

COUNTER INFORMATION

No. 5 FEBRUARY 1985

SOLID AS A ROCK!

FITZWILLIAM, YORKSHIRE

"WE'LL STAY OUT TILL HELL FREEZES OVER" - a Fitzwilliam miner, 27th January 1985.

IF YOU'RE BEING taken in by the mass media propaganda that the miners strike is already defeated - visit Fitzwilliam in Yorkshire. Every single miner in the village is on strike.

The local Kinsley Drift mine, normally employing around 500, has a grand total of 2 strike-breakers. But in late January this figure was halved, when one scab failed to survive the weekly womens picket. None of the missiles that pounded his scab mobile actually hit him. Nevertheless he collapsed and had to be taken to hospital. The diagnosis? "An anxiety attack".

The miners and women who spoke to Counter Information told us how almost the whole community, including the unemployed and workers from other industries, are committed to the struggle.

The women described how they are fully involved: speaking at meetings, going to demos, organising and taking part in picketing, running the kitchen - despite the opposition of some "male chauvinists".

After experiencing the restrictive attitude of N.U.M. officials, the women now organise their pickets themselves - "it's nothing to do with the Union", one said.

During the strike Fitzwilliam has seen sabotage against the colliery buildings, clashes with

the police, barricades in the streets - and vicious police brutality. "PC DIMMOCK - COMMUNITY SPY" is only one of the many slogans against the police, in support of the strike, and in solidarity with prisoners, that cover the village.

Up till recently flying pickets from Fitzwilliam spread the struggle beyond their own 'fortress', convoys of minibuses sometimes having to break through police roadblocks to reach their targets.

Since the New Year however the Yorkshire Area N.U.M. have taken away their minibuses, claiming that with sequestration the union has no more money - a claim that some miners dispute.



Free

TERRY FRENCH,
MINER JAILED FOR
FIVE YEARS

Whatever the truth may be, if the N.U.M. had time before sequestration to transfer massive funds abroad, they surely had time to buy minibuses to enable picketing to continue.

Another blow to the struggle has been the numerous arrests, accompanied by restrictive bail conditions and heavy court sentences.

Nevertheless the miners and women we spoke to in Fitzwilliam are determined to continue the struggle. This is a fight with a significance far beyond the coal industry.

One woman told us how she welcomed the support they were getting from gay and lesbian contingents on miners marches, the mining communities were now suffering the same sort of police oppression that groups like gays and blacks had suffered for years. Unlike the union officials who accept today's system of exploitation, the younger strikers are, one miner said, "a new breed" who would take the whole struggle much further - the Union leaders will either have to keep up with what's happening or they'll be left behind.

The struggle of the men and women in the mining communities should be an inspiration to all who are oppressed and exploited. They've shown that the best way to fight back is NOT to rely on Union leaders or politicians going through 'official channels', but to organise ourselves to take direct action.

We mustn't let this vicious government (aided and abetted by the compromising union leaders) succeed in isolating the miners. All those already involved in the struggle must directly approach other groups of workers and the unemployed and urge them to take action NOW, linking their struggle directly with the miners fight.



Picture: JOHN STURROCK (Network)

Silverwood colliery in South Yorkshire

MONKTONHALL

THE COAL BOARD are again flouting a 'national agreement' — NACODS men at Monktonhall have been threatened by the manager, Kerr, that they won't be paid unless they go into work through miners picket lines.

But mass pickets at the Lothian colliery on February 4th succeeded in persuading the local Nacods members to continue their policy of not crossing the picket line. And the NACODS men have now withdrawn safety cover.

It's clear that the Coal Board will break any agreement whenever they think they can get away with it. When will NACODS members realise this and join the miners in all-out strike?

(Info.: pickets at Monktonhall, early February)

ONLY DOING THEIR JOB?

LOTHIAN police excelled themselves at Blinkbonny private mine 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', replied the Blinkbonny miners — whereupon the police promptly arrested them.

Can anyone still believe the police are neutral?

(Info: Monktonhall pickets, early February)

WHEELER, N.C.B. boss in Scotland, tried to use the recent fires at Frances and Seafield collieries to blackmail miners back to work.

