requires an escalation in the demands that have to be met, and if they are to be met in full, the SUPPORT OF OTHER WORKERS IS VITAL.

TUC IS CUT ...BACKWARDS (????)

At the TUC conference, Scargill appeared to have won a political victory by gaining the backing of the conference, but what does it mean? Not a lot. What the Miners don't need is the kind of backing that the TUC gave the NGA during the Warrington dispute when, despite 1982 conference resolutions to back any union under attack from the governments union laws, the TUC sat back and watched the NGA face total defeat. If the miners are wary of betrayal then they would do well to look at the activities of their own union. The last set of NUM/NCB talks were the most secretive yet. McGahey promised "...secret talks, but no secret deals". So why the farcical 'cloak and daggery'? The NUM (Scargill included) must now be looking for a way out of the strike. Gaining the verbal support of the TUC was victory enough. The last thing that Scargill wants now is to be seriously put in a position of having to ask for that support to be translated into action (especially since the steel workers and power workers bureaucrats are set against it). If a deal is not reached soon then he will be left with no choice.

A MINE OF INFORMATION

To those who refuse to believe that the NUM would 'sell out' the miners we point to a few recent examples of where they have done just that...these actions of the NUM speak for themselves.

JAN '83 In Scotland, as pickets from the Kinneil Pit gain support for their sit-in, McGahey calls off the strike. Kinneil Pit is shut. In Wales, the NUM ignores an 80% vote for strike action against job losses. The threatened pits are shut. In Kent, NUM opposes strike action against redundancies at Snowdown pit.

OCT/NOV '83 Seven week strike at Monktonhall pit in Scotland. The NUM negotiates what they call a "victory". None of the strikers demands are met.

JAN/FEB '84 Action by Scottish miners at Bogside and Polmaise pits against closures. Spontaneous walk-outs throughout Scotland in response to new shifts and productivity deals. Scottish NUM Executive meeting refuses to call an all out strike, saying their is no support. Polmaise miners storm the meeting and attack McGahey.

UNDERMINING THE SELL OUT

If betrayal is to be avoided and the strike spread and escalated then the bureaucracy of the unions must be bypassed. Power workers officials telling NUM officials that their members will not back the miners is meaningless (the 1982 rail strikes were sabotaged when the NUR refused to back ASLEF and vice-versa because of the personal rivalry between Sid Weighell and Ray Buckton), **THE STRIKE MUST BE TAKEN OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE UNIONS - THE HIT SQUADS HAVE SHOWN HOW SUCCESSFUL AUTONOMOUS WORKING CLASS ORGANISATION CAN BE.**

AGAINST THE UNITED FORCES OF THE STATE, ONLY THE UNITED WORKING CLASS CAN WIN!

Unity is forged through solidarity and solidarity is a two way thing. The slogan 'The miners fight is everybody's fight' means nothing unless the miners recognise that: 'Everybody's fight is also the Miners fight!'. Other workers, particularly those in the key industries must be appealed to **DIRECTLY AS WORKERS** and encouraged not just to support the miners, but to **USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE UP THEIR OWN DEMANDS.**

FORM JOINT STRIKE COMMITTEES, LINK UP WITH THE UNEMPLOYED, SPREAD THE STRIKE!

Careless Talk is a small group of revolutionaries surviving in the potteries, our aims are:

- 1) We are for the abolition of capitalism which is a system of oppression and exploitation existing throughout the world. This task can only be carried out by the working class themselves for themselves. The working class is the vast majority of the world population and includes housewives, the unemployed and all those who have to sell their ability to work in order to survive.
- 2) We urge that struggles be directly controlled by those involved in them, not by unions, political parties or organisations which seek to lead or claim to represent the W. class.
- 3) We are against all divisions within the class (such as between men/women, blacks/whites gays/straights...) where one section of the class oppresses another. These divisions prevent unity in struggle and can only serve the ruling class.
- 4) We are against all forms of nationalism and for international class struggle.
- 5) We want an end to wage slavery and the beginning of production for need not profit where everyone has an equal say in the running of society and in determining their own lives.

We are willing to offer the use of our print facilities to anyone interested in spreading the strike outside of the control of the unions. If you have any comments, criticisms or enquiries please write to the following address: Box CTC

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