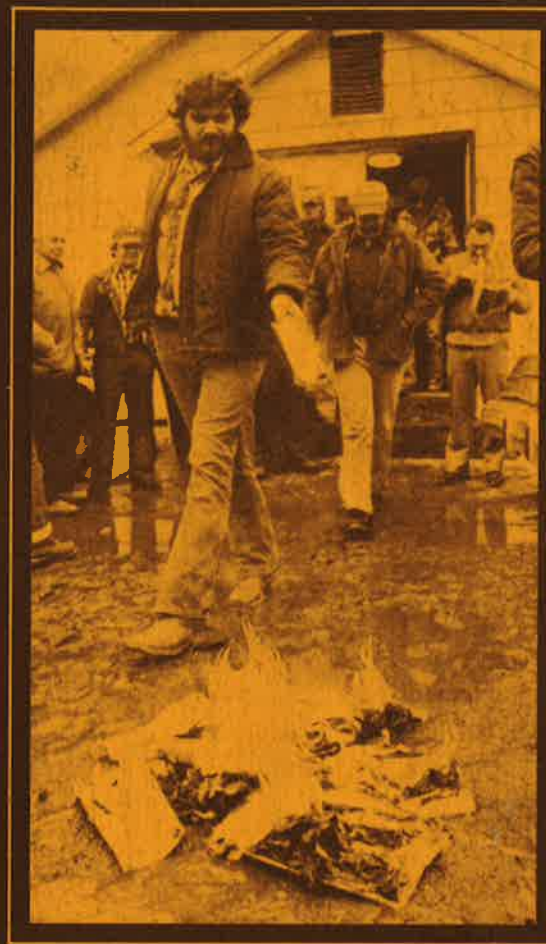


Here is the true story of the Great Coal Strike of 1978—from the miners' side of the barricades. And much more besides: the bankruptcy of Arnold Miller and Miners for Democracy; class war in Harlan and Stearns; wildcats in the coalfields; crisis in the UMWA. Not just reporting but hard analysis...and a program for victory!



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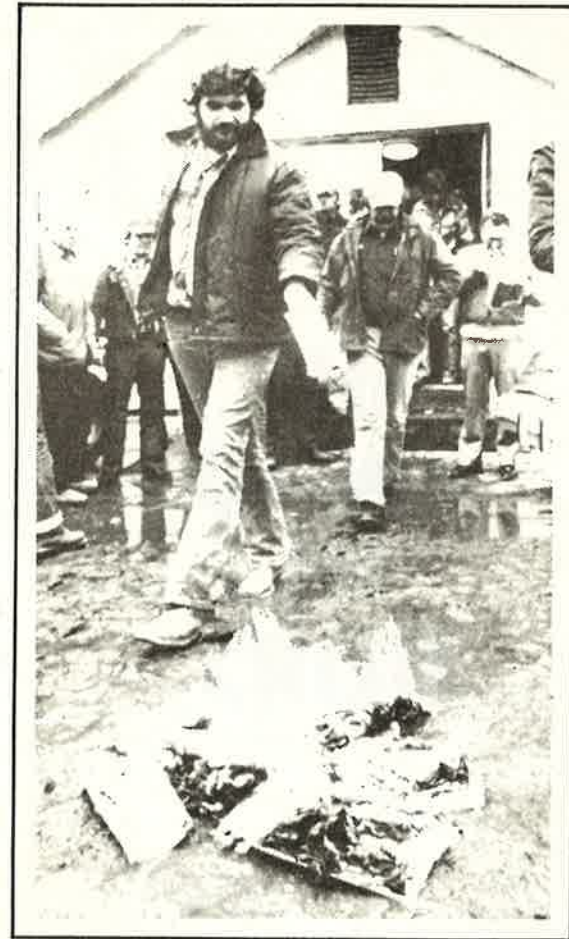
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AGAINST THESE WORKERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SMASH THESE STRIKES STOP THIS
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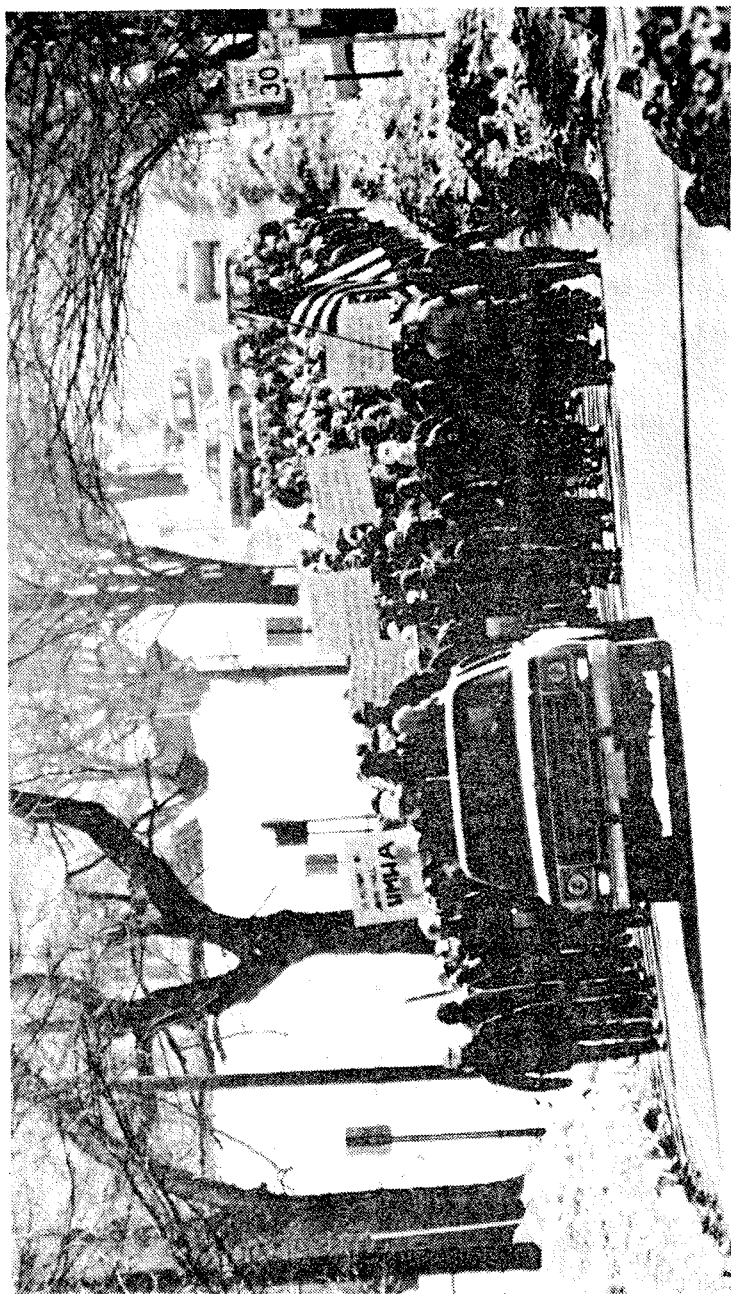
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April 1978



THE UMWA IN CRISIS



John Blair/Liaison
Miners march in memory of John Hull, the Patoka, Indiana striker killed by company thugs in February.

The Crisis of Leadership

The Great Coal Strike of 1978

—excerpted from WV No. 201, 14 April 1978

The 1977-78 coal strike was the most explosive political event in the recent history of the American working class. Jimmy Carter tried to “cool it” for almost three months, the big business press did its best to keep it off the front pages, and the big wheels of the labor movement turned their backs on the miners until the strike threatened to close down the heartland of U.S. industry and freeze out the East-Central states. But down at the base, in the ranks of U.S. labor, millions of workers followed the miners’ struggle with avid attention and sympathy. While the UAW did nothing in the face of 300,000 layoffs in the depths of the 1974-76 depression; while New York City unions threw in the towel during the bank-manipulated “fiscal crisis,” and “rebel” steel union bureaucrats meekly accepted extension of the hated ENA no-strike pact, the coal diggers out in the Appalachians stood up and fought back. They stopped a concerted offensive by the operators that was supposed to “teach them a lesson.”

Instead, with their unsurpassed militancy the miners rocked the U.S. ruling class and inspired all the rest of the labor movement. The outpouring of donations to the strikers and the appearance of union-led caravans in the coalfields were actions unheard of in recent decades. Bosses and union leaders from one end of the country to the other began to worry that their people might become infected with “miners fever.” If the lengthy 1969 GE strike and the 1970 postal strike—when Nixon called out the National Guard in NYC—shocked the country into realizing the class struggle was not dead, the impact soon wore off. But the coal miners’ defiance of bosses, government and union leaders alike could lead to a wave of labor militancy that would be difficult to extinguish.

After the 160,000 striking members of the United Mine Workers of America threw back a second takeaway “tentative agreement,” the bourgeoisie suddenly realized it had a tiger by the tail. In a panic Carter invoked Taft-Hartley, state cops began riding shotgun on scab coal trucks and federal agents swarmed through coal country arrogantly serving their poisonous injunctions. Yet it was not the cops, courts, coal operators and capitalist politicians who finally

forced the miners back. The treachery of the UMWA leadership and the absence of a class-struggle alternative were what did in the strike, as many miners saw the hopeless prospect of endlessly voting against sellout contracts handed them by Arnold Miller & Co. What is most galling is that the miners' tenacity brought them so close to winning despite their despicable misleaders.

In the end the coal strikers went back to the pits with a contract that is universally despised as a major step backwards for the UMWA. Finding no leadership among so-called "dissidents" on the Bargaining Council, the ranks finally accepted (with substantial opposition and no illusions about what they were getting) a contract which gave up to the already profit-bloated energy trusts one of the major conquests of this proud union. When it was over the miners' cradle-to-grave health care system was gone and they are now threatened with firing when they strike over such life-and-death issues as mine safety.

But the UMWA membership did not return to the mine portals with its militancy broken. Far from it. At every step they frustrated the major objective of the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA): to write into the contract provisions allowing the dismissal and penalization of strikers and strike leaders. By this means the BCOA had hoped to put an end to the massive wildcat strikes which have swept through the Appalachians since the late 1960's. The operators had been gearing up for this confrontation ever since the summer of 1975: coal stockpiles in early December were at a record high, production from non-union mines was mounting rapidly, and the companies tried to demoralize the miners by provoking a wildcat over medical care last summer.

On the eve of the contract strike BCOA head Joseph Brennan was threatening that "The UMWA is not the only game in town." The companies figured they would starve out the "strike-happy" miners, who would crawl back chastened after a debilitating strike and accept miserable terms. Yet the miners refused to knuckle under. Eighty thousand of them struck for 10 weeks in last summer's health card wildcat, and during the contract strike they used their traditional roving pickets to shut down *half* of all non-union coal production in the country. With no one to mobilize opposition they burned one contract proposal after another. It took 110 days to wear down the miners' resistance and still the coal bosses didn't get their no-strike clause. Even then 43 percent voted against the sellout, virtually the same proportion as rejected Miller's 1974 contract (and the bosses know well how little "labor peace" that produced in the coalfields).

The United Mine Workers is in deep trouble. Its top leaders are known and despised as outright *traitors* to those who elected them, Judases who might as well be getting their 30 pieces of silver from the

companies. Among the district leaders there is no one who put forward a strategy to *win* the strike, to protect and extend the gains the UMWA has won in the past through struggles as bitter as this one. But the settlement, while a setback, is only a ceasefire, not a rout. *Newsweek* (7 April) understood this vital fact, headlining its wrap-up story, "The Miners' Bitter Truce." So did Jimmy Carter with his plans for a government investigation of "productivity" and "labor stability" in the mines. Both the miners and the bosses realize there are hard battles ahead.

Class War in the Coalfields

The Great Coal Strike of 1978 was as harsh as the winter in which it took place. Because of this it exposed the realities of the class struggle with a clarity seldom experienced in this country of the great consensus and law and order. Marxists have always said that laws are merely the expression of the balance of class forces. But when has this been so vividly obvious as in Carter's ineffectual imposition of the Taft-Hartley Act. The vast majority of U.S. union officials claim they can't engage in militant tactics such as "hot-cargoing" (boycotting) scab products because this is outlawed under T-H. But the miners proved it can be done. They shut down non-union mines with their militant tactics while scab coal was dumped on the highways, coal barges burned on the rivers and railroad bridges on coal spurs were blown up. Washington put off using the "slave-labor act," openly admitting they feared it would be defied; and when it was finally decreed, the government had to scour the mining towns to find a few dozen scabs who actually "obeyed the law." This lesson must not be lost on union militants elsewhere.

Socialists often refer to the venal sellout union bureaucrats as "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class." Seldom has there been a more despicable example of how "responsible labor statesmen" are agents of the class enemy within the workers movement. Every time the BCOA sneezed Arnold Miller began quivering uncontrollably. His bargaining team was hand-picked by the Labor Department (as was the UMWA International headquarters staff), then reshuffled by the government when Miller's first proposed pact was turned down by the Bargaining Council. The "dissidents" among district leaders were just as eager to do Carter's bidding and produced a second contract which was overwhelmingly rejected by the ranks. On the other side of the table sat a man who foreshadowed the future of these fakers. The BCOA's Brennan is a former UMWA official, who like many former bureaucrats from the corrupt Boyle regime went over to management after being kicked out of union office.

Here was a vivid example of what Leon Trotsky called the crisis of proletarian leadership—160,000 miners practically bringing the



Oliphant

companies and the United States government to their knees in the greatest strike in 30 years, but with no one to lead them to victory. If the militant coal strikers were forced to accept a contract that represented a defeat after fighting off gun thugs and state cops; lasting *six months* (when you count the 1977 wildcat) without income or strike benefits; defying Taft-Hartley, Jimmy Carter and everything the capitalist state could throw at them, it was because of the treachery of the UMWA leadership—and the absence of anyone to replace them who had a program for effectively waging class war in the coalfields.

This strike made crystal clear, if it wasn't already, that it takes more than simple trade unionism to win labor's fight. Class collaboration, looking just for a "deal" with the bosses, means defeat for the miners and all workers. The coal miners must be armed with a *political* program to fight the enemy on every battle front. They proved they had the economic muscle to put the companies against the wall and the guts to stand up to the government. But it is next to impossible to take on the entire bourgeoisie singlehandedly, even in a simple economic strike. The coal miners urgently needed the backing of industrial action by key unions elsewhere, labor protest strikes against Taft-Hartley and a working-class political offensive to win public opposition to the strikebreaking Democrats.

The complete disintegration of the UMWA leadership under the hammer blows of the miners' strikes as well as the refusal of the entire trade-union bureaucracy to undertake militant acts of solidarity in defense of the miners proves the urgency of the Spartacist League's fight to replace the present sellouts not with slicker "reform" bureaucrats but a genuine class-struggle leadership of the labor

movement. However incompetent Arnold Miller may be—and there is no doubt that he is one of the least capable of U.S. union officials—it is the policies of subservience to the company dictates, the phony "friend of labor" Democratic Party and the capitalist government which must be rejected. The "progressive" reformers like Miller and Sadlowski with their ties to liberal Democrats are equally as incapable of leading the workers' struggles to victory as the reactionary Meany bureaucrats.

Yet in 1972 the vast majority of the U.S. left hailed Miller's election as a "victory," and to this day not a single one of these pseudo-revolutionary groups has repudiated its earlier support to this traitor. The SL refused to bow to the dangerous illusions in Miller's since-buried Miners for Democracy (MFD) and called for an uncompromising struggle for the independence of the unions from the capitalist state. It is this program, the *only* program that told the truth about what the MFD represented, that militants in the UMWA must grasp if they are to avoid endless strikes without victory and the eventual gutting of their union.

The Challenge of the Miners' Militancy

The miners' explosive confrontation with the coal operators, the government and their own misleaders was the product of an anger and fighting spirit that has been steadily growing in the coalfields. For over a decade, coal production has been increasing sharply, tens of thousands of new, young miners have entered the industry. Massive wildcats shut down the majority of the unionized mines in every year of the last contract. The strikes of 1975 and 1976 fought for the right to strike against the companies, the arbitrators and the courts. The ten-week wildcat of 1977, although sparked by drastic health benefit cutbacks, was in fact integrally tied to the upcoming contract battle that both sides knew centered on the issue of "labor discipline."

This strike was deliberately provoked by the BCOA, which wanted to use the health card as a bargaining chip to get a no-strike clause in the national negotiations. As he had in every previous wildcat, Miller did the bosses' bidding and forced the strikers back to work. When the contract fight began in December, the most militant section of the union, centered in West Virginia, had gone for weeks without paychecks. It is significant that in the vote on the final contract offer, West Virginia's Districts 17 and 29, which had borne the brunt of the Miller-knifed wildcats, voted heavily in favor of ending the strike, reflecting the weariness of these miners.

As the contract deadline approached, the Spartacist League pointed to the miners' most urgent needs: the unlimited right to

strike, no restrictions on roving pickets, an end to the pro-company arbitration system; guaranteed health benefits without deductions and higher, equalized pensions; total UMWA control over safety; a shorter workweek with a big pay boost and full cost-of-living protection; an end to racial and sexual discrimination and the victimization of union militants—union control over hiring. We also raised the demands necessary to take the coal industry out of the hands of the parasitic energy conglomerates: for the nationalization of the mines and the construction of a workers party to replace the Republican/Democratic big business government with a government of the workers.

While the bosses correctly gauged the cowardice of the Miller bureaucracy, what they totally underestimated was the militancy, determination and solidarity of the miners themselves. The miners dug in and fought back with everything they had. Wave after wave of roving pickets swept through the coalfields shutting down scab mines. Even in areas not particularly noted for their militancy, mass miners pickets were commonplace. Thus in northwestern Alabama in early February it took some 200 state troopers assisted by helicopters to rescue a handful of scabs from the wrath of 1,000 union miners. Huge stockpiles sat unused, the bosses afraid to try to move them. Despite two martyred dead and hundreds of arrests, the miners were not intimidated by the operators' gun thugs or vicious state troopers. They continued to choke off the supply of coal and by early February the once cocky coal business consumers began to scream for help.