But his move failed and the vast majority of Fife miners are still on strike. And they're determined not to allow any compulsory redundancies to result from the N.C.B.'s announced closure of the Frances.

So strong is the spirit in the Fife mining communities that the Police are now reluctant to venture into certain areas such as High Valleyfield, where police vehicles have come under attack.

PEOPLES NEED NOT BOSSES GREED

NEARLY 100 people took part in a day of direct action on the theme of PEOPLES NEED NOT BOSSES GREED in Edinburgh on 20th December.

The Electricity Board showrooms were briefly occupied in solidarity with the miners, pornographic magazines were destroyed in Menzies, while the Coal Board showroom, the Inland Revenue offices and fur shops were among the other targets.



FREE THE PRISONERS!

THE WHOLE MIGHT of the police, the courts and the entire State is being used to try and crush the miners strike. Up to the 14th December 7,316 people had been charged in connection with the strike. By the end of January at least 117 people had been given custodial sentences.

Many others are in jail awaiting trial.

In one prison alone — Armley Leeds — there were 150 miners in mid-December.

Police brutality has often been met by courageous resistance on the picket lines and in the pit villages such as Fitzwilliam, Hemsworth and Grimethorpe.

This solidarity must continue when people are imprisoned. A major aim of the strike must be the release of all prisoners and the dropping of all charges, with full re-instatement in their jobs for everybody sacked. The law has yielded before to mass direct action, such as when the jailed dockers — the Pentonville 5 — were freed.

It's also vital that those currently behind bars and their families are given as much practical support as possible.

Prisoners Aid groups are now being formed to do just this. The Fitzwilliam Prisoners Aid Committee was set up by miners and other local people in December. This followed the trial of the 'Fitzwilliam 9'. Arrested after a day of police brutality and peoples resistance in Fitzwilliam on July 9th 7 of the 9 were found guilty at their trial at Pontefract in December.

Magistrate David Loy — self avowedly 'judge and jury' — ignored overwhelming evidence of police brutality. For example defendant Peter Doody was so severely beaten by truncheon wielding police that he sustained no less than 15 weals on his back and had to spend 2 nights in hospital.

Loy found him guilty of 'Breach of the Peace' and gave him a four month suspended sentence.

Peter Hurst, an unemployed builder, was sentenced to six months imprisonment.

The Fitzwilliam Prisoners Aid Committee are working to ensure that people like Peter Hurst, who have given so much for the miners cause, are not forgotten and abandoned in prison. They write to prisoners, send them literature, money, etc., help them and their relatives. They are producing a monthly leaflet with the names and addresses of prisoners, to encourage people to write to them.

The F.P.A.C. is supporting ALL imprisoned for their support of the miners strike, no matter where they were arrested or for what alleged offence.

If you know of any people imprisoned for their support of the strike please inform the F.P.A.C.

Donations would be much appreciated. Write: Fitzwilliam Prisoners Aid Committee, c/o 4 Rockingham St., Fitzwilliam, Pontefract, West Yorkshire.

Another similar group has just been formed in London. Involved in the same sort of practical solidarity with the prisoners and their relatives, Class War Prisoners Aid stand for:

1. Unconditional defence of ALL prisoners arrested, in connection with ANY offences in support of the miners struggle.

2. Opposition to all attempts by Union bureaucrats to restrict solidarity with prisoners (as Yorkshire N.U.M. did with the 'Fitzwilliam 9')

3. No separation between 'political' class war prisoners and imprisoned 'common criminals'. Most working class prisoners are inside for petty crimes against capitalist property. For maximum solidarity between prisoners, workers and the unemployed.

4. Only working class solidarity can free the prisoners. For a fuller explanation of their aims and activities contact Class War Prisoners Aid, Box CWPA, 355 Holloway Rd., LONDON N7

Please send messages of support to the following prisoners, jailed for their involvement in the miners struggle. (It's advisable to write recorded delivery).

TERRY FRENCH, B7 3 3 83, HMP Wandsworth, PO BOX 757, Heathfield Road, London SW18

PETER HURST, G7 8282, HMP Haverigg Millam, Cumberland.

GARY MILLWARD, S.NEATH, A.VIRGO HMP Armley, Leeds LS12 2TJ

A full list of prisoners is available from the two Prisoners Aid groups listed in Counter Information.

PUBLISHED by Anarchists in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

WRITE to Box 81, First of May 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

IN AMSTERDAM a large number of people occupied the office of the Dutch Trade Union Congress (F.N.U.), 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.

F.N.U. 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.

(Info: a member of the Amsterdam Support the British Miners Committee)

FREE THE WORLD

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.

Developing international links between workers struggles is vital if we're ever to really challenge today's world system of exploitation.

SEAFARERS SOLIDARITY

A SHIP loaded with 4,000 tons of coal for a power station at Shoreham, Sussex has been blacked by seafarers and the Seafarers Union, and is stranded in the port of Workington, Cumbria.

(Daily Telegraph 14th January)

SEVEN COACHES have been wrecked in an attack on the Wigan depot of Smith-Happiways, a firm which transports strike-breakers to local pits. £15,000 worth of damage was caused on the 20th January. Police are "keeping an open mind" on whether the attack was connected with the miners strike.

(Info: Lancashire Evening Post, 21st January)

Snowball Effect!

PICKETS near Rotherham angered local police by building a snowman and decorating it with a policeman's helmet. One Superintendent was particularly angry and ordered the removal of the helmet. When the miners refused his request he jumped into his police land-rover and demolished the snowman.

He also demolished his land-rover (and was badly shaken) as the snowman had been built around a concrete post!

(Info: Black Flag 11th February)

BLACKOUTS ON BLACKOUTS

Despite censorship by the mass media reports are coming in of power cuts probably caused by the miners strike. Some examples of these blackouts are: in Stockport on 21st January for almost an hour; in Kirby in Ashfield on 16th January for 2 hours; in south and south-east London for more than 2 hours (Fords Dagenham was plunged into darkness) and late last year in Nottinghamshire, St. Albans, Llanwen, Birmingham, and Barnsley.

On January 28th Islington North MP, Jeremy Corbyn, asked the government for facts on the extra-ordinary numbers of power cuts and voltage reductions all over Britain.

Recently Kent miners have stepped up the picketing of power stations such as Tilbury and oil terminals. Workers at the West Thurrock power station have refused to accept coal AND oil, thus greatly affecting the power stations operational capacity.

Now's the time for a massive step up in picketing the power stations to help bring on power cuts that even the Sun won't be able to ignore!

(Info: Morning Star, 21,22,29 January; Guardian 8th January)

WE WANT THE RIOT TO WORK

ADDRESSING a public meeting in Manchester Town Hall on January 23rd, a black miner described how both black people and the miners have experienced the same kind of police oppression. He went on to urge that the way that the black people can support the miners now is to take to the streets and riot, as in 1981.

SHUT DOWN THE INDOCTRINATION CENTRES!

AT THE START of the school term in January over 100 schools in Ayrshire and 20 in Mid-Glamorgan were closed because of lack of coal for heating. Miners should disregard the absurd N.U.M. dispensation which normally allows coal to be delivered to schools.

Its vital that the impact of the strike spreads beyond the coalfields - and closing down schools makes even more sense at present when teachers too are taking industrial action.

News from Ayrshire

WILLIAM ROWELL, manager of Killoch colliery, has attempted to force Western S.M.T. to break the picket lines by issuing an ultimatum about them losing their contract. He was heavily defeated on this when the drivers overwhelmingly rejected this proposal from their management.

Police harassment of striking miners continues in a sickening manner. Five strikers from Auchinleck were recently arrested for following a scab bus. Their bail conditions are the normal now being imposed - they are not to picket anywhere in Ayrshire, Lanarkshire or Dumfriesshire - and were sacked by the N.C.B.

About 50 striking miners have been dealt with in this manner in Ayrshire so far - over 500 throughout the British coalfield.