Just as the miners' grip tightened on the bosses' throats, Miller caved in to virtually every one of the operators' demands. However, as soon as news of the horrendous February 6 contract proposal got out, furious miners rose up and threw it back in his face. They were not about to accept terms which called for firings and fines for "strike instigators" and miners who respected picket lines; which dissolved their health and retirement funds and allowed Sunday work and hated incentive schemes. Mass demonstrations were held throughout the coalfields denouncing Miller's contract and demanding his resignation. Thousands signed recall petitions and hundreds stormed into Washington on February 10, occupying the UMWA headquarters and forcing an overwhelming no-vote by the union's Bargaining Council.

With Miller completely discredited and the coalfields in an outraged uproar, the Spartacist League pointed the way to dump the traitorous negotiators and place the strike in the hands of the ranks: electing district-wide strike committees and demanding a special convention to elect a new negotiating team.

While the federal government had monitored the coal talks with little faith in Arnold Miller, it was clearly shocked by the depth and

force of the miners' outrage. With Miller in semi-seclusion, Labor Department agents scurried around in search of someone in the union hierarchy willing to deal who still had enough credibility to make it stick with the ranks. The government courted "dissident" members of the Bargaining Council, and three of them—Jack Perry, Ken Dawes and Tom Gaston—were added to the UMWA negotiating team.

Within a few days the so-called "dissidents" proved as pliable as Miller. The Bargaining Council knuckled under to a pattern-setter agreement worked out behind the scenes with the independent P&M coal company. Yesterday's critics went out to try to sell the new pact, whose terms were only marginally better than the earlier February 6 sellout. Miller blew \$40,000 on a pro-ratification media campaign and Carter threatened to bring down Taft-Hartley should the miners resist sellout No. 2. But the ranks weren't buying. Copies of the contract were consumed in coalfield bonfires and district leaders were booed down. Miners went to the polls and spurned their leaders with a lopsided 70-to-30 percent rejection.

His more subtle efforts reduced to ashes, a frantic Jimmy Carter turned to bigger guns. Within hours of the final vote tally, the U.S. president was on national TV invoking the Taft-Hartley Act and ordering the miners back to work. Administration officials had considered seizing the mines but held that tactic in abeyance, partly due to opposition from the mine owners. They were also fearful that negotiating directly with the combative mine workers would embroil it in the same morass that had destroyed Arnold Miller politically and reduced the BCOA to squabbling disarray. The problem with Taft-Hartley was that nobody really expected it to work. Carter tried to put teeth in his injunction by the unprecedented move of naming over a thousand UMWA regional and local union officials, branding them as criminals with threatened jail and fines should they so much as encourage another miner not to return under the slave-labor law. Miners were outraged at the sight of hundreds of trenchcoat-clad federal marshals chasing up the hills and hollows to serve the strikebreaking injunctions.

When Carter slapped a Taft-Hartley injunction on the strike, singling out over a thousand UMWA officials for jail and fines, the Spartacist League solidarized with the miners' solid defiance. We called for the rest of the labor movement to rise and stop the government's strikebreaking ploys with protest strikes and mass rallies.

The miners proved perfectly capable of repulsing Taft-Hartley. But with their defiance of the government, refusal to cross picket lines and powerful commitment to their "no contract, no work" tradition, the miners had reached the limit of trade-union militancy. When Miller

quickly agreed to yet another sellout contract and the majority of the Bargaining Council approved it, it became even clearer that what stood between the miners and clear-cut victory was the vacuum of leadership at the top of the UMWA. In spite of their heroic efforts, many miners decided that with their current misleadership they simply could not do any better.

The miners were squared off in a virtual war with the coal operators, the cops and the strikebreaking federal government. They needed a leadership with a program to win the war, capable of waging a political fight against the government's threats; leaders who would aggressively mobilize the ranks and reach out to the rest of the labor movement for militant support. Instead they were saddled with men whose faith and illusions in the enemy camp lead to paralysis. Even the minority of the Bargaining Council members who consistently voted no on the BCOA/Miller/Carter terms had no conception or program for leading the miners on an offensive against Carter and the Democratic Party. Continued defensive battles, even by the most courageous but leaderless army, can never win a victory.

When miners narrowly voted for the last deal, although they had beaten back the BCOA's anti-strike provisions, they still did not have the right to strike and will still have to face down the arbitrators and courts. They lost their free medical benefits and the UMWA health care program, 30-year-old landmarks of the labor movement.



John Blair/Liaison



David Vick/Charleston Gazette

Miners burn Carter-imposed sellout contract.

Pensions remained inadequate and unequal, with 93 percent of the retirees collecting a paltry \$275 a month. The miners knew that with such a contract it would be difficult to organize the growing number of non-union mines which threaten the bargaining power and very existence of the UMWA.

Though the terms of their contract are a setback for the UMWA, the miners know that they were not conquered by their avowed enemies; they were betrayed by their own leaders. The miners returned to work bitter and disgusted but not broken. To prepare for the inevitable new battles, the miners need now to regroup and draw the crucial lessons of their strike. First and foremost is the need to forge a leadership committed to fighting the control and dictates of the capitalists and their political parties. For it was the ties between the quislings in union office and the bosses' government and politicians that blocked the miners victory.

The Collapse of the UMWA Leadership

Although one could hardly guess it today, Arnold Miller was brought to office by a reform movement which promised to return the UMWA to its membership. It is only a little over five years ago that Miller's Miners for Democracy swept the gangster Tony Boyle out of office. Liberals and most so-called radicals alike enthused over a "new day" for the labor movement. The Spartacist League foretold that Miller would prove a disaster for the miners and a willing tool of the federal government. For he was fundamentally the candidate of Nixon's Labor Department and a section of Democratic Party liberals. A broad section of the capitalist class backed the MFD against Boyle precisely because the latter had lost effective control over the UMWA membership.

The MFD from its inception kowtowed to the desires and dictates of capitalist politicians in Washington and their emissaries in the coalfields. Jock Yablonski, a longtime member of the Lewis-Boyle machine, ran against Boyle only on the urging and the supervision of the Ralph Naders and Joe Rauhs who provided the crucial links to the Democratic Party liberals. Rauh masterminded Yablonski's campaign and based his entire strategy on appealing to the courts and Nixon's Labor Department to virtually take over the UMWA. After Yablonski was murdered, this same strategy dominated the Miller/Trbovich/Patrick lash-up, with lawyers Ken and Chip Yablonski along with Rauh calling most of the shots.

The SL's warnings have been fully confirmed by Miller's unbroken record of treachery since coming to office. But now, in a soon-to-be published book based on a 1974 Ph.D. thesis capping three years of work with Miners for Democracy, former University of Pittsburgh

professor Paul Nyden provides, perhaps unintentionally, massive evidence of the MFD's role as a conduit for government influence in the union. Nyden is frequently quoted in the pages of the Communist Party's *Daily World*, which slavishly tailed Miller, and he does not want to draw the obvious conclusions. But the facts he presents are damning.

In commenting on the government's attitude toward MFD, Nyden cites an article, "Anarchy Threatens the Kingdom of Coal," from *Fortune* (January 1971), a magazine which reflects the thinking of some of the biggest bankers and industrialists in the U.S. Shaken by the 1969 Black Lung strike and the 1970 wildcat spearheaded by the Disabled Miners and Widows, big business decided that Boyle had to go:

"The problem of dealing with a work force that is no longer under union discipline would be difficult enough for the companies. But they are now faced with the prospects of signing a new contract on October 1 with a union president whose mandate to hold office is questionable, to say the least."

Nyden goes on to record the attitude of the operators and the Nixon administration:

"The operators would normally shudder at the possibility of having a militant rank-and-file slate elected to office. But dissatisfaction with Boyle's regime was generating so much conflict and touching off so many wildcat strikes everywhere in Appalachia in the late 1960's, that the operators and the pro-business Nixon administration realized there would never be any chance for steady production in the nation's coal mines until an honest election was conducted in the UMW."

—Paul Nyden, *Miners for Democracy: Struggle in the Coal Fields*

The Nixon Administration, which was busy covering up its wiretapping/burglary of Watergate and its secret Cambodia bombings, was hardly interested in honesty; it wanted a more "responsible," trustworthy leadership to tame the UMWA. And the MFD tried to oblige. Nyden records one revealing confrontation between miners who, angered over a rigged election in District 5, wanted to strike and/or seize the District headquarters, versus Ken Yablonski's wretched legalism at an MFD rally in Cokesburg, Pennsylvania in April 1971:

"Yablonski: ... if you don't act responsibly and if you don't act within the law that you claim you want the protection of, then you disgrace the movement that you belong to.

"Voice from the crowd: What is the law?"

"Yablonski: The law says that you must resort to the courts if your union officials violate your union Constitution. And that is what we're going to do.

"Voice: The courts don't control me. They don't control me. How long will it take? How long... [continued shouting]

"Yablonski: I don't want no damn rabble rouser ruining this thing. Act responsibly once in your life. We cannot resort to mob rule. We

cannot resort to irresponsible and illegal activity.... I saw rebel strikes in the 50s and the early 60s and it never got you a thing. This rebel movement... never had any chance of success until we got some real responsible leadership.... Believe me, men, believe me, if this thing isn't done legally, if it isn't done within the framework of the law, then you're not going to get it...."

Many miners were not happy with the MFD's reliance on the agencies of the bosses' government. Though Boyle was thoroughly discredited by his notorious disregard for the miners' safety and the widely held conviction that the corrupt UMWA chief had played a hand in Yablonski's assassination (for which he was later jailed), Miller won with only 55 percent of the vote. Mike Trbovich later conceded that the MFD's court suits against the union had cost them a lot of votes.

Nyden quotes one retired black miner, Rufus Clark, who had been president of the Clyde No. 3 mine in Western Pennsylvania where both Yablonski and Trbovich were later president: "How can you trust a movement that brings in people who have always been against the laboring man. Who appoints the Secretary of Labor? Nixon does! Nixon's going to supervise this election. And who backs Nixon? Big Business. No, I've never cared a damn for Big Capital!"

If Arnold Miller failed to impose the "labor peace" the government hoped for, it was not because he didn't try. After taking office, he and the other MFD leaders opposed the mushrooming wildcats, enforcing Boyle's hated contract. They rammed through the 1974 contract, trading off the miners' demand for the right to strike in exchange for an unwieldy grievance procedure capped by binding pro-company arbitration. In the years since, the bureaucrats freely resorted to red-baiting union militants and even invoked disciplinary penalties against leaders of wildcats. Nor was this the policy of Miller alone—on these issues, he was supported unanimously by his running mates, Harry Patrick and Mike Trbovich, as well as by the pro-Boyle clot on the union's International Executive Board grouped around Lee Roy Patterson.

The groveling of the Miller-led bureaucracy became downright scandalous in the just concluded strike. Wayne Horowitz and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service literally selected the key UMWA negotiations (including Harry Huge, who only shortly before had outraged miners when he voted as the union's representative to cut health benefits), advised Miller on his selection of a publicity firm (since he had fired virtually his entire staff), then wrote the first two contract proposals. As the strike wore on, Miller & Co. were more and more exposed as mere rubber stamps for Carter, Marshall and the Labor Department.

Miller's opponents in last summer's election provided no alternative in the strike. Harry Patrick—having recently accepted a

high-paying job with the federal anti-poverty agency ACTION— chimed in his endorsement of the last two sellout pacts. Lee Roy Patterson popped his head up to be quoted each time as saying “sellout,” then disappeared again, biding his time for a comeback. Miners should remember that at no time in their long and crucial struggle with the operators and the government did Patterson seek to provide any leadership. How could he? Like Miller, Patterson calls on the government to “straighten out” the union (he brought five separate law suits against the UMWA during last year’s election campaign). He is simply tied into a more conservative clique in the UMWA hierarchy.

It has become quite the fashion in recent years for dissidents and office-seekers in the bureaucratized unions to call in the courts and/or Labor Department to fight their battles with the entrenched officialdom. But the bitter experience of Arnold Miller should serve as a sharp warning not just to miners but to all workers not to trust this strategy or those who push it. It is the government’s control of the union movement that is the greatest threat to both union democracy and to the fight against the employers.

The government’s drive to foist the Miller/MFD clique on the UMWA in 1972 and its invoking of Taft-Hartley today were merely two sides of the same coin. In both instances it was motivated by the same desire to break the militancy and solidarity of the rank and file. The past five years of the UMWA underscores the central lesson that the first condition for a real class-struggle labor movement is complete independence from the government, its agencies and courts.

Oust the Bureaucrats! Build a Workers Party!

In recent years, the miners have been unique in their determination to defend themselves through militant struggle. The entire labor bureaucracy hates and fears this militancy, above all terrified that it could spill over to their own membership. Thus on the eve of the strike, a top aide to Steelworkers president Lloyd McBride commented, “The thing most likely to keep our experiment [the no-strike Experimental Negotiating Agreement] alive is the probability that the coal miners will have a long, bitter strike. That will remind our members once again how little sense there is to such a pattern... unless you have a suicide complex.” After the strike was over, Fred Kroll, president of the railroad union BRAC denounced the miners for being “out of control.” And UAW president Doug Fraser, who served as a key advisor to Labor Secretary Ray Marshall, declared that “at critical moments in the coal talks the President, Secretary of Labor and Director of the Federal Mediation Service acted decisively, sensibly and most importantly, fairly....”

This was after Carter tried to smash the strike with Taft-Hartley!

Throughout the strike the leaders in maritime, rail, Teamsters and steel unions permitted the shipment and use of scab coal. Thus, the bosses were enabled to avoid an acute economic crisis that would have quickly brought them to their knees. The betrayal of the steel and rail union bureaucrats, both in closely related industries, was particularly notable. Thus, the railroad workers hauling scab coal were in fact working without a contract under provisions of the anti-strike Railway Labor Act; now that the coal strike is over, the bosses and the government will go after them. And steel workers, with thousands of their numbers laid off by the same steel barons who were among the most hard-line anti-union mine operators, were told by their leaders to just keep on working stockpiled and scab coal as their brothers in the Mine Workers fought alone.

The highly publicized donations from the Steelworkers, Auto Workers and Communication Workers to the UMWA—sums which in fact amounted only to about \$1 for every member of these giant unions—were a response to the rank and file’s mushrooming support for the miners, expressed in many plant gate collections and caravans carrying food and money to the miners, and an attempt to head off any more militant or direct defense of the miners strike. Even in the face of Taft-Hartley, not a single major union leader demanded protest strikes to stop this strikebreaking attack. Only in the west coast Longshore union did the membership force their International Executive Board to adopt such a resolution, which the top officials then suppressed and refused to act on.

On the left the Spartacist League was virtually alone in unceasingly struggling for genuine acts of solidarity with the miners—publicizing the efforts of steel worker militants to fight for a joint coal/steel strike, as well as the fight of steel and maritime workers to demand that their unions hot-cargo scab coal. In response to Taft-Hartley, the SL demanded protest work stoppages and publicized resolutions to this effect that were passed by UAW Local 6 in Chicago, as well as the Bay Area’s Amalgamated Transit local and the ILWU.

Carter’s invoking of Taft-Hartley was a powerful reminder that the Democratic Party, as well as the Republican, stands for union busting, for strikebreaking and for the repression of the working class. Congressmen of both parties united behind Carter’s moves against the miners and, throughout the strike, Democratic governors like Kentucky’s Julian Carrol as well as their Republican counterparts like Indiana’s Otis Bowen mobilized their cops and state troopers against the miners.

This strike should be a lesson to all workers that every major struggle must lead ultimately to a confrontation with the capitalist government, which, far from being “neutral”—as the labor

bureaucrats claim—is the armed fist of capital. Through the Democratic and Republican parties which they finance and control, the bosses mete out their “justice” to all who rebel militantly against their oppression under capitalism—to striking coal miners, Vietnamese peasants and the residents of the black ghettos. The capitalist parties prefer to maintain their rule peaceably; but when the exploited get “out of hand,” bloody force is used.

Workers must demand that their unions cease support for the Democrats and Republicans and fight instead for the unions to build a *workers party* to fight for a workers government. Millions of workers’ dollars and their votes are wasted in every election supporting the same politicians who slash the budgets, break the strikes and start the wars. A workers party would fight not only to mobilize the labor movement in united struggle against the capitalists and their parties but to form a workers government that would expropriate the privately owned mines, mills, banks and big industries, allowing them to be run for the interests of society not the fantastic profits of a few.

The obstacle to such a policy is the same trade-union bureaucracy that does its best to stifle every manifestation of working-class independence. While the miners were locked in combat with the coal operators and the government, George Meany was busy trying to ingratiate himself with Carter and the Democrats on Capitol Hill. If the president feels Taft-Hartley is “his only alternative,” said Meany, “then we won’t criticize him.” The fight for labor’s political independence necessarily requires the fight to oust the treacherous, class-collaborationist union bureaucrats who prop up the Democrats and Republicans. Both tasks are at the top of the agenda necessary to forge a fighting labor movement.

The Coal Miners and the Left

When the combination of massive struggles and bureaucratic sabotage has confronted the miners in the past, many have looked to the left for new leadership. Socialists, many of whom learned their trade unionism in the more politicized labor movements of Britain and southeastern Europe before immigrating to the U.S., played a leading role in the union’s fierce early organizing battles. Later after the longest strike in the union’s history, four and a half months in 1922, the employers launched a union-busting offensive which reduced the union to a shadow of its former self with no resistance from John L. Lewis. Thousands of miners flocked to the new Communist Party (CP) in response. A relatively unknown CPer got one-third of the total in the 1924 UMWA presidential election.

The “Save the Union Committee,” an alliance between the CP and John Brophy, a longtime socialist leader in Pennsylvania, won mass

support in the UMWA with its program of stopping the wage-cuts, organizing the unorganized, nationalizing the mines and building a labor party. It is almost certain that Lewis’ victory over Brophy in the 1926 election was due to massive vote fraud. Even in the depth of the depression years, socialists, Stalinists and Trotskyists led bitter miners strikes in Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania and “Bloody Harlan” county in Kentucky.