Frickley miners leafleting Ferrybridge power station, to advertise a joint meeting between power workers and miners

NEWS FROM LANCASHIRE

MINERS KIDNAPPED

ON ITS WAY round St. Helens one morning, collecting strikers to go picketing and being followed by the police as usual, a minibus picked up two miners who were standing by the roadside. They turned out to be working miners waiting a bus to take them into Parkside pit!

The astonished pickets made them aware of their mistake in no uncertain terms, but the driver is being prosecuted for abduction as this is the most serious charge the police could think of.

MINERS VIOLENCE

ON FRIDAY 2nd February, about forty striking miners from Agecroft pit in Lancs, where the vast majority have worked throughout the strike, met for an evening out at a pub in Burnley.

They needed a morale boosting get together, as they are isolated from other Lancashire strikers, and there is much bitterness between them and the scabs at Agecroft.

During the evening a working miner attacked one of them by smashing a beer glass in his face. He had 48 stiches in hospital. When police arrived they were all set to blame the strikers for causing trouble. Luckily the pub landlady vouched for them.

No mention of this incident in the press of course, but the story is now going around Agecroft (furthered on its way by scabbing N.U.M. Branch Secretary Jim Lord), that groups of strikers meet every Friday night to harass the workers.

Class Action

DESPITE the Miners Executive's desperate attempts to reach a settlement over the last few weeks, the miners strike continues into its twelfth month.

With all the backstabbing by trade union officials, the T.U.C., Labour Party and all, the miners continue to hold out; however it is increasingly important for them that they get support from other workers.

Over the last eleven months we have seen solidarity action by some power workers - coal and in some places oil have been turned back from power stations, railworkers have blacked coal - this has led to the 1 day stoppage in January after threats and intimidation by British Rail management, two national dock strikes - directly linked with the miners strike, and also considerable financial contributions by people generally in response to the miners struggle.

But if the strike is to be won, then the real political muscle of the working class needs to be exercised. Solidarity and support needs to be turned into strike action.

The time when the government, NCB and the economy generally seemed most worried about their future was during the Dock strikes and at the one time possibility of allout strikes by the Pit Deputies, NACODS.

This shows that the way towards victory can only be through strike action, not the useless one day stoppages and demonstrations organised by the unions but by striking over demands and in solidarity with other workers such as the miners.

Two areas where there is the possibility for this in the immediate future is in the Railway Industry and amongst local authority workers

British Rail are at present attempting to win productivity

improvements and with this implement new work methods - they are also threatening to cut subsidies on passenger services. All this comes at a time when safety on the railways is under question, with 1984 being the worst year for accidents in decades.

All these measures can only mean more hardship and redundancies for workers, already it has been announced that 600 jobs are to go 'due to the miners' strike' - the scapegoat management uses to cover up its financial mess.

Bearing in mind that pay talks are due in March, there is a definite need for resistance, building up to all out strike action.

As well as the excellent examples of blacking coal, free transport to miners pickets could be provided, and refusing to collect passenger fares would help railway workers as well as getting support from the public.

Strike action is also possible among council workers who also have pay talks, and in England and Wales they are also going to get hit by ratecapping on March 6th which will mean massive numbers of redundancies.

Along the same lines the actions of power workers in blacking coal up and down the country needs to be tuned into strike action.

However we can't just expect this sort of generalisation to just happen, neither can we rely on union officials to do what is necessary. What is needed is for miners and all workers who are prepared to fight for the future to create direct links, by attending and speaking at mass meetings, and sending delegations to workplaces to call on a one to one basis, for support.

The miners strike is just the beginning. No longer with economic decline and high unemployment can workers expect to win wage settlements or gain job security. No longer can disputes be seen within union boundaries; the next year and particularly the miners strike will determine the future of the whole working class.

There has to be an end to negotiated defeats and instead an intensification of class struggle, confronting not only the Tories, but also the unions, labour movement and the whole of the capitalist state with a direct blow from the 'grassroots' of workers and class solidarity.

RADIO REVENGE

THE FREE RADIO station, Radio Revenge, put out a broadcast over the Leeds area on Xmas day. The four hours of broadcasting included material in solidarity with the miners strike, such as information on the Hemsworth mining community trial and a discussion on the strike.