Left-wing influence in the UMWA was suppressed by the virulent anti-communism of Lewis, who expelled his opponents in droves, and the Stalinism which thoroughly corrupted the Communist Party. The CP’s attempts to build a new union in the coalfields from 1928 to 1933, when the UMWA had virtually ceased to exist outside of Illinois and the Pennsylvania anthracite fields, was aborted by its sectarian refusal to work with anyone who did not accept its control. Later the CP zigzagged so far to the right that it embraced Roosevelt’s attacks on the famous 1943 miners strikes and labeled Lewis a fascist for striking against the wartime government. The Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), however, continued to stand by the miners.

By the time the federal government decided that Tony Boyle had to go and boosted Arnold Miller to power, most of the American left had fore sworn the struggle against government manipulation of the labor movement. With the exception of the Spartacist League, they either cheered Miller or made a few perfunctory criticisms of the MFD’s reliance on the courts and Labor Department. Now, after five years of betrayal by the MFD leaders, which have rendered Arnold Miller perhaps the most thoroughly despised trade-union bureaucrat in the U.S., *not one of the groups that supported him in 1972 has repudiated that position.* Unwilling and unable to learn the lessons of history, these fake leftists have served notice that they will back the next two-bit “progressive” faker that comes down the pike.

The two largest groups on the left, the Stalinist Communist Party and the now ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, have long since abandoned any struggle against the policies of the reformist union bureaucracy. When the SWP and CP demand that the federal government clean up the unions, when they back union-busting affirmative action suits against the unions, when they call on the federal government to send troops to Boston to “protect” blacks—they demonstrate the same touching faith in the good will of the capitalist state as the Millers and Sadlowskis.

From the beginning of the strike, the policy of these groups was indistinguishable from that of the labor bureaucracy. Both spent their energies on organizing platforms for reformist bureaucrats to ballyhoo their phony “solidarity” with the miners, while their own trade-union supporters consistently refused to support resolutions



Bosses' press hoped that the Carter government could control the miners.

raised by militants for class-struggle defense of the strike. In the Bay Area, for example, the SWP took the lead in opposing a motion presented to a meeting of some 200 trade unionists to implement the ILWU's call for a one-day strike against Taft-Hartley, while the CP abstained. The SWP's *Militant* even had the gall to write an article during the strike about why militants should *not* demand solidarity strikes with the miners and hot-cargoing of coal!

In the aftermath of the strike, the CP published a statement in the 30 March *Daily World* which hailed the settlement as a "real victory for rank and file miners, as it is a victory for all of organized labor." The statement, which amounted to a thorough whitewash of the traitorous UMWA bureaucracy, contained not one word of criticism of the contract provisions, even claiming that the right to strike was "strengthened"! An article in the 7 April *Militant*, entitled "Outcome of the Strike," while more critical of Miller, nowhere admitted that the SWP had supported Miller for years!

Like the SWP and CP reformists, the Maoists of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) had no program for the crisis of leadership that was blocking a victory to the strike. In fact, the RCP came out in the March issue of *Revolution* against the effort to dump Miller! (The RCP's forerunner, the Revolutionary Union, had given "critical support" to Miller in 1972.) Denouncing it as a "diversion" that had won the support of "some" rank-and-file miners (like maybe 90 percent!), the RCP writes off the justified hatred of

160,000 miners for Arnold Miller as the work of a group of "opportunist union hacks." It is of course true that many UMWA officials who endorsed the "recall Miller" campaign are no better than he. But to refuse to come out for removing Miller on these grounds is to serve as his last-ditch defense!

The small Miners Right to Strike Committee (MRSC), which is politically supported by the RCP, was equally incapable of providing any direction for the militant miners, offering only more "militant" rhetoric: "Vote no and hang tough." But the mine workers were plenty militant already. What they lacked was leadership and the MRSC had no idea of how to provide it. The MRSC did not call for strike committees, did not call for replacing Miller, did not call for a special convention.

Behind the MRSC's refusal to struggle for a new leadership during the strike lay the fact that it simply had no program for victory. Despite its militant posturing, the MRSC has always tailored its demands to the existing norms of reformist trade unionism, consciously avoiding mention of the need to fight racial oppression, to build a workers party or to expropriate the capitalists. In this strike, it rejected even the fight to organize delegations of miners to demand that other unions hot-cargo scab coal. Instead, it accepted Miller's policy that labor solidarity would be limited to appeals for funds, clothes and food, and merely wanted to channel relief aid through its own small "support committees" as an alternative to the various District and International relief funds.

Most of the remaining American left groups put in equally dismal performances. The Progressive Labor Party, which has degenerated into a crazed semi-syndicalist cult, featured endless idiotic ravings in *Challenge* which made the miners instead of the gun-toting scabs and cops look like provocateurs. "Hail Miners Violence!" was one typical headline. The Workers League's *Bulletin* stridently denounced Miller's ties to the Labor Department. But these political bandits were absolutely silent about why they had enthusiastically backed Miller in 1972 or, even more outrageously, called last summer for support to Lee Roy Patterson—distinguishing themselves as the *only* left group to back this red-baiting, right-wing former ally of Tony Boyle!

These pseudo-revolutionaries are far from being the furious "reds" who have been blamed for the UMWA's problems by bureaucrats from Patterson to Miller. In fact the real problem with the CP, SWP and the rest of the reformist gang is that their program doesn't go beyond the simple trade unionism of Miners for Democracy. That is why they supported the MFD in 1972 and why they covered up for Miller's strikebreaking until literally thousands of miners were

clamoring for his head. In the recent strike the determined militancy of the miners pushed to the limits of trade unionism, to the point where it became brutally clear that what was needed was a program and a strategy that could overcome the attacks of the bosses and the capitalist parties. But the reformists have no such strategy and program any more than Arnold Miller does. So it is not surprising that many of them called the final settlement a "victory."

The miners will surely be confronted now with a host of aspiring leaders seeking to dump discredited UMWA leaders. Many of these will be District officials who played no better role and would have done the same had they held Miller's office. There will also be among those coming forward miners who played honorable and militant roles in the strike. But unless these new leaders absorb the political lessons of the UMWA's experience over the last five years, unless they are committed to a complete break with the politics of class collaboration, they too will *necessarily* succumb to the powerful pressures that the capitalists and their politicians apply to keep the unions in line.

The militancy and courage which the miners have repeatedly displayed have not yielded a leadership to match these qualities. Nor will simply more militant struggles produce such a leadership. Seventy-six years ago V. I. Lenin, who led the Russian workers in their successful revolution, wrote that "The history of all countries shows that the working class exclusively by its own effort is able to develop only trade-union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc." (*What Is To Be Done?*). The miners today are among the most, if not *the* most trade-union conscious workers in the U.S. But what Lenin wrote remains true today. Miners must be won to a Trotskyist leadership and a class-struggle program for their struggles to break through the limits imposed by pro-capitalist leaders, the employers and the state....

The Spartacist League stands in the tradition of revolutionary leaders of the working-class movement like Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, who unceasingly fought the opportunist peddlers of illusions, not least when these opportunists falsely called themselves "socialists" or "communists." In refusing to capitulate to "progressive" fakers like Miller and Sadlowski, we counterpose the building of a militant opposition in the unions based on a class-struggle program. As Leon Trotsky wrote in 1938 in the *Transitional Program*, the founding document of the Fourth International:

"It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of

the revolution. This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

Over the last several years the pages of *Workers Vanguard* have covered the struggle of militants in auto, steel, longshore, maritime, phone and other unions to forge such a programmatically based opposition as the nucleus of a new leadership. A program for the UMWA, incorporating the lessons of the working-class movement generally as well as of the miners' own struggles, would include such demands as:

- 1) For the unlimited right to strike and picket—down with compulsory arbitration and court injunctions! For total UMWA control over safety: no faith in the government's inspectors!
- 2) Restore the health fund, controlled by the union, with guaranteed full medical coverage! Equalize and raise all pensions—retirement after 20 years in the union!
- 3) For a shorter workweek with no loss in pay and a full cost-of-living escalator clause! Eliminate overtime and create jobs through fewer hours underground!
- 4) For a militant organizing drive, including UMWA strike action, to bring the non-union mines under UMWA contract. Down with company unions like the SLU!



Spartacist banner at miners strike support demonstration in Pittsburgh. WV Photo

5) Keep the government, its agencies and courts out of the unions—no support to those who bring the Labor Department and courts into union affairs!

6) For real union democracy: one-year terms, annual conventions, one-year contracts! No union official to be paid more than the highest-paid working miner!

7) Smash all anti-union laws, like Taft-Hartley, with united, militant labor action!

8) End racial and sexual oppression! For union control of hiring—promotion by seniority to eliminate all forms of company discrimination! Smash the Klan, the Nazis and all other fascist groups!

9) End the parasitic monopolies' domination of basic natural resources: expropriate the mines and the entire energy industry without compensation!

10) No support to the strikebreaking Democrats and Republicans, the parties of big business! Oust the bureaucrats and build a workers party, based on the unions, to fight for a workers government that will expropriate industry and the banks and run society in the interests of working people!

The vital importance of working-class leadership has been demonstrated with renewed intensity by the heroic miners strike. The aspiring careerists in the UMWA will spurn the hard struggle to cohere a programmatically based class-struggle opposition. They will use the anti-communism which has been fueled by capitalist propaganda and the real betrayals of the fake lefts, mainly the shamelessly reformist, pro-Miller Communist Party, to whip up opposition to the militant miners who fight for it. They have no real alternative to Miller—their policies are only an alternative way to lose. It is the Trotskyists of the Spartacist League who have consistently put forward a program for victory. ■

ARNOLD MILLER & THE MFD

Labor Department Wins Mine Workers' Election

The roots of the betrayal of the 1977-78 coal strike go back to the November 1972 election of Arnold Miller as president of the UMWA. Virtually every left group in the country joined Nixon's Labor Department, liberal Democratic lawyers and money men and big business mouthpieces like Fortune magazine in pushing the Miners for Democracy reform slate. But the Spartacist League warned that "reformers" whose road to office was through calling the bosses' government into union affairs could only bring betrayal in their wake. The Workers Vanguard article in March 1973, "Labor Department Wins Mine Workers' Election," told the truth about Miller. In fighting to throw out corrupt gangsters like Tony Boyle the precondition for union democracy is independence from the capitalist state...

—excerpted from **WV No. 17, March 1973**

"For the first time, you have replaced an entrenched labor bureaucracy with leaders chosen from the rank and file." So the United Mine Workers *Journal* (December 1972) pompously told the membership after the Miller-Trbovich-Patrick slate defeated the incumbents headed by Tony Boyle in the Labor Department-supervised UMW elections last December.

And indeed, at first glance Arnold Miller of the "Miners for Democracy" (MFD) appears to be the archetype of the "honest rank and filer" courageously taking on and defeating the status quo. But stripped of liberal romanticizing, Miller's victory over Boyle was significant only as a step in the U.S. government's campaign to curtail even the formal independence of the union movement....

Miners for Democracy was the new name for "Miners for Yablonski," the campaign structure supporting Joseph Yablonski. Yablonski, MFD's first "rank-and-file" candidate for the UMW presidency first came to public attention as the man who persuaded Pennsylvania miners not to strike to force Boyle to open contract

negotiations after there had been no new UMW contract for a period of five years! Yablonski had been a member of the International Executive Board since 1942 and had gone along with the union hierarchy for years. He had worked for Boyle's reelection, participated in permissive use of union funds, and kept silent about the UMW's collusion with the coal companies. (Even one of his most ardent supporters admitted that Yablonski had helped Boyle rig the pensioner vote in 1964!) He was persuaded to run for office by Ralph Nader, who had jumped on the mine-safety bandwagon. It took two months of secret meetings with Nader before Yablonski was willing to announce his candidacy. And why not? He had a lot to risk—a \$26,000/year salary and a no-questions-asked expense account. Reading his program of mild reforms for the first time, Yablonski stumbled over the words, no doubt because he had just seen the program, probably written by Nader.

Miller was selected for nomination by the Miners for Democracy after the 1969 Boyle-Yablonski contest had been ordered rerun by federal court order because of gross election irregularities. His program was a simple extension of Yablonski's: move the UMW headquarters to the coalfields, reduce the salaries of International officers, retirement after 25 years with full benefits, a \$200/month pension, autonomy for UMW districts, establishment of local safety committees, a 6-hour day and 4-shift day with one shift devoted to



Mike Trbovich



Joseph Yablonski

maintenance, support to the Black Lung Association, sick pay benefits, and reclamation of land destroyed by strip mining.

The Miners for Democracy is the captive creature of the liberal section of the bourgeoisie and has been subordinated to these interests from the start. MFD was founded, built and run by liberal Democratic Party politicians and lawyers. Instrumental in transforming it into a permanent group were Yablonski's two sons, both lawyers, and Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., one-time head of Americans for Democratic Action. Both of Yablonski's lawyer sons declared that the only reason neither would run for union office himself was that the UMW constitution requires a candidate to have worked five years in the mines!...

Relying on the government and the courts for its strength, MFD practically handed the union over on a silver platter in May 1972 when it sought to have Boyle ousted and replaced by a court-ordered tribunal—again the work of Rauh.

Miller's campaign represented no more of a "rank-and-file movement" than did Yablonski's. The miners realized that Miller was the liberal establishment's and government's choice for their leader. They so resented Miller's overt government sponsorship that, even after the Yablonski murder scandal, 40 percent of the miners voted for the nakedly corrupt and tyrannical Tony Boyle, whose regime had been an endless series of disasters for the miners.

Degeneration Under Lewis/Boyle

The UMW had rapidly degenerated during the last decade of John L. Lewis' despotic reign. With the replacement of coal by oil and gas in home heating and the introduction of diesel fuel on the railroads, the demand for coal dropped drastically and Lewis embarked on a campaign to nurse the dying coal industry back to health at the miners' expense. Demands for job security, paid holidays and other fringe benefits were scuttled to allow the companies a free hand in a massive program of modernization and consolidation that cost more than 300,000 men their jobs. Millions were loaned the coal producers from the UMW-controlled National Bank of Washington to assist them in their modernization. Negotiations were carried on in private for the first time and contracts were signed without strikes. Contracts were "open-ended," i.e., they remained in effect until either side decided to terminate them. From 1958-63 there was no new contract, with the only change for the miners being cutbacks in welfare fund benefits.

When Boyle came to power in 1963 upon the death of Lewis' hand-picked successor, Thomas Kennedy, the coal industry had recovered after having captured the electricity-generating market. But Boyle

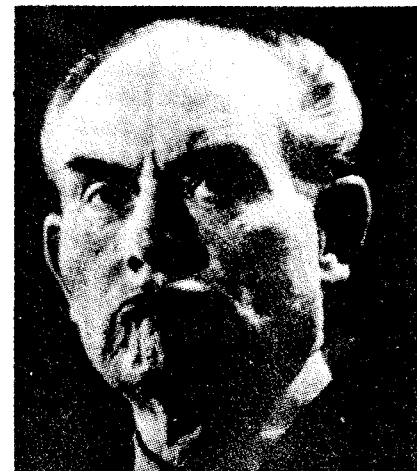
made no move to reopen the contract until faced with a strike threat in the Pennsylvania coalfields. His first contract was greeted with a wave of wildcat strikes across the northern coalfields and Boyle moved to tighten the reins. Conventions were held thousands of miles from the coalfields and stacked with pro-Boyle delegates. Dissenters at the 1965 convention were silenced through physical attack. Changes in the constitution were made to lengthen the term of presidency and raise the number of nominations needed from five local unions to fifty. 19 of the 23 union districts were held in trusteeship by the International and Boyle was given power to fill all vacancies occurring in International offices except the Executive Board. The 1968 contract included a provision for a \$120 Christmas bonus for miners who had not taken part in any wildcat strike during the previous year!

The Boyle regime reeked of corruption. \$850,000 was taken from the union treasury and put in a special account to enable all International officers to retire at full salary. (Boyle received \$50,000/year plus an unlimited expense account.) Boyle appointed his brother to the presidency of Montana District 27 at \$27,000/year. His daughter, a lawyer, was put on the district payroll at \$23,000/year. Boyle was convicted in federal court of contributing \$50,000 of union funds to various Democratic candidates and is strongly implicated in the Yablonski murders. There is little doubt that thousands of dollars of unaccounted-for union funds were used for his campaign in 1969, while the *UMW Journal* was turned into his personal mouthpiece.



Michael Abramson

Arnold Miller



Daily World

W.T. Boyle

Meanwhile Boyle continued Lewis' collusion with the operators. Right after the 1968 Farmington disaster, Boyle praised Consolidation Coal for its "safety-mindedness"!

With Boyle's record, union democracy was a ready-made issue for Yablonski and the Miners for Democracy. But rather than building a real movement of the ranks to clean up the union, the MFD relied on legal battles in the federal courts and intervention by the federal government in internal union affairs. Yablonski repeatedly called upon the Labor Department to conduct an investigation of the 1969 Boyle campaign, upon the advice of Joseph Rauh, the chief strategist of his campaign. After Yablonski's defeat and murder in 1969, Mike Trbovich, head of MFD, filed complaints with the Secretary of Labor charging irregularities in the election. Two years later, in May 1972, U.S. District Judge William B. Bryant ruled the 1969 election invalid and ordered a rerun under Labor Department supervision. . . .

Miners themselves have been among the chief victims of Labor Department policy. The Landrum-Griffin Act declares that union trusteeships are to be presumed invalid after 18 months. But UMW districts had been under trusteeship for decades, although a suit aimed at forcing Boyle to relinquish control over the union's districts was first filed by the Justice Department more than six years ago. Miners for Yablonski protested that their rights were being denied and that the election was being stolen, but the Labor Department replied that there was nothing to do until after the election.

Maneuver Heads Off Struggle

... Far from indicating any change in the fundamental aims of the government, however, the Labor Department's acquiescence to the MFD's assumption of power was simply another maneuver in the interests of the capitalist class.

The era of labor peace in the coalfields was over. An exposed and discredited Boyle could no longer effectively discipline the work force. Disgusted with the Boyle regime's corruption and collusion with the coal operators, miners had begun to take things into their own hands. Wildcats had spread over contract settlements and health and safety issues. The West Virginia miners who struck in 1969, demanding a law encompassing compensation for black lung disease, were acting in defiance of the UMW hierarchy, which actually brought charges of dual unionism against the black lung movement. While the election challenge was being debated in court, in June 1970 a wildcat strike protesting non-enforcement of the 1969 Mine Safety Law shut down 150 mines across the eastern coal region. A month later a group of disabled miners and widows began setting up picket lines in West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky to protest Boyle's

failure to carry out his campaign pledge to shape up the Welfare and Retirement Fund. In 1971 UMW members struck until wage gains in excess of maximums set by the Pay Board were ratified.

In the last ten years the Labor Department has dismissed election complaints in 330 cases in which it admitted that the law had been violated. It chose to intervene for "democracy" in the UMW election because this was an opportunity to stave off the rising discontent of the miners. It was this discontent which caused the government to reverse its earlier pro-Boyle, anti-Yablonski policy. The total collapse of Boyle's authority was dangerously undermining the capacity of the UMW bureaucracy to discipline the workers. The Labor Department disposed of Boyle for the same reasons that the CIA disposes of petty tyrants, like Diem—when they have outlived their usefulness. By establishing Arnold Miller in office, directly dependent on the liberal bourgeoisie and state apparatus, the government sought to ensure that no real change would be effected in the relationship of forces between the miners and the coal operators. For a few mild reforms and promises, the miners might be bought off and the potential for a programmatically-based real movement of the ranks squashed.

The Left Builds Liberal Illusions

Given the liberal view of the state as a class-neutral entity, it is certainly logical that liberals should look with favor upon appeals to the government to intervene to democratize the unions. Avowed Marxists, however, should certainly be capable of understanding that the U.S. government is nothing less than the political embodiment of the U.S. bourgeoisie (including the coal operators). The unions, despite their corrupt and reactionary leaderships, represent the workers' first step in overcoming atomization and impotence at the hands of their employers. Going to the Labor Department to "protect" workers' rights is inviting the class enemy into the workers' organizations. The elementary first principle of a revolutionary proletarian policy toward the trade unions is the struggle for the class independence of the workers. . . .

To "overlook" this principle in the pursuit of opportunist appetites is to cut away the very basis of communist opposition to the reformist bureaucracy! Scum like Boyle must be thrown out by the organized and conscious union ranks, not by the capitalist government and its courts, whose interests lie not in democratizing the unions, but in destroying them.

Yet the ostensibly Marxist movement failed abysmally on this most basic question. . . .

Needless to say, the Communist Party supported the Miller campaign whole-hog. Trade Unionists for Action and Democracy—

a coalition of the CP and its friends in the union bureaucracy—worked closely with Miners for Democracy and sent a congratulatory telegram to Miller and other MFD candidates after the elections. The left-social-democratic International Socialists recognized Miller to be interested only in gaining personal power and stated that he should be supported, all in the same breath....

The I.S.' support for Miners for Democracy, like its support for the United National Caucus in the UAW, is one more example of its opportunist policy of feeding the workers' illusions to tail future bureaucrats. While claiming on paper to be in favor of socialist principles and working-class power, the I.S. is really interested only in getting more left-talking and "militant" labor fakers—like Arnold Miller—into office....

"The MFD victory has opened the door for democracy in the UMW, but not necessarily the kind of democracy that its leaders and their Labor Department allies envisioned. Instead it will be, if the ranks have their way, the democracy of an active rank and file, continually pushing their leaderships to greater militancy."

—*Workers' Power* No. 70, 19 January-1 February 1973

But the proletariat develops only trade-union consciousness through such spontaneous struggle. The mobilization of workers in economist struggle, around reformist illusions under the control of left-posturing bureaucrats does not set the stage for the building of the revolutionary party, but is an obstacle to it. Without the intervention of conscious communist cadres, the miners' struggles, no matter how militant, will never go beyond the level of simple trade unionism. Support to Miller, in lieu of posing the necessary alternative of building communist-led caucuses based on a full transitional program, condemns the miners to this path....

At bottom, Miller's program is specious because it is the campaign promises of an individual rather than a systematic defense of the workers' basic interests; he has no ties to a disciplined political caucus but only to an election campaign committee of his friends. When a union oppositionist wins leadership on the basis of a powerful, organized movement among the ranks, he cannot so cheaply betray his program or that movement might sweep him out of office again. But Miller has no real program, and he must keep faith only with the Labor Department/liberal Democrat cabal which installed him at the head of the UMW.

This is the real lesson of the UMW elections. For communists, whose fundamental aim in the labor movement is to transform the unions into a tool of the revolutionary will of the proletariat, no reform can increase the power of the working class if it is won by placing the unions under the trusteeship of the capitalist state, thus destroying the first pre-condition for their mobilization in the

struggle to smash that state. Those pretended Marxists who offer excuses for this disastrous policy, posing the MFD's ties to the liberal bourgeoisie as merely a negative item on a linear balance sheet, demonstrate their complete abandonment of a revolutionary working-class perspective. ■

The Rise and Fall of Arnold Miller

Arnold Miller was narrowly re-elected in 1977, with a majority of the disgusted miners either not voting or opposing him. On the eve of the election, WV took stock of Miller's demise and the fractured UMWA leadership...

—**excerpted from WV No. 161, 10 June 1977**

As presidential elections approach in the United Mine Workers of America, the U.S. left and the entire workers movement has the obligation to take a position on the experience of four years of "reform" leadership in the most combative union in the country. On our part, the Spartacist League refused to support Miller or Boyle in 1972, and we oppose all three of the feuding labor fakers in the June 15 UMW elections. Not only for revolutionaries, but for all militant mine workers the lessons of the rise and fall of Arnold Miller—the dissolution of his electoral combine, the Miners for Democracy (MFD); his enforcement of one sellout contract and negotiation of another; his siding with the courts and coal operators against numerous massive wildcats, and above all the dangerous consequences of bringing the capitalist state into the affairs of the labor movement—must be a powerful demonstration of the bankruptcy of supporting one wing of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy against another....

The inability of Miller, Patrick and Trbovich to institute a homogeneous bureaucracy flowed from the same fundamental factor that led to the toppling of the old Boyle regime: the relentless combativity of the miners and their unwillingness to tolerate the pro-

company discipline that their bureaucratic leaders have attempted to foist on them....

The Lewis Tradition

In fact, the abuses which Miners for Democracy claimed to redress preceded the Boyle regime. Following World War II, the demand for coal underwent a sharp decline, as it was replaced by oil and gas in home heating, and by diesel fuel on the railroads. John L. Lewis embarked on a campaign to nurse the declining industry back to health at the miners' expense. Demands for job security, paid holidays and other fringe benefits were dropped and the companies were allowed a free hand in a massive program of modernization and consolidation. Negotiations were carried on in private, and opened contracts which remained in effect until either side decided to terminate them, were signed without strikes.

Tony Boyle, who succeeded Lewis' hand-picked successor Thomas Kennedy after the latter's death, came to power in 1963. Boyle extended the despotic bureaucratism of Lewis and Kennedy. His collaboration with the bosses was notorious....

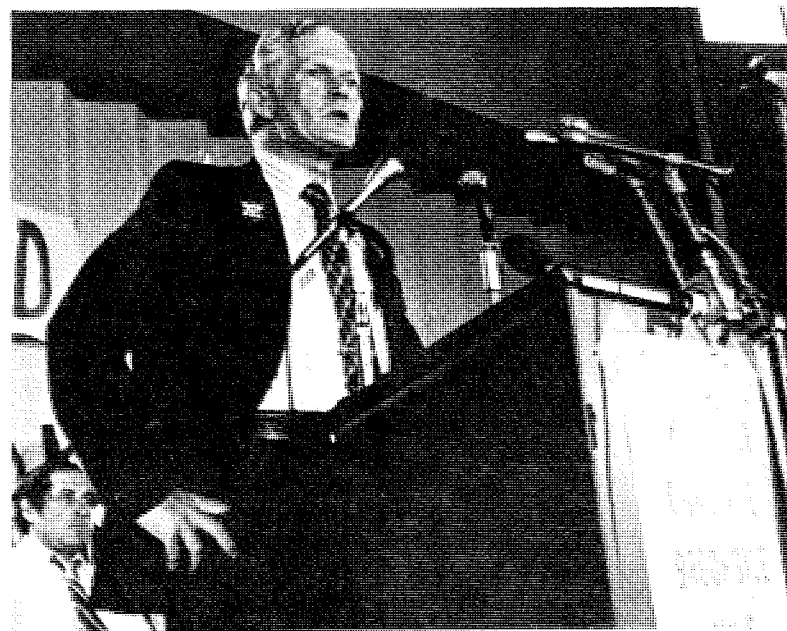
The broad support that the MFD received was not surprising. The Boyle regime had become increasingly isolated and unable to control the membership, and the program of the MFD didn't in any way go beyond straight-line trade unionism—i.e., reformist class collaboration. Its essence was a series of minimal reforms that were standard practice in many American unions....

The real issue of the 1972 elections was not the elementary reforms proposed by Miners for Democracy, but the independence of the trade unions from the bourgeois parties and state. Miller himself had unsuccessfully run for office in the West Virginia legislature on the Democratic Party ticket and maintained close ties with liberal politicians. But the grossest betrayal was the MFD's invitation to the bourgeois state to intervene in the UMW....

The MFD's courting of the state against the Boyle clique only presaged its support of the courts against the Mine Workers membership once it achieved power. Our article entitled "Labor Department Wins Mine Workers' Election," published shortly after the elections, put the question squarely:

"But Miller has no real program, and he must keep faith only with the Labor Department/liberal Democrat cabal which installed him at the head of the UMW.

"This is the real lesson of the UMW elections. For communists, whose fundamental aim in the labor movement is to transform the unions into a tool of the revolutionary will of the proletariat, no reform can increase the power of the working class if it is won by placing the unions under the trusteeship of the capitalist state, thus destroying the



WV Photo

Miller addressing Brookside miners at 1974 strike rally.

first pre-condition for their mobilization in the struggle to smash that state."

—WV No. 17, March 1973

This was not, however, typical of the response of the American left, which virtually without exception added its voice to the chorus of cheers for Miller. Predictably enough, the CP uncritically backed Miller, and the CP-dominated TUAD sent Miller and other MFD candidates a congratulatory telegram after the elections. The SWP similarly campaigned against the "greater evil." A *Militant* headline (8 December 1972) blared: "Issues in Miners Election: Boyle 'Protects Bosses From the Men'." The workerist International Socialists (I.S.) claimed that an MFD victory would insure that the new union leaders would be forced to defend the membership:

"The MFD has opened the door for democracy in the UMW, but not necessarily the kind of democracy that its leaders and their Labor Department allies envisioned. Instead, it will be, if the ranks have their way, the democracy of an active rank and file, continually pushing their leadership to greater militancy."

—*Workers' Power*, 19 January-1 February 1973

Within the Maoist movement, the main tendencies engaged in polemics over how much "criticism" it was appropriate to make

before selling out to Miller. The October League excoriated the Revolutionary Union (RU—now the Revolutionary Communist Party [RCP]):

“On the question of supporting the Miller and Sadlowski campaigns, the OL takes sharp issue with RU leader Avakian’s line of ‘critical support.’ Faced with the growing fascist assault of gangster miner-union leader Tony Boyle and USW boss I. W. Abel, it was the duty of the entire working class and its leadership to stand behind the two campaigns, which had the solid support of the rank and file.”

—*Call*, August 1973

The Decline of Miller

The Miners for Democracy experience has proven a complete dud. The Miller regime has acted in a fashion fundamentally identical to its predecessor, as the servant of the coal operators and the capitalist class. And just as under the Boyle regime, the rank and file has demonstrated its determination to fight for its interests, *despite* and often *against* its sellout leaders.

The UMW, under Lewis, Kennedy and Boyle, was always ruled despotically. The MFD was the first major challenge to the incumbent bureaucracy for 40 years, ever since the 1920’s, when the Communist Party had considerable influence. But the illusions which thousands of miners had in the Miller administration following the ouster of Boyle have long since been dashed. The very fact that Lee Roy Patterson, a confederate of the hated Boyle, could rise to be a major contender in the elections, simply by distancing himself from the betrayals of the Miller-Patrick administration, is a crushing indictment of the policies of the current leadership.

As for Miller himself, regardless of the outcome of the elections his personal prestige, founded on a reputation of being an honest reformer, has suffered irreparable damage. The ex-New Leftists and young liberals who enlisted in the new UMW administration have deserted in droves. (Research done by Patterson shows that 29 out of 31 key aides, staffers and union officials who supported Miller in 1972 have since left.) Even Joe Rauh, the liberal kingmaker, who in fact was the real organizer of the MFD victory, has recently announced that he is supporting Patrick. For the liberal bourgeoisie as a whole, the inability of the UMW leaders to discipline their ranks has considerably soured it, for the time being at least, on new experiments with “progressive” unionism.

As to the claims of fake-leftists that the MFD victory would at least provide a “democratic” framework in which militants could fight for their policies, this stupidity has been buried under four years of Miller strikebreaking. The massive wildcats that have shaken the coalfields are the result of the fundamental contempt of the class-

collaborationist leaders for the rank and file. All of the major contenders—Miller, Patrick and Patterson—have supported draconian measures to quash the membership, such as the September 1975 resolution of the International Executive Board which mandated powers to itself to try members who defied the directives of the International. . . .

While the fake-left pooh-poohed the issue of government intervention during the 1972 UMW elections, the major coal miners’ battles in the past period have been confrontations with the bourgeois state. These included the successful wildcat against West Virginia governor Arch Moore’s gasoline rationing in 1974 and the massive wildcat strikes against court fines and injunctions in 1975 and 1976. In all cases, following its pact with the Labor Department in 1972, the UMW bureaucracy has bowed to bourgeois legality, first by enforcing Boyle’s rotten contract and then by attempting to do the same with its own. (The Miller settlement in 1974 sold out the crucial demand for the local right to strike.) The obvious significance of the question of the state was brought to the fore by the miners themselves in the 1976 wildcat: they demanded a written statement from coal operators forswearing the use of the courts in disputes with the unions, as well as demanding that all fines and injunctions be dropped, there be no reprisals and an investigation be undertaken of the judges who routinely side with the companies in every strike. . . .

The Left: Nothing Learned

One might expect that Miller’s obvious bankruptcy and the disappearance of Miners for Democracy would force some of their



John Blair/Photoreporters
Lee Roy Patterson



Robert Gumpert
Harry Patrick

left apologists to re-evaluate their earlier support to these fakers. But such is not the case. Although few left groups are backing the unpopular Miller with enthusiasm in the June 14 UMW elections, most of the left pursued a virtually identical class-collaborationist policy in supporting "progressive" out-bureaucrat Ed Sadlowski in the February Steelworkers elections. Not a single group that backed Miller in 1972 has renounced that position, which only points to the degree to which they are mired in anti-Marxist methodology....

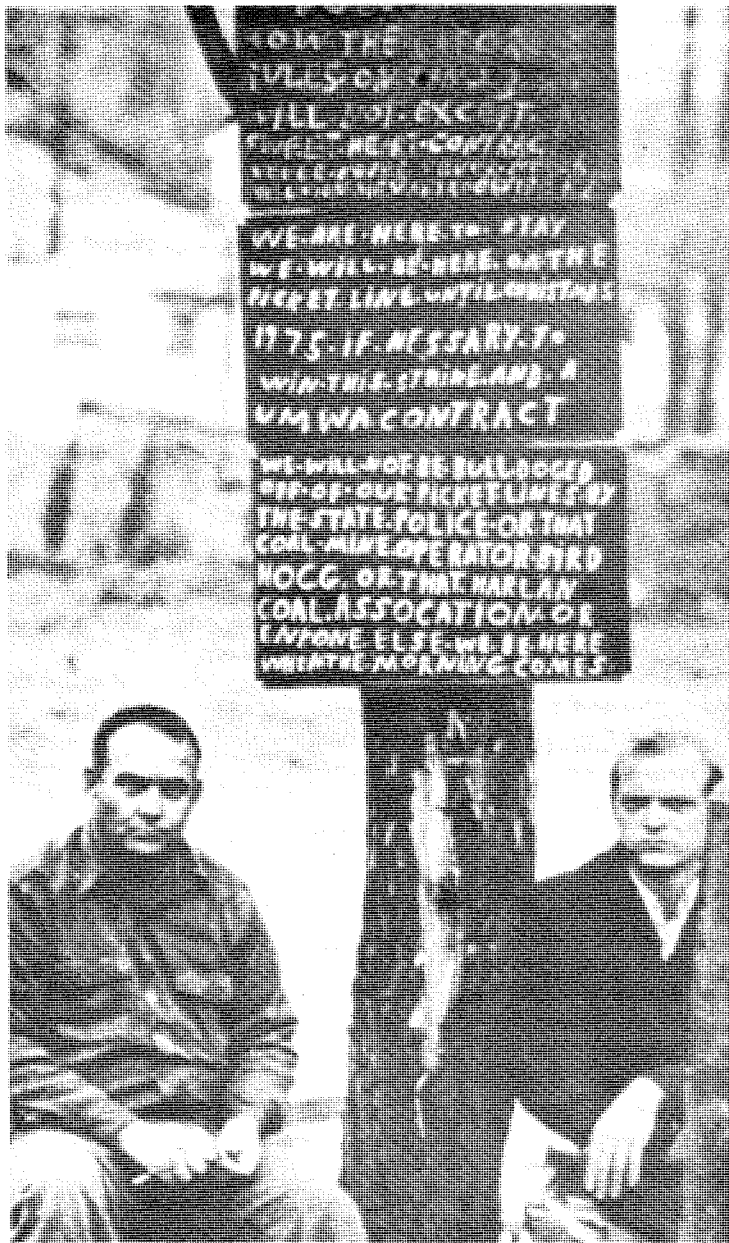
Genuine workers democracy cannot be separated from a class-struggle program. The Millers, as much as the Boyles, must suppress the UMW ranks in order to maintain discipline for their capitalist masters. The prostration of the I.S. and SWP before the "democracy" of liberal money-man Joe Rauh, the U.S. Labor Department and Arnold Miller makes them obstacles to the building of a class-struggle leadership in the unions....

The Spartacist League was almost alone in 1972 in opposing support to Miller. Unlike the centrists and reformists, who argued for supporting the MFD on the basis of its popularity, the SL held that critical support within union elections must be grounded on program. Should a reformist bureaucrat break from class collaboration on key issues—such as opposition to government intervention in the unions, a break from the capitalist parties, expropriation of the mines—then, and only then, is it principled to extend critical support....

The assertion of the opportunists that "exposing" Miller by putting him in power would lead the miners to embrace a militant leadership has been proven a lie. Had the MFD been a programmatically based caucus with even a semblance of class-struggle politics, a split would have occurred in the face of the treachery of Miller/Patrick/Trbovich. There would then be today a real left alternative to Miller's reformism. Instead, in the absence of a class-struggle alternative disappointment in Miller has mainly been expressed in a strengthening in the reactionary Patterson/Boyle wing of the bureaucracy. In a union with the most militant rank and file of any in the U.S., all three candidates are proven strikebreakers! That fact alone should make it obvious that the MFD experiment did nothing to resolve the crisis of leadership.

Despite the miners' enormous proven capacity to struggle, the question of leadership is crucial. The experience of the Miller regime is another convincing proof that the liberal reformers are no alternative to the Boyles, Fitzsimmons, Meanys and Abels. It is a powerful vindication of the position, held uniquely by the SL, that *only* on the basis of a principled, class-struggle program can a leadership be built that can offer a way out of the hellhole of capitalist exploitation for miners and all workers. ■

CLASS WAR IN STEARNS & HARLAN



UMWA strikers at Brookside mine.

United Mine Workers Journal

Movie Review:

Blood and Coal: Harlan County, U.S.A.

With non-union coal production rapidly expanding, posing a mortal threat to the UMWA, the operators violently resisted the union's organizing attempts. They were assisted by Miller's criminal policy of refusing to mobilize the union's strength behind miners trying to win a UMWA contract. The Academy Award-winning film Harlan County, U.S.A. vividly portrayed the bitter 1973-74 strike at Brookside, Kentucky...

—excerpted from WV No. 144, 11 February 1977

Bloody class warfare is a rare theme in American movies. Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County, U.S.A.*,... is a documentary film about one of those battles, a 13-month strike in the Appalachian coal fields that ended in a limited victory for the miners.

The film is a first-rate documentary. It has impact because it is not only the story of a strike but also a compelling portrayal of the power of labor traditions. It is a historical document of union militancy and working-class solidarity.

It also records, but has no answer for, the treachery of the United Mine Workers (UMW) leadership under Arnold Miller, which withheld active support to the Harlan County strikers for over a year and then sold out the right to strike over grievances in the 1974 national coal contract.

Kopple's use of historical clips from the 1930's never allows the audience to forget that this is Harlan County. This is bloody Harlan: "there are no neutrals here." Dramatic scenes of class confrontation in the 1970's are prepared by images of pitched battles in the past. The screen is filled by the government's tanks ripping through the streets on the way up to the mines. The troops form a corridor of the state's armed might through which scabs are driven...

The miners and their wives speak for themselves in this story of a year-long struggle at Brookside, Kentucky. Contemptuous and paternalistic, the Duke Power Company which owns the mine

refused to accept the standard UMW contract, forcing the miners to strike in July 1973. Jailed en masse by mine-owning judges, beaten by state troopers, shot at by scabherding gun thugs, the strikers held out and finally forced recognition of the union by the mine bosses.

Kopple's camera allows us interviews of the older folks who remember the martyrs who died. For them the UMW slogan, "fight like hell for the living," is no abstract rhetoric. Throughout the film are woven the miners' own songs, articulating their plight and their determination. At a strike rally, Florence Reese sings "Which Side Are You On?"—the song she wrote during Harlan County's labor battles of the 1930's.

Things are straightforward in Harlan. We see picket lines held by the wives on the highway because the mines are held by machine guns. Those who cross are scabs—there's no confusion here. We see the Brookside women lie down in the street to stop the gun-toting thugs. The cops drag them away, but they return. We see men and women defying court injunctions which would mean death to the strike. They have no illusions that the cops who arrest them or the courts who jail them are anything but an official extension of the company and its gunmen.

Over and over again Kopple sees the source of the strikers' courage in the memory of prior battles, in the class-struggle traditions of the coal mines of Harlan. After numerous confrontations and mass mobilizations, the miners are faced with the decision to defend themselves with arms against the guns of the union-busters and the cops. Workers self-defense is also a tradition in Harlan, and the climax of the film is surely when the strikers train their gun barrels on a convoy of scabs trying to enter Highsplint Mine.

The central figures of the movie are the miners' wives, whose Brookside Women's Club was in many ways the backbone of the strike. Their gritty defiance of gun thugs and state troopers sustained the picket lines through months of strikebreaking terror. For the Brookside women, as well as their husbands, the union meant survival....

The urgency of class solidarity undercut traditional racial and sexual prejudices. The powerful contradiction, pervasive throughout the U.S. proletariat, between militant unionism and reactionary social attitudes is particularly intense in the isolated mining regions. The West Virginia textbook-burning campaigns are an example. The appeal to god-fearing anti-communism has traditionally been the bosses' rallying cry in the coal fields. In the 1930's it was not only prosecution on charges of "criminal syndicalism" that defeated the Communist Party (CP)-led National Miners Union in Harlan and

Bell counties, but also a hysterical scare campaign against "Marxist atheism."

Today UMW bureaucrats play on the same backwardness to harass militant oppositionists and try to purge "reds" from the union. Last September's Mine Workers convention turned into a virtual witchhunt as a result. In this respect Arnold Miller, Mike Trbovich and the rest of the bureaucrats follow in the footsteps of their anti-communist predecessors, from John L. Lewis on.

While the film is able to record the class-struggle traditions in Harlan, it fails to explicitly deal with the political reality of the bureaucratized labor movement which dragged out the Brookside strike and made it into such an agonizing struggle. As a political statement, *Harlan County, U.S.A.* never goes beyond the militant unionism it depicts. Acknowledging Miller's betrayals—and the miners' anger in response, as they burn his 1974 contract—the film shows nothing of the political roots of these betrayals....

In the film, "Jock" Yablonski, the long-time UMW bureaucrat who founded Miners for Democracy and was killed by Boyle supporters, dies an untarnished martyr; Miller is seen as just one more personally corrupted bureaucrat. But in fact Miller's political behavior was utterly predictable (and Yablonski's would have been the same had he lived). Unlike their fans in virtually every allegedly socialist group in the U.S., the Spartacist League warned from the outset against illusions in these darlings of the liberals....

Miller's reliance on the capitalist government—through its courts and Labor Department—to climb to power in the UMW presaged his later collaboration with the class enemy in breaking wildcats, his stifling of the miners' right to strike and his heavy-handed suppression of internal opponents in the union. Today those who backed Miller—"critically" or otherwise—are fleeing like rats from his sinking ship, as the treachery of this "reform" bureaucrat has become obvious to all.

But there is one group of Miller enthusiasts which has remained loyal to the bitter end. The Communist Party's review of *Harlan County, U.S.A.* attacks "Barbara Kopple's limitations as a labor documentary filmmaker" ... for putting Miller in a bad light! This, it says, aids the "unholy alliance" of pro-Boyle forces "skilled at taking advantage of the disruptive attacks on Miller by some of the so-called 'leftist' sects operating among the miners" (*Daily World*, 2 November 1976).

The *Daily World* complains that, "As presented in the film, the UMW president is apparently turning out to be just one more labor bureaucrat. Actually in the real miners' world, it's a different situation." In the spirit of the Stalinists' "documentary films" of the Russian Revolution that "edited out" the role of Leon Trotsky, the



Louisville Courier-Journal

Cops arrest strikers at Brookside, Harlan County.

CP would prefer a “documentary” about the coal miners in which Arnold Miller is not seen as a sellout. The problem is, Kopple’s camera and microphones recorded what UMW miners thought of Miller’s sellout contract; they reflected the fact that the membership struck for a month before he could shove it down their throats. That’s what the *Daily World* doesn’t want to see on film.

Kopple has limitations, but they are not that she shows what the angry miners thought of Miller’s sellout. Unfortunately, the film’s indictment of the UMW leaders is only implicit and incomplete. The director sees the strike through the eyes of the most militant miners in the area, who were frustrated by Miller’s betrayals yet had no strategy to defeat them. Toward the end of the film one sees the Harlan miners trying to grapple with the Miller bureaucracy; there are arguments, a young miner talks of the need to continue the struggle. Here one hopes for an analysis of the role of the union bureaucracy, a call for constructing a class-struggle opposition in the UMW against *all* the labor fakers and an explanation of the need for a *political* struggle by the working class against the parties and state of big business. Instead there is an emptiness, at best platitudes of the kind that one can find in endless stories about Harlan in the pages of the Communist Labor Party’s *People’s Tribune*.

The strike is finally won—after a young miner is murdered, shot in the face—through the mobilization of 120,000 miners in a five-day “memorial period” which shut down every UMW-organized mine in the country. A subsequent NLRB representation election was lost at Highsplint Mine and Miller agreed that Brookside would be exempted in any contract strike later in the year. Above all, the necessary support—a nationwide coal strike—deliberately withheld by UMW leaders for months, could have won the strike in short order at the onset. The “reformer” Miller, however, was committed not to class struggle but to accommodation with the coal bosses....

Harlan County, U.S.A. shows that the basis for class struggle is rooted deep in the capitalist mode of production itself. The old-timers recall the bloody battles fought a generation ago in eastern Kentucky, only to be fought again when the mine bosses drove the union out. But if today’s militant young miners are to go forward they must go beyond the limits of labor reformism and the tenuous victories of defensive battles. It is through the fight to throw out the Abels and Sadlowskis, the Boyles and the Millers that the workers will recover their militant traditions, forge a class-struggle leadership and go on to make the revolutionary history of the future. ■

Class Warfare in Stearns, Ky.

Gun thugs and scabherding state troopers repeatedly attacked miners at an even longer strike in Stearns, Kentucky. WV was the first newspaper on the left to publicize the embattled miners’ cause...

—excerpted from **WV No. 160, 3 June 1977**

STEARNS, Kentucky, May 28—From 1 a.m. until 3:30 this morning, picketing coal miners in this tiny town not far from the Tennessee line came under a barrage of gunfire—more than 200 rounds—by criminal gun thugs of the Storm Security Service at the struck Justus Mine. Forty-five caliber slugs, buckshot and automatic weapons fire ripped overhead as strikers crowded in a four-foot deep fox hole behind sandbag fortifications.

Between volleys, militants stood up with a megaphone to curse and ridicule the guards. The company goons fired from 200 yards’ distance, behind their own bunkers, with the knowledge that the



WV Photo

Stearns strikers at sandbags, their protection from company gun thugs at the picket site.

strikers were more than willing to defend themselves. Were it not for this fact, miners told a *WV* reporter who spent the night with them in their picket site, the gun thugs hired by the Stearns Mining Company would overrun the union's fortifications, drive off the pickets and break the ten-month-old strike.

The miners, however, have no intention of giving ground. "They won't run nobody off," one picket commented during a lull in the firing. "It'd be like running from your own home." Another striker pointed out that if union reinforcements are needed, most of the strikers live within a few miles of the struck mine.

The bitter class warfare in Stearns has become one of the hottest points in the eastern coalfields, which have been swept by one massive wildcat after another during the last four years. Already it has assumed the proportions of the 1973-74 strike at Brookside Mine in Harlan County, 80 miles east of here....

The strike, which began last July 17 with a 151-to-1 vote, is to force the company to accept the national bituminous coal contract with the United Mine Workers (UMW), which has been certified as bargaining agent for the miners by the National Labor Relations Board. Safety is a major issue in the strike. One of the key demands is for an elected union safety committee. The Stearns Mining Company is a subsidiary of the notorious Blue Diamond Coal Company which also owns the Scotia Mine where 26 workers were killed in March 1976. Conditions at the Justus Mine are equally dangerous. When government safety inspectors tour the mine, the company has ample warning to eliminate flagrant safety hazards. Miners say that the bosses threaten to fire any worker who complains about safety to the inspectors.

Battle Zone

Management broke off negotiations in late January, and the importation of hired gunmen was the first step in an attempt to resume production with scab labor.... However, militant resistance from the strikers has halted these plans. Strung up on a tree stump in front of the union "hall" (a cabin located just down the road from the entrance to the Justus Mine) is an effigy of a company security guard. Next to him is a sign which says in no uncertain terms, "Warning: The Stearns miners have determined that scabbing is dangerous to your health." Round-the-clock picketing makes sure this warning is heeded.

Blue Diamond's determination to keep the UMW out of its mines has turned the Justus compound and surrounding woods into a battle zone. International organizer Lee Potter and UMW director of organizing John Cox showed *WV* reporters a line of trees cut down by massive company gunfire. This was so heavy one night that the



WW Photo

Stearns miners in trench outside union hall at Justus Mine.

strikers gathered up the severed branches to add to their bonfire.

The shooting has continued nightly, and sometimes in broad daylight, for months since the Storm Security outfit was brought into Stearns in February. "It began the first day they came in," one worker said. Previously, picketing was peaceful and effective with no scabs daring to dig coal, although company officials have been entering the compound daily under police escort.

The small cabin built for pickets had all its windows shot out and its walls riddled with bullet holes. "You'll be sitting there playing cards," one worker said, "and next thing you know you'll be looking for a hole." An estimated 30 guards live inside company property and shoot at the strikers from behind steel-reinforced bunkers made of railroad ties and sandbags. Their food and ammunition comes in by helicopter.

Miners estimated that the Storm Security goons frequently fire 500 rounds or more per night. In fact, pickets described this morning's gunfire as light and speculated that the guards' supplies were low since no helicopter had landed for a few days. According to the strikers, the gun thugs' ammunition includes exploding shells, deer slugs and tracer bullets....

Company "Justice"

Blue Diamond's assault on the coal miners is not restricted to hot lead from Storm Security gangsters. The company and courts have

also mounted a legal attack. Yesterday, 27 strikers were arraigned in McCreary Circuit Court as the result of a grand jury indictment charging them with first degree assault, kidnapping and first degree robbery. Three cowardly company guards claim that on the night of April 13 they were allegedly disarmed by strikers, given a tour of the county and dropped off minus their pants. When two of their heavily armed cohorts arrived to pick the redfaced thugs up, they set off a gunfight and the two were seriously injured. All 27 of the indicted UMW members pleaded innocent and will face trial in October....

Last weekend McCreary County judge J.B. Johnson fined the union \$4,050 for nine counts of contempt of court. The judge also ordered the UMW to post a \$100,000 penal bond as a condition for permission to continue picketing. The contempt citation charged the union with violations of a temporary restraining order, including blocking entrance to the Justus Mine on several occasions with rocks, logs, trees and burning tires; interfering with company employees attempting to remove these obstructions; damage of company property resulting in loss of electricity, water and phone service inside the compound; and firing high-powered weapons into company property. The court also cited an incident on March 12 when miners allegedly roughed up five security guards and their boss, Bob Storm....

Finally, the miners were dealt a blow by the NLRB. Based on the same allegations as the circuit court contempt citations, the Board issued an unfair labor practices complaint against the UMW. Earlier in the strike, a union petition against Blue Diamond was turned down by the NLRB. Needless to say, the cops and courts have consistently turned a deaf ear to the strikers' complaints....

For a National UMW Walkout to Defend the Stearns Strike!

This challenge must not go unanswered. A belated five-day national coal work stoppage in August 1974 was required to force the Duke Power Company to finally recognize the UMW after the 13-month Brookside strike at Harlan. A national strike in the coalfields today would quickly bring Blue Diamond to terms and could be a springboard for organizing non-union mines throughout the U.S. and Canada....

It is an outrage that miners here are being shot up with the connivance of pro-company courts and cops without the UMW calling the rest of the union out of the pits! It is because the bureaucracy—including UMW president Arnold Miller and his rivals for the presidency, Harry Patrick and Lee Roy Patterson, as



Wide World

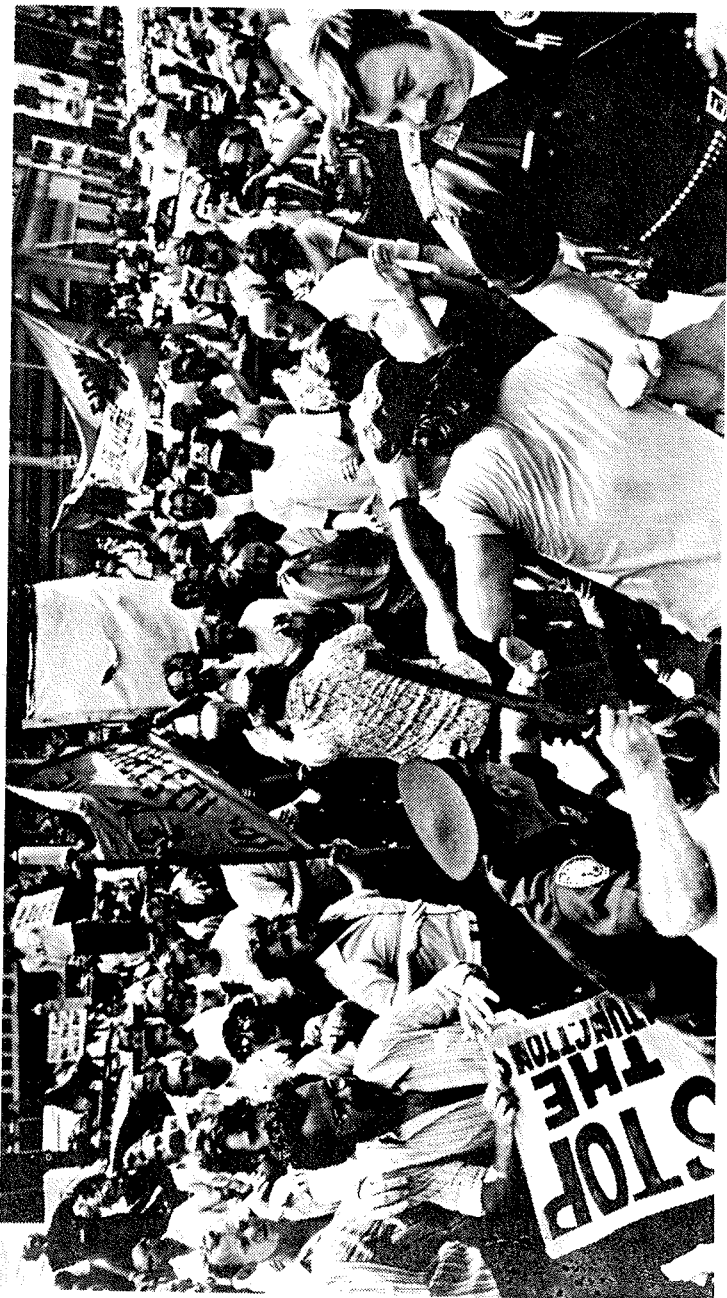
Top, state police stand guard over handcuffed Stearns strikers, many of whom were beaten to the ground, below.



Wide World

well as the whole International Executive Board—fears a nationwide coal strike might well get “out of control” and open the union ranks up to class-struggle policies that it refuses to back up the Stearns strikers. A militant union leadership would not only call a national strike but also appeal to unionists in the steel mills, power companies and railroads to stand with the UMW by refusing to handle coal while a strike continued.... ■

WILDCATS IN THE COALFIELDS



Charleston Daily Mail

Cops battle striking West Virginia miners in Charleston, August 1975.

Miners Fight for Right to Strike

In the summer of 1975, tens of thousands of miners walked out to defend the right to strike that Miller had abandoned in the narrowly ratified 1974 sellout contract. WV reported from the West Virginia coalfields...

—excerpted from **WV No. 76, 12 September 1975**

CHARLESTON, W. Va., September 7—A coal miners' wildcat strike that began near here in Logan County August 11 and encompassed at its peak two thirds of the United Mine Workers (UMW) 120,000 members continues in an atmosphere of deepening bitterness. Amid increasing reports of bomb threats, gunfire and rock throwing in neighboring coalfields, angry miners are defying UMW President Miller's repeated back-to-work orders as well as massive court fines (now up to \$1 million and increasing at the rate of \$100,000 a day).

This already four-week-old strike, the longest and largest in the country so far in 1975, has cost the coal operators more than 2 million tons of production—and, more costly to them, has deeply shattered whatever lingering faith miners had in Miller, whose "reform" leadership team has moved as surely to sabotage the miners as did its predecessors in the Tony Boyle regime.

Sparked by the firing of Local 1302 president Roger Thompson in Lundale, a neighboring Logan County mine went out in sympathy with 1302's protest strike. Though a grievance has been filed against Amherst Coal Company's firing of Thompson, to date no answer has been received by the union. A Logan County miner from a nearby local told this reporter of five recent firings at his mine and the growing fear that the companies were getting the upper hand. Thompson's firing, he said, "was the straw that broke the camel's back." His local walked out. The wildcat spread from District 17 (the UMW's largest) into neighboring District 29 (the second largest), and within two weeks spilled into northern West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Alabama and Indiana....

Though Arnold Miller backed the local right to strike in his 1972 campaign, he dropped this elementary need in the 1974 contract negotiations. The resulting contract was only narrowly ratified (44

percent voted “no”) after a desperate campaign by Miller against the “unauthorized” contract strike. A Logan County miner (who didn’t support the contract) says that there has always been suspicion in his local about the voting tally on the contract since the ballots were called in for secret counting. Another said he considered the contract a trick; the “legalese” about the right to strike and grievances wasn’t clear, and he feels Miller pulled a fast one on the membership. In comparing the blatant no-strike deal saddled on the Steelworkers by I. W. Abel with the current situation of the miners, he said at least steelworkers know whom they should be against, “Miller’s too sneaky.”

But it is difficult to be “sneaky” when you openly join hands with the courts and coal trusts to break a strike. Fuming over Miller’s strong denunciations of the strike and his incessant orders to return to the pits, miners here are particularly incensed that UMW lawyers have often refused to represent miners in court for “illegal” picketing. In one such hearing, August 26 in Charleston, Judge K. K. Hall found five men in contempt of court, and fined each \$500—payable to the Amherst Coal Company! Though miners filled the chambers during these kangaroo court proceedings, union lawyers were nowhere in sight.

Miller has sent telegrams to officials in the wildcatting areas instructing local leaders to identify UMWers on picket lines. This outrageous company-finking has caused signs and chants of “Miller is a scab!” to mushroom in miners’ rallies throughout the striking areas. At Drawdy Falls Roadside Park, a traditional meeting place during wildcats, 2,500 miners rallied for three hours on August 24, despite intermittent rain storms, to shout their disapproval of Miller. A march was also held the following day in Charleston when 400 miners protested the injunctions and jailing of Howze....

With this demonstrated widespread militancy, a group centered in District 29—the Miners Committee to Defend the Right to Strike—has played a prominent public role. Originating in the 1974 contract fight, the Right to Strike Committee described itself in a letter published in the November 1974 issue of the Maoist Revolutionary Union’s *Revolution*: “The Right to Strike Committee is a group of rank-and-file coal miners united to organize and fight for a STRONG CONTRACT which includes the RIGHT-TO-STRIKE written clearly into the grievance procedure” [emphasis in original]....

But the group has apparently decided to restrict itself to these popular issues. This is at the expense of waging the necessary political battle for a class-struggle program that alone can free miners from the grip of Miller and all stripes of impotent reformism. Despite its obvious aspiration for union leadership, the Right to Strike Committee currently has a program *more limited* than was Miller’s in

1972, and should logically dissolve if the right to strike is won!

While the Committee desires to “keep the judges and government out of our union” (quoted in *Revolution*, December 1974) its leaders apparently do not see that even “critical support” to Miller’s election (which was the Revolutionary Union’s position) was an invitation to government intervention.... We countered to the Boyle vs. Miller dead end the perspective of building a class-struggle opposition, which would fight not only for the right to strike but also for strikes to unionize the 30 percent of bituminous coalfields still unorganized, for full cost-of-living protection, a shorter workweek with no pay loss to make jobs for all, expropriation without compensation of the energy monopolies that own the mines and labor’s political independence through the formation of a workers party and a workers government.

The Miners Committee to Defend the Right to Strike is not such an opposition. Not only has it failed to raise such a full class-struggle program, but it shuns crucial social issues right under its nose: the anti-abortion, anti-busing and notorious anti-“dirty school book” movements being led by local reactionaries and the Ku Klux Klan. Anxious to insure a monopoly for its narrow brand of simple trade unionism, the Committee is not above abusing elementary norms of workers democracy. At the Charleston rally a District 17 miner



Charleston Daily Mail

Striking miners in Charleston during August 1975 wildcat.

distributing a leaflet advertising a Kanawha Valley Association rally against racism was told by Committee members he would be "trashed" if he continued his leafletting.

Forging the necessary class-struggle leadership for the UMW will surely not be an easy task. A miner who announced at a recent rally in the southernmost tip of West Virginia that he was a member of a communist organization was nearly lynched for his declaration. Yet the militant miners have already experienced the bankruptcy of reformism: sacrificed at the coal companies' altar by Boyle, they are now betrayed by Miller. Both today's wildcat and tomorrow's inevitable battles require the creation of a class-struggle leadership. This is the prerequisite to fulfilling the aspirations expressed by a young Boone County miner, who was speaking for thousands of disgruntled miners, "We're not quitting, we're going all the way!"... ■

Arnold Miller Breaks Coal Wildcat

Arnold Miller and the UMWA bureaucracy denounced and opposed the strike and instituted new measures to shackle the militant miners...

—excerpted from **WV** No. 78, 26 September 1975

SEPTEMBER 16—A wave of repression threatens the United Mine Workers (UMW) membership in the wake of a massive wildcat coal strike that lasted over four weeks....

The strike, which peaked Labor Day weekend with nearly two-thirds of the UMW's 120,000 members out, ended in defeat. Neither a stop to the use of court injunctions to break strikes nor the right to strike over local grievances—the issues that had fueled the spreading walkouts—was gained.... Far more than Charleston Judge K. K. Hall's \$700,000 fine against the union (payable to local coal operators!), it was Miller's incessant "back-to-work" orders that broke the back of the strike. UMW Secretary-Treasurer Harry Patrick summarized the leadership's hostility after a Charleston meeting with 65 local presidents, when he announced that "the contract will not be re-opened. The right to strike people can strike

until Hell freezes over..." (*Louisville Courier-Journal*, 31 August). The decisive turning point came on September 5, when Miller and Patrick met with over 250 local officials from District 17 and pushed through a resolution demanding a return to work, refusing support for the right to strike over local grievances and calling for "punishment of union members who have spread the strike."...

In a resolution that passed 22 to 2, the IEB [International Executive Board] instituted a 10-point anti-strike program that included:

—nullification of the long-standing "24-hour rule," where all three shifts of a mine strike if one turn goes out;

—forbidding the use of UMW funds for the defense of miners involved in picketing mines other than where they work, or to pay fines and damages assessed against union locals for their participation in wildcat strikes;

—providing IEB authority to "try charges against members who, by their actions, in willful and deliberate defiance of International directives, seriously jeopardize the integrity of the union";

—calling for contract instruction for local officials, immediate meetings with management when strikes break out, local meetings "as soon as possible" after a strike starts, with the appropriate District officer (whose responsibility is "directing the men back to work") in attendance.... ■

Miners Strike Against Injunction

The coalfields were shut down again the next summer as miners demanded an end to the increasing use of court injunctions against their wildcat strikes...

—excerpted from **WV** No. 120, 30 July 1976

CHARLESTON, W. Va., July 26—Coal production in West Virginia has come to a virtual standstill in the wake of a week-old strike, which by now includes an estimated 55,000 out of the 60,000 United Mine Workers (UMW) members in the state. The walkout began June 24 over a job-posting controversy at the Cedar Coal Company in Cabin Creek, but has now become a political strike

against government interference in mine workers/management disputes....

Following the June work stoppage, both union and management agreed to submit the posting issue to a federal arbitrator. On July 9, the arbitrator ruled in the company's favor and a week later U.S. district judge Dennis Knapp fined the striking local \$50,000 and an additional \$25,000 for each day the strike continued. Currently the Local has \$28 in its treasury.

It was in response to these fines that the wildcat last week spread across the state. Union members met in Logan County Saturday, July 24, to discuss the strike and a much larger meeting was held Sunday on a field at Dry Branch on Cabin Creek to organize and spread the struggle. Miner after miner rose to attack the court. One militant described the injunctions as "bullets wrapped in paper." The strikers demanded allegiance from all miners and denounced as a scab any miner who works at a site where pickets may be temporarily absent....

The strikers want a written statement from the operators foreswearing the use of courts in disputes with the union. They also demand that all fines and injunctions be dropped, and that no discharges or reprisals result from the strike. At the Logan County meeting, strikers demanded investigation of the judges who had issued "massive fines and penalties against the miners."...

The demand for an investigation of the judges is potentially a powerful demand, which could marshal broad support for the miners by exposing the complicity of the politicians, courts and coal bosses. Knapp was appointed by Nixon, with strong backing from West Virginia's notoriously corrupt governor, Arch Moore. Hall, who fined the union \$700,000 during the 1975 wildcat and who dragged the 213 strikers to court in the first place, is backed by former Ku Klux Klansman and current U.S. senator Robert Byrd....

The sentiment against company-bought politicians and judges, particularly in an election year when disgust over governmental corruption is at an all-time high, should be turned toward mobilizing the labor movement for the construction of a workers party with a class-struggle program. Pro-capitalist labor bureaucrats like Arnold Miller, however, are completely opposed to any such demand since unleashing the workers' political muscle would mean dumping them as the first order of business....

The most prominent opposition group in the UMW is the Right to Strike Committee, which is uncritically supported by the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP)....

Seeking to keep a low profile (in contrast to its prominence in the September wildcat), the Committee has simply tailed after the bureaucrats, not even raising the call for re-opening the contract to

include the right to strike or demanding that the International make the strike official and that strike committees be elected. But unless class-struggle militants put forward a transitional program going beyond trade-union reformism, they will fail to prepare the miners to smash the red-baiting propaganda and government repression that the strikers will soon confront. Lacking this preparation the militant ranks will once again be forced to capitulate to pressure from Miller or pro-Boyle bureaucrats still in power at the district level....

At this point the strike is still gathering momentum. After Sunday's meeting, workers gathered in numerous smaller groups to arrange for pickets throughout Kanawha, Boone and Raleigh counties and all across the state. Militants promised that scabs who received broken windshields as a first warning would have something else broken the next time they tried to cross a picket line.

Militancy alone will not put an end to the onerous working conditions, the murderous cave-ins and anti-union injunctions, however. These are features of the profit-hungry capitalist system which can be ended only by a united working-class upsurge to smash the bosses' state apparatus and institute a workers government in its place. In many ways the men in the pits are far ahead of their American class brothers and sisters in combativity and union traditions. Revolutionaries must seek to lead the miners and all workers beyond the reformist trade-unionism personified by Arnold Miller, as well as the Right to Strike Committee, and toward the conscious struggle against the wage-slave system itself. ■

Miller Backs Judges Against UMW

The anti-injunction strike was sabotaged by Miller and the UMW International Executive Board's back-to-work orders on behalf of the coal operators and strikebreaking courts...

—excerpted from WV No. 122, 20 August 1976

CHARLESTON, W. Va., August 14—The month-old strike by wildcatting United Mine Workers (UMW) members is going down in defeat....

The original strike against the Cedar Coal Company was rapidly transformed into a generalized protest against court interference in

union-management disputes. The strike raised a mighty protest against such government intervention, but nevertheless failed to achieve its goals. This is due to the treachery of the Arnold Miller bureaucracy and local union officials.

The strike reached a critical point last week. Miller was in Charleston August 8 and called a rally at which he intended to urge the miners back to work. Although 1,000 strikers showed up at Cedar Grove, West Virginia, Miller did not. He later claimed that death threats and a picket line prevented him from attending. These charges, which are unsubstantiated, only demonstrate the strike-breaking Miller's unpopularity with the rank and file.

In Miller's absence a strike rally was held and a unanimous vote was taken to continue the strike. At this juncture the strike appeared to be out of the control of even local bureaucrats. Local officials present were noticeably reticent, no doubt feeling the pressure of Miller on one side and the ranks on the other...

A broadly based strike committee, democratically representing the large eight-state area of the strike, could have effectively asserted its legitimacy and neutralized vacillating officials. An official strike vote would have counteracted UMW bureaucrats like Lee Roy Patterson, an International Executive Board (IEB) member from western Kentucky. "I don't know why the miners in West Virginia are down and I can't seem to find out" (*Sunday Gazette Mail*, 8 August), Patterson told 1,500 strikers in Kentucky August 7. Particularly in outlying districts a recognized strike leadership was needed to counteract the bureaucrats' deliberate misrepresentation of the issues of the strike....

A militant strike committee would also have sought to extend the struggle to other industries. The Chesapeake and Ohio and the Norfolk and Western railroads have each laid off hundreds of workers due to lack of cargo. The railroad unions should have shut down these lines entirely in sympathy with the miners. This action would have stopped the flow of stockpiled coal out of the fields.

Similarly, appeals should have been directed toward the steel plants. Some steelworkers, in fact, were anxious to demonstrate inter-union solidarity. Militants in United Steelworkers (USWA) Local 1014 in Gary, Indiana issued a leaflet entitled "No Government Intervention against the Unions! Hands Off the UMW!"

These militants call for an industry-wide sympathy strike in steel. Their leaflet concluded by stating, "required is an opposition committed to a program of class struggle, committed to unconditional opposition to government intervention, and fully committed to the principle of working-class solidarity which today demands concerted and decisive action by the USWA on behalf of the striking miners."...

Lacking an organized leadership consciously prepared to spread the strike and to counter the bureaucracy's treachery, the wildcat was battered down. The UMW's IEB met in Washington on August 9 and threatened to place Local 1759 under an administrator if the strike there didn't end. The Board also threatened expulsions for disobedience. On Tuesday, August 10 Miller and the IEB met an estimated 500 angry miners in Charleston and attempted to get them back to work.... To underscore his contempt for the ranks Miller and the IEB eventually walked out of the meeting.

That same day 10,000 miners in Alabama joined the strike but workers were reported returning to the job in Ohio, west Kentucky, Illinois and Tennessee. On Wednesday Local 1759 voted 75-25 to return to work. Simultaneously the overwhelming majority of local presidents in District 17 voted to return to work. The local bureaucrats could tell which way the wind was blowing by then and gave Miller a standing ovation at a meeting in Charleston (*Charleston Gazette*, 12 August)....

And now that the miners are returning to the pits, Miller promises to seek a meeting with the BCOA—a promise he has been making for a long time. Even the original job-posting grievance at Cedar Coal remains unresolved. Finally, 213 strikers from Local 1759 must still appear in court on August 17 on contempt of court charges. In short, the miners achieved not one of their demands. And Miller's promises to the contrary, they are not likely to win them now. For it is precisely by mobilizing the membership in strike action, not in toothless negotiations with the companies and union-hating courts, that the UMW can make gains.... ■

Miners Strike Against Miller

The third major mine strike in as many years exploded when union and management trustees conspired to slash the miners' health benefits...

—excerpted from **WV No. 164, 1 July 1977**

Within eight days of the re-election of Arnold Miller as president of the United Mine Workers (UMW), 35,000 miners were on strike against the union leadership. Underscoring the complete bankruptcy

of the Miller regime, the strike centered in the big West Virginia districts which, along with the retiree vote, had given Miller his slim margin of victory just days before...

The strike exploded in response to the June 20 declaration by trustees of the Health and Retirement Fund that 821,000 beneficiaries will have to start picking up the tab for a good part of previously fully paid health care. Working and retired miners will now have to pay the first \$250 of hospital costs in addition to 40 percent of doctors' fees up to \$250.

The attack on miners' medical benefits is a calculated provocation, designed to batter and weaken the union prior to vital negotiations over the national contract which expires December 6. The employers' Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) has indicated that it is gearing up for a showdown to break the strength of the UMW. Using the fact that nearly half of all coal mined in the U.S. now comes from non-UMW mines, the BCOA is talking of junking the nationwide contract and bargaining on a company by company basis...

Outraged at the militant wildcats that have ripped through the coalfields, the BCOA is also determined to teach the miners a lesson: knock off the strikes or lose your benefits. Payments to the fund are made by the coal companies on a productivity basis, according to coal tonnage and man-hours worked. Fund trustees claim that strikes since the 1974 contract have cost the fund \$65 million with another \$20 million loss blamed on shutdowns caused by last winter's bitter cold. The BCOA is screaming about the 869,000 man-days lost to strikes in the first five months of this year, up 92 percent from last year, and wants to make the miners pay.

As Miller chimed in with the coal bosses to blame the reductions on strikes, local officials in Miller's home base, District 17, called a meeting to try to quash the wildcat. District president Joe Perry announced that he, the district executive board and the local presidents were urging the miners to go back to work so that the "...situation can be alleviated..."

Miners should demand that the medical and retirement trust funds be fully funded at no cost to union members and that these monies be administered by the *UMW alone*. These funds should be contractually guaranteed and not pegged to productivity. The bosses must not be allowed to cut off health or pension payments with complaints about strikes, unnecessary doctor bills or bad weather.

The assault on the miners' medical benefits is the latest of a whole series of provocations by the coal operators designed to whip the union to its knees before serious contract talks begin. To preserve the union and prepare it for the job of organizing unorganized coal mines

nationwide, these attacks must be fought head-on! A militant miners' leadership would have met the benefit-slashing with a call to expand the strike nationally, demanding full restoration of benefits... ■

"No Card—No Coal!"

As he had done in every previous strike, Arnold Miller gave the miners nothing but threats and false promises...

—excerpted from WV No. 170, 26 August 1977

AUGUST 23—At a heated meeting of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) held in Charleston yesterday, the Union's International Executive Board (IEB) ordered miners to end their two-month wildcat, reportedly with the provision that if the coal operators (BCOA) do not restore the company-paid medical cards within 60 days, they will call the union out on a national strike.

The immediate effect of the meeting has been to boost back-to-work sentiment. Reportedly about one half of the 65,000 miners in West Virginia—the heart of the strike—returned to work today, along with miners in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Alabama and western Kentucky...

Yesterday's meeting in Charleston was scheduled to bring together IEB members and District 17 officials. But several hundred uninvited rank-and-filers came to Charleston, insisting that the UMWA tops confront them. They fought their way past a bureaucratic goon squad into the meeting room at the Daniel Boone Hotel.

Miller reportedly fled from the room at the sight of the militant miners, returning with a ten-man personal bodyguard. Further "protection" for the executive board was furnished by Charleston police, who showed up in full riot gear. One District 17 miner in attendance told *WV* that as soon as the back-to-work motion was passed, the meeting was instantly adjourned and most IEB members disappeared from the room within 30 seconds.

For weeks the UMWA bureaucrats have feverishly tried to break the strike. They have on numerous occasions ordered the wildcatters to return to work, threatening to discipline the strikers. Miller even appeared on television August 13 to denounce "false prophets" who were promoting the strike.

But Miller and the IEB, whose authority has slipped to its lowest point, were defied repeatedly by the militant miners. Numerous

miners have demanded Miller's recall. And last week District 17 miners picketed district headquarters, refusing to allow elected officials to enter. . . .

Unable to cajole or intimidate the miners into returning to work the UMWA tops attempted to pressure district and local officials into doing their dirty work. Following the militant miners' march in Washington August 5, some of the district officials who organized the rally, claiming that the miners had made their point in Washington, convened meetings in Districts 29 and 17 to consider back-to-work resolutions.

The ploy was successful in District 29 (southern West Virginia) where some 9,000 miners returned to the job. But it was foiled by miners in District 17. After the majority in this district voted to remain out, District 17 president Jack Perry sighed, "Again, we've attempted and failed. That's the way it is" (*Charleston Gazette*, 11 August).

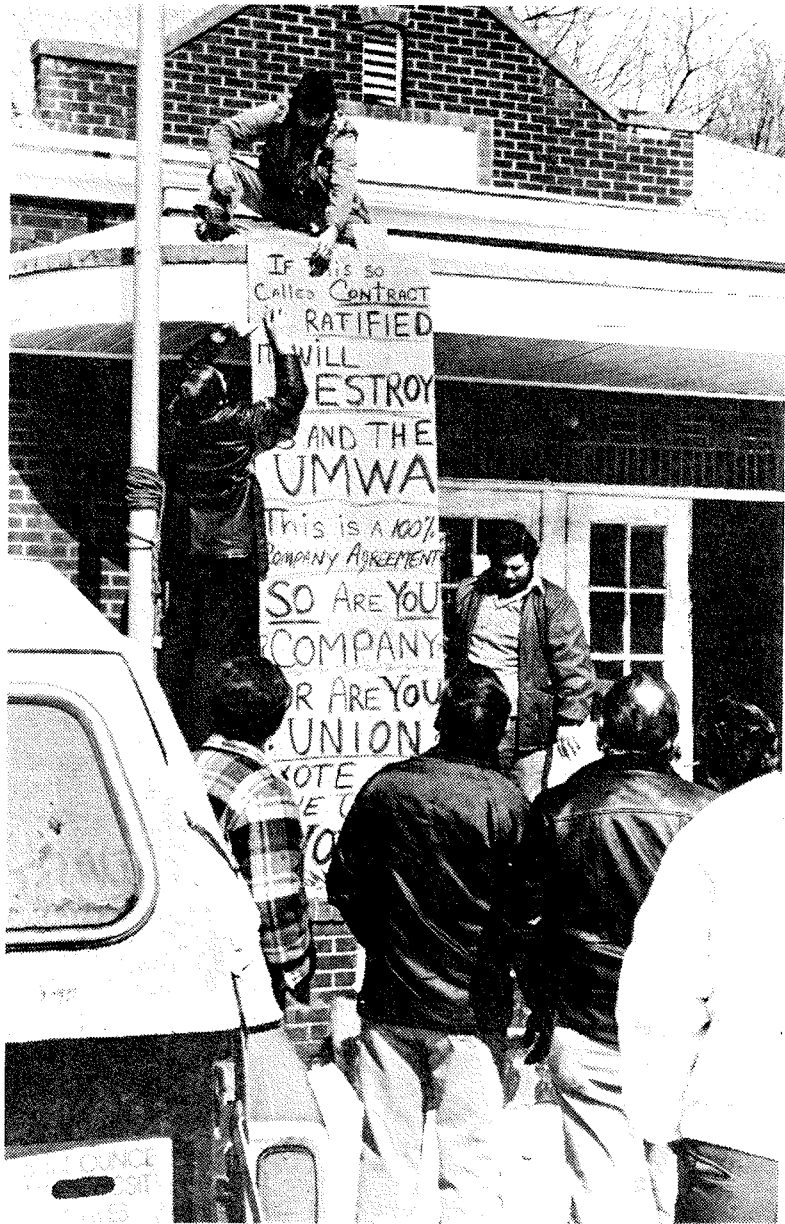
District 17 miners quickly insured that West Virginia was once again shut down solid. Roving pickets were dispatched to neighboring states. Last week the total on strike swelled to 80,000, principally through the addition of Alabama miners.

The 80,000 on strike last week represented the high-water mark of the wildcat. The strike has alternately expanded and contracted, as militant miners and strikebreaking bureaucrats have attempted to check each other's moves.

The key weakness of the strike, from its inception, has been the absence of an elected strike leadership that can authoritatively extend the wildcat nationally and counter the treacherous ploys of the strike's enemies, both inside and outside the union. . . .

Without such organs, the spontaneous militancy of the workers is usually unable to withstand the superior organization of the bureaucracy. When District 17 local officials, at least some of whom sincerely wanted to extend the strike, called on the International to come to Charleston, they had no demands, no strategy and no visibly authoritative body of their own to counter the top officials. So the IEB quickly recaptured lost ground and passed over to the offensive. The rotten back-to-work maneuver was the result. . . . ■

110 DAYS: A STRIKE AGAINST THE BOSSES, THE GOVERNMENT & THE LABOR BUREAUCRACY



Miners in Vestaburg, Pennsylvania call for rejection of Carter-imposed agreement at start of the voting. WV Photo

UMWA in Fight for its Life

—excerpted from WV No. 184, 2 December 1977

The battle lines are being drawn sharply as the country's 200,000 union coal miners prepare for a bitter strike to defend the very existence of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) from a bloodthirsty assault of the coal operators.

The UMWA is the oldest industrial union in the U.S. For the last three years it has been the one focus of sustained labor militancy as repeated wildcats sweep the coalfields. But now, due to incredible bureaucratic squabbling and the pro-company policies of the UMWA leadership under Arnold Miller, the union is faced with a life-and-death battle.

All U.S. labor has a stake in this struggle, for if the miners union is broken it will open an offensive of union-busting throughout the country. The need for labor solidarity, particularly from the closely connected steel and railroad workers, is sharply posed; the possibilities for powerful joint action are enormous. What is criminally lacking is a leadership with the guts and the class-struggle program to pull together the miners' militancy into a mighty fist which can shatter the attack by the energy trusts.

The bosses are out for blood... Their aim: to quash the militancy of the miners, which threatens the untrammelled right to extort profits under the projected mass expansion of coal production.

On the other side, rank-and-file miners are aware that they must stand and fight. The burgeoning expansion of non-union coal production and the exhausting wildcats which, thanks to the sabotage of the UMWA bureaucracy have not led to real victories, have weakened the position of the union. The relationship of forces is deteriorating for the miners. Unless the bosses are stopped now, massive defeats are in store....

The key issue is the right to strike. In furtherance of their demand for uninterrupted production, the operators are demanding: an explicit no-strike clause; financial penalties for miners who engage in wildcats, with bonuses for those who cross picket lines; elimination of the two-week summer shutdown with mines to be operated seven days a week, 52 weeks a year; completely barring union safety committees from closing unsafe mines; and an end to the union's right

to automatically represent new mines opened up by UMWA-contract companies.

The coal operators are prepared for a protracted strike. Trustees of the UMWA benefit funds, jointly administered by the BCOA and the union, have announced that all health and death benefits for miners will be cut off for the duration of the strike. The trustees also threaten to suspend or reduce pension benefits. Penalizing miners for strikes has been a regular practice for the trustees. Less than six months ago the trustees ruled that miners must pay the first \$500 of medical expenses, in retaliation for wildcats; this decision itself sparked a 10-week wildcat....

Organize the Non-Union Mines

The expansion of the non-union sector of the soft-coal industry has been meteoric. In 1974 some 70 percent of the industry was organized by the UMWA; today it is no more than 50 percent. The closing of the non-union pits could very well be the decisive factor in whether the strike is victorious. Certainly, the continuation of scab production during the strike will be a major demoralizing factor.

By no means, however, will the militant miners allow such production to continue unhindered, and the non-union sites could well be the sites of the most hard-fought battles of the strike. The difference between the union and non-union mines is recognized by thousands of non-union miners, such as those at Brookside and Stearns, who have waged months-long battles to win UMWA contracts. It is imperative that union militants raise as a major demand on their own leaders, "No settlement without standard UMWA contracts at the non-union mines." In such a fashion the strikers can cut through the anti-union propaganda of the scab outfits and demonstrate clearly to the non-union miners that the strike is in their interest....

Class Solidarity is Key

The accumulation of vast coal stocks, as well as the likelihood that these stockpiles will be augmented by scab domestic production and foreign imports, makes organized class solidarity a key element in the defense of the miners. The UMWA must not be forced to bear the brunt of the bosses' attack alone.

A major user of coal is the basic steel industry.... As an elementary act in defense of the miners, steelworkers must refuse to handle all scab coal. All shipments of coal to the mills must be boycotted by steelworkers!

Railroad workers can play an equally crucial role in insuring that coal not be moved from scab mines and coal depots. Seamen and

longshoremen must enforce the demand that no coal be imported into the country for the balance of the strike. Effective labor boycotts of scab coal can play a major role in foiling the bosses' strategy of starving out and demoralizing the miners through a protracted war of attrition....

The entire labor movement must demand that the capitalist government keep its hands off the miners. Should federal troops be marshalled or the National Guard be mobilized, it will only be for the purpose of defending scabs against pickets. Such actions, as well as strikebreaking Taft-Hartley decrees, must be countered by a solid show of strength by the entire trade-union movement in the form of general protest strikes....

Militant miners are rightfully suspicious of Miller's version of the "right to strike." In 1974 Miller narrowly rammed through a sellout contract which omitted this key demand. Since then he has consistently attempted to quash every rank-and-file strike against the bosses. He has opposed every single wildcat strike, demanding that miners return to work and imposing disciplinary sanctions against militants, and he did not utter a peep of protest against the ARB's recent ruling against roving pickets. While Miller claims that he will not submit a contract to the ranks for ratification which does not contain a right-to-strike provision, he has made it clear that he is only talking about the strictly "local" right to strike (and even then only around certain issues)—thus barring the roving pickets and district-wide and nationwide strikes that are absolutely essential in many instances to defeat the coal bosses. But despite Miller's explicit willingness to write a ban on roving pickets into a "local right to strike" provision, the bosses are not buying. They are firmly convinced that Miller is incapable of disciplining the militant miners, and they want an explicit no-strike clause, combined with draconian penalties to be levied on wildcatters.

While Miller's attempts to implement his conciliationist program are being snubbed by the BCOA, the Patterson and Patrick wings of the bureaucracy have counterposed absolutely nothing. The sudden quiescence of Miller's enemies in the bureaucracy is simple expediency: caught between a determined rank and file and an intransigent BCOA, Miller's position is unenviable. The Patricks and the Pattersons neither want to share responsibility with Miller for the outcome of the strike, nor do they have anything different to propose. The silence of these would-be "leaders" at this critical juncture demonstrates anew that the factions within the UMWA leadership are nothing but unprincipled cliques. There's not a dime's worth of difference among them.

While there exist smaller groups within the UMWA that claim to offer a more militant policy, none provide a real answer for miners.



Grace/Syigma

Kentucky state cops break up picket line to let scabs through.

The Miners Right to Strike Committee, supported by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), must be defended from the vicious redbaiting campaign currently being boosted by the coal bosses, the bourgeois press and Miller. However, this vicious witchhunting attack notwithstanding, the reformist policies of the Right to Strike Committee do not fundamentally break from those of the UMWA bureaucracy.

The Right to Strike Committee—along with the Mountain Community Union—has recently initiated a Miners Support Committee. This committee is circulating petitions simply calling for support to the miners and four contract demands: right to strike; full medical and pension benefits, contractually guaranteed; a big wage increase; and a strong safety program. The petitions are to be turned into such disparate entities as the BCOA, West Virginia Governor John D. Rockefeller IV, the U.S. government, Arnold Miller and the UMWA's International Executive Board! It should be obvious that the coal operators and the capitalist politicians will not be swayed one bit by these pieces of paper; the class enemy will not be deterred from its union-busting drive by a mere petition. On the other hand, the contract demands cited are so vague that even the UMWA bureaucracy can claim to support them, while selling them out at the same time.

The fall issue of *Rank and File Unity*, published by the Miners Right to Strike Committee, contains a more comprehensive listing of contract demands, which include criticisms of Miller for his opposition to the wildcats and to an effective right to strike. But the strategy laid out is fundamentally the same as the petition campaign—namely, to pressure the bureaucracy. The Committee abdicates on the fundamental question: the need to counterpose a

class-struggle strategy to Miller's defeatist policies. Missing from its literature are not only any political demands, such as the need to break from the Democratic and Republican parties, but even demands which are central to winning the strike—shut down and organize the non-union mines, joint strikes with steel and railroad workers, a labor boycott of scab coal, and the democratic election of strike committees by UMWA miners. Fundamentally, the Right to Strike Committee accepts the same trade-union reformist premises as the UMWA bureaucracy, and simply demands that it hold out for "more."...

Miners cannot defend their interests without a militant strike and they cannot afford to allow the conduct of such a strike to be left in the hands of the UMWA bureaucracy. Militants must demand mass district meetings to initiate democratically elected strike committees. The strike committee leadership, centralized on a national level, must fight for such crucial demands as:

1) Shut down all coal production—Bring the non-union miners out and organize them! For working-class solidarity: shut down steel and the railroads, hot-cargo scab coal!

2) For the unlimited right to strike! No restrictions on roving pickets! End compulsory arbitration—Full power to resolve grievances through strike action!

3) A big wage increase! A sliding scale of hours and wages: a shorter workweek at no cut in pay with full cost-of-living protection!

4) A big boost in pensions, equalized at the highest level! End the dual-pension system negotiated by Miller in 1974! Abolish the \$500 medical deductible! Full health and pension benefits, contractually guaranteed—End funding on a tonnage basis!

5) Federal inspectors will never guarantee safe working conditions—For strong, full-time, company-paid union safety committeemen! For the union's right to shut down unsafe mines!

6) End all racial and sexual discrimination! End victimization of militants! For union control of hiring and upgrading! Promotions on a seniority basis!

7) As early as 1916 the UMWA called for nationalization of the mines, a demand which has long since been buried. Today the coal mines are increasingly dominated by powerful steel, oil and utility interests. Expropriate the mines with no compensation!

8) For a workers party to fight for a workers government! The Democratic and Republican capitalist politicians will fight unrelentingly to defend the bosses' right to impose labor discipline and inhuman working conditions, to extort their bloated profits. Miners, like other workers, need their own party, based on the unions, to fight for a workers government. ■

UMWA Ranks Shut Scab Mines

—excerpted from WV No. 186, 23 December 1978

... On December 13 at least five truckloads of coal were dumped alongside eastern Kentucky highways as 400 roving pickets covered that state, Ohio and West Virginia in a 100-car caravan. The contingent made a stop at the Justus mine in Stearns, Kentucky, where 150 miners have been on strike for nearly 17 months seeking a UMWA contract. A hundred riot-equipped state police were rushed to the scene. But unlike last October, when the cops beat and arrested over 100 strikers and union supporters for trying to stop scabs, this time the outnumbered cops made no attempt to remove the pickets....

The high and increasing percentage of non-UMWA coal in the West, where over 50 percent of U.S. coal reserves are located, is a mortal threat to the miners union. The UMWA's weakness in the West has made the struggle to stop scab production particularly bitter.

A bridge leading to the Plateau Mine in Utah was burned December 8 and 40 scabs were trapped overnight. Heavy equipment was needed to clear the highway of 500-pound boulders and four-inch spikes had been driven into the road to deter scabbing. Pickets also stopped operations at the neighboring Swisher and Soldier Creek mines. Union officials asked representatives of the three scab mines to close up voluntarily in order to weed out troublemakers, a proposal which the operators spurned. Instead of relying on the militant ranks, union leaders then requested Utah governor Scott Matheson close the mines and, predictably, he refused as well.

All three mines opened December 9. Scabs were helicoptered into the Plateau compound and buses—their windows covered with wire mesh—transported the strikebreakers into the others behind a “human wall” of over 90 Utah Highway Patrolmen. Temporary restraining orders have been passed out to over 1,000 striking miners barring interference with the scabs and a spokesman for the governor stated that the National Guard was being kept apprised of further developments....

In the western coalfields eight contracts have already been settled and another is expected imminently. These are surface sub-bituminous and lignite mines which in 1974 were part of the Western Surface Agreement with the union. This year they pulled out of the

multi-employer group under that contract, forcing the union to negotiate with each company separately. These “independents” include giants like Peabody and Consolidation—the two top producers in the industry—which also own struck mines in the East and Midwest....

Militants must resist this defeatist division among the union ranks. All U.S. and Canadian mines must be shut down! No union member should return to work until every union local has a contract. This must include both production and construction workers, in deep and strip mines both in the East and West.... ■

Throw Back the Sellout!

By early February, two miners had been killed on the picket lines and hundreds arrested. But the miners' valiant effort paid off: so much scab production was shut down that coal stockpiles began to run out and the business consumers screamed for Washington to intervene. On February 6, Miller agreed to a contract that betrayed every one of the miners' most vital needs. We called for the miners to “Throw Back the Sellout!” and prepare a new leadership...

—excerpted from WV No. 192, 10 February 1978

... In the longest official coal strike in the U.S. in over half a century, after 63 days on strike by the 175,000 soft coal miners of the UMWA, with victory now clearly in sight—Arnold Miller has come up with an agreement with the companies which would spell *disaster* for the union if accepted.

- In place of the right to strike, the bosses will get the “right to fire” and fine militants who engage in wildcat strikes.
- After allowing the health and welfare fund to run out of money last summer, now they put the knife in the back of the miners' medical plan, one of the major achievements of the UMWA, to replace it with inadequate “insurance” schemes.
- Take away cost-of-living increases and the companies' current wage offer comes out to a measly 3 percent per year, far less than

obtained over the life of the current contract.

This Miller contract stinks so bad that it is likely that the district bureaucrats on the UMWA bargaining council will send the negotiators back for more. If the council puts this insulting deal to the membership for a vote, they must throw it back in Miller's face! Not just by voting it down but by *mobilizing mass protests* and demanding a *special UMWA convention to elect a bargaining committee* that will get what the union ranks want and need.

COAL MINERS! In spite of the total lack of leadership from the International in organizing the strike, in spite of Miller's betrayals at the bargaining table, **VICTORY IS POSSIBLE!** *You can win* this strike by sticking to your guns and demanding that there be no settlement without *unlimited right to strike, fully funded health fund and a big wage increase.* **DON'T GIVE IN NOW THAT THE BOSSES' BACKS ARE AGAINST THE WALL!** Redouble your efforts to shut down scab mines. Send mass delegations to steel plants, power stations, rail and truck terminals urging the workers not to handle scab coal.... ■

Miners on the Attack

The miners' mass pickets confronted the mounting violence of scabs and strikebreaking cops...

—excerpted from **WV No. 192, 10 February 1978**

...It's now crystal clear that the UMWA strikers' efforts to shut down non-union operations have been succeeding....

These victories have been won against rioting state troopers, company-paid gun thugs and armed scabs. On February 3 UMWA member John Hull of Patoka, Indiana was killed by a scab at the Bowerstock Mine where 35 militants attempted to close the pit which has operated throughout the strike. In Cabin Creek, West Virginian miners told *WV* that on a 200-man caravan last week, strikers' cars were hit by rifle, shotgun and pistol fire within 15 minutes of crossing the Kentucky state line. And a Pike County miner reported that more reinforcements are desperately needed in Kentucky, whose state cops have a reputation as the most vicious in coal country.

But armed strikebreakers have not deterred the miners. In Alabama, where two weeks ago Governor George Wallace's state troopers dispersed 500 miners with tear gas, union miners came back with redoubled forces. On February 3 some 800-1,000 Alabama miners trapped seven scabs at a pit in Oakman, in the northwestern

part of the state. At first a smaller number of strikers asked the scabs to honor the picket lines, but when they refused union reinforcements were summoned by CB radio. According to a UPI dispatch: the scabs holed up in the house "were told in the presence of troopers 'They would not be allowed to leave alive'."

Eventually more than 200 state troopers were called in to rescue the seven. The same news account reported: "Several police cars were riddled with small-arms fire, and the pilots of two National Guard helicopters that went aloft with lights to illuminate the area reported that they had been fired on in the predawn rescue operation. Lieut. Roy Smith said that the strikers had also exploded two sticks of dynamite near the officers, and a third stick was tossed under a patrol car but did not go off."

"The troopers then drove in convoy down the dirt road to the house, receiving small-arms fire from miners in the woods. 'We had to gas them going in and coming out,' Lieutenant Smith said. "Fifteen patrol cars were damaged in the assault, the police said. The windshields on three cars were smashed, and there were bullet holes in several others."

Such militant mass picketing, organized on short notice, clearly caught the bosses, scabs and cops by surprise. Scabs will think twice before they show their face in that area again.... ■

Miners To Miller: Shove It!

—excerpted from **WV No. 193, 17 February 1978**

FEBRUARY 14—With a mounting fury that has confounded both the coal operators and the Carter government, striking members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) have flung Miller's abominable tentative agreement with the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) back in the union president's face. After a dramatic confrontation in Washington February 10, when hundreds of angry miners stormed UMWA headquarters and a frightened Arnold Miller stayed in hiding, the overwhelming 30 to 6 rejection vote by the UMWA Bargaining Council in a hurriedly called Sunday morning meeting was a foregone conclusion.

Faced with a unanimous cry of outrage from the coalfields, a rising chorus of calls for Miller's resignation and a stack of telegrams

demanding rejection which one Council member said was "twelve feet high," every district president and International Executive Board (IEB) member present voted no. Only Miller, the union's vice president and secretary-treasurer and the three-man negotiating committee voted for the sellout. The coalfields are in an uproar....

Militant actions over the last week have made clear the miners' resolve to continue their strike until they get what they want. What they clearly don't want is anything remotely resembling Miller's disaster contract.

On February 6, over 600 miners and strike supporters rallied in Pittsburgh outside the headquarters of U.S. Steel—a major coal producer and consumer—and marched to the offices of Consolidation Coal, one of the nation's biggest coal companies. On the way they demonstrated at Duquesne Light, an electric company which also operates mines. The crowd chanted "Scab coal will not roll" in reference to Duquesne's request to the Pennsylvania governor for police escorts on scab coal trucks. The march also hit the *Pittsburgh Press* and TV station KDKA for their anti-miner coverage of the strike.

With the announcement of the tentative settlement later that day, and as its provisions became known in the coal-mining regions, miners' protest meetings began to mushroom. A February 8 rally in Frankfort, Kentucky had been called to protest state troopers who have arrested nearly 500 miners during the strike. But in the wake of Miller's settlement, the miners also turned their wrath on Miller. One black retiree who spoke denounced Miller: "Any man who would sign a contract or negotiate one like he did in '74 or even now, there's got to be something wrong with him. It seems to me that he crawled into bed with the operators."

This sentiment was shared by the presidents of 52 out of 53 locals in Ohio's District 6 who met the next day and voted to reject Miller's pact. In West Frankfort, Illinois officials from 23 UMWA locals demanded Miller's immediate resignation. And on Saturday, February 11, 3,000 angry miners met in Beckley, West Virginia and overwhelmingly voted down the proposed agreement. Meanwhile petitions demanding Miller's resignation are sweeping the coalfields and it's hard to find a miner who won't sign.

Miller, knowing he is hated and alone, began carrying a pistol, surrounded himself with well-paid bodyguards and went into hiding. He grew increasingly bitter and hysterical at any criticism. On February 8, Miller appeared at the District 17 headquarters in Charleston to confront district vice president Cecil Roberts.

One of Miller's thugs assaulted Roberts in his office and another miner was also jumped. Reportedly, the fight was broken up by miners in the building who rushed to Roberts' aid. When Miller's

Smash the Taft-Hartley Injunction! Victory to the UMWA!

The following motion was passed overwhelmingly at the March 12 meeting of UAW Local 6 (International Harvester, Melrose Park, Illinois). Local 6 members and Chicago-area trade unionists, as well as UAW members throughout the U.S., must fight for its immediate implementation to defend the miners strike.

Whereas, President Carter has invoked the reactionary Taft-Hartley law in an attempt to force striking coal miners back to work and thus break their strike; and

Whereas, Carter's action is a statement to all labor that any effective strike in this country will be declared illegal and that the resources of the federal government will be mobilized to smash it; and

Whereas, this action by President Carter is a declaration of war on and is an extreme danger to the entire labor movement; and

Whereas, while the coal miners have from the beginning of the coal strike fought a determined battle to shut down scab mines and to stop the movement of scab coal, the state and federal governments together with the utilities and steel companies are continuing to replenish their stockpiles with scab coal; and

Whereas, United Auto Workers and the rest of the labor movement have the power to crush this government/energy/steel trust assault and throw Carter's union-busting injunction back in his face; and

Whereas, as an elementary act of class solidarity steel, utility and transport workers must hot-cargo all steel shipments for the strike's duration;

Therefore be it resolved, UAW Local 6 calls on the International to declare and implement an immediate two-day strike in protest against Carter's Taft-Hartley injunction; and

Be it further resolved, that UAW Local 6 calls on Region 4 to call a mass meeting of Chicago area labor to (a) declare and implement an immediate two-day shutdown of Chicago area industry to demand, (1) Down with the Taft-Hartley injunction! Hands off the miners strike! (2) Drop all charges against striking coal miners; (b) organize caravans of pickets from Chicago area labor to join with the coal miners in shutting down all scab coal shipments; (c) call on steel, utility and transport workers to hot-cargo coal shipments for the duration of the strike.

guard began reaching into his coat pocket, he was told not to pull it out if he wanted to leave the building under his own power.

"That's how this union democracy he gave us works," one Charleston-area miner bitterly told *WV*. Later that night a group of 40 angry miners scoured the city's hotels looking for Miller. But the UMWA chief was not to be found.

When Miller announced plans for a February 11 meeting of the Bargaining Council in Washington, it was like waving a red cape at the furious miners. Hundreds of miners from Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky boarded buses and car caravans and headed for UMWA headquarters.

When they arrived, the miners occupied the UMWA building, tore a portrait of Miller from the wall and hung a picture of John L. Lewis in the Council's meeting room for what one miner called "inspirational purposes" (*Charleston Gazette*, 11 February). Two to three hundred miners waited inside the building and across the street in a park, holding hand-made signs denouncing the contract and waiting for Miller's Cadillac limousine to arrive. They cleared the building when one district official suggested the Bargaining Council might be afraid to meet in their presence, but Miller never showed up.

"The thing that makes me ill is that yesterday he said the bargaining council had a responsibility to pass on this contract to the membership so they could vote on it," one Council member told the *New York Times* (12 February). "Then when the membership showed up, he didn't have the courage to face them." Miller telephoned in, canceling the meeting and maliciously denounced the "anarchy of a small irresponsible group."

But the miners in Washington knew they had the backing of their union brothers in the coalfields. And their presence had an effect: a straw vote held that day in Miller's absence went 33 to 3 against the contract and foretold the formal vote two days later. As one militant on the scene told *WV*, "The guys that were voting for it at the start, by God, they changed their minds after we got up there."...

It would be a mistake for miners to rely on the Bargaining Council as an effective guarantee against a contract sellout. The "no" vote by the Council was, in itself, a cheap gesture. The massive uproar in the coalfields made it clear that any district official who supported this atrocious deal would lose all credibility before the rank and file.

But district officials have exercised no leadership in this strike. For the most part, they have had no part in the militant picketing that shut down the scab mines; nor have they even championed such demands as the unlimited right to strike. Thus, Jack Perry, president of District 17 in the heart of West Virginia and a vocal opponent of

Miller, stated that financial penalties against wildcatters might be acceptable "if we had the limited right to strike" (*Charleston Gazette*, 11 February).

Even after Sunday's vote to reject, the Bargaining Council adopted a formal resolution recommending the 1974 pact as a guide for the future negotiations with the BCOA. But it was the provisions of the last contract—and in particular the absence of the right to strike—that led to three massive wildcats in three years—strikes which the International leadership, including the IEB, opposed.

The conduct of the strike must be taken out of the hands of the discredited Miller and the bureaucrats. District-level strike committees must be elected to organize and extend picketing efforts against all production and shipment of coal, and to approach transport, steel and power station workers to hot-cargo scab coal. A special bargaining convention must be elected now. The elected delegates to such a convention must formulate clear, powerful strike demands: for the unlimited right to strike, full funding of the health benefit fund, a big wage boost, full cost-of-living protection, equal pensions for all at the highest levels, extend the contract to and bring into the union the unorganized miners. ■

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Carter Strongarms UMWA Bargaining Council

With Miller completely discredited, the Carter administration stepped up its threats and pressure on the UMWA...

—excerpted from **WV No. 194, 24 February 1978**

The latest White House maneuvers only bear out the role of the Carter administration as defenders of the coal operators' interests. The decision to expand the union's negotiating team to include three "anti-Miller militants" from the International Executive Board (IEB)—Jack Perry, president of District 17 (western West Virginia); Ken Dawes, president of District 12 (Illinois); and Tom Gaston, president of District 23 (western Kentucky)—was widely acclaimed as providing a bargaining team more responsive to the interests of the membership. But who made the decision to include them? Certainly not the UMWA membership. They have not been consulted once during this strike, neither concerning the composition of the bargaining teams nor as to the contract demands that the negotiators have put before the BCOA.

In fact it was the Carter government itself that forced Miller to expand the negotiating team and keep the Bargaining Council on call in Washington. And in whose interest has the government acted? This is no secret. As the *New York Times* (16 February) noted: "Paradoxically, they were added to the bargaining team at the request of the coal operators, who sought to avoid another experience of negotiating a contract that was approved by the Miller group, then turned down by the bargaining council..."

Watch Out for the Sellout!

The government/BCOA strategem has worked so far. Perry, Dawes, etc. have knuckled under. The first contract that the "new" negotiating team presented to the Bargaining Council on February 18 aroused such a storm of protest that it was voted down *unanimously*, 37-to-0, with the entire negotiating team, including Miller, being forced to reverse itself! The main change in this offer, which the BCOA termed its "final offer," was that it lifted the proposed

financial penalties against wildcat strikers. But it preserved the right of coal operators to summarily fire "strike instigators" and discipline miners who respected picket lines, thereby gutting the right to strike.

Yet only two days later the Bargaining Council approved the P&M settlement by a margin of 26 to 13. Pittsburg and Midway does not speak on behalf of the BCOA, but the Carter administration made it plain today that it is pushing for a settlement modeled after this "pattern..."

Further, this settlement does not alter the medical coverage initially offered by the coal operators association. This proposal, under which the health fund is to be abandoned for a commercial carrier insurance plan, makes miners subject to hundreds of dollars of "deductible" medical expenses yearly and almost surely means the discontinuance of the miners' health clinics. Supposedly the issue of medical coverage will be subject to further negotiations with the BCOA; however, the Bargaining Council's refusal to demand maintenance and full funding of the health plans as a precondition to accepting any settlement with Pittsburg and Midway makes it virtually certain they will not press this key issue with the BCOA.... ■

Fremont UAW Calls for Sympathy Strike

At an executive board meeting of United Auto Workers Local 1364 (Fremont, California GM) on March 15 the Committee for a Militant UAW put forward the following motion of solidarity with the coal miners strike:

"Motion: That UAW Local 1364 immediately prepare for a sympathy strike of no less than 24 hours in support of striking mine workers who have been rejecting unacceptable settlements and defying Taft-Hartley and all forms of government strike-breaking. And that Local 1364 initiate a mass labor rally the day of the strike and call on all other unions and central labor councils in the area to join us in the strike and rally. And that Local 1364 immediately contact and coordinate activities with ILWU Local 13 (Los Angeles), Local 19 (Seattle), Local 10 (Bay Area), and ATU Local 1555 who have already passed similar motions."

Rather than setting a specific date, however, this motion was watered down before being passed by the executive board, by saying that Local 1364 would "get in touch with other unions and the miners on a date and time for a possible sympathy strike."

Burn Carter's Contract

On the 84th day of the strike, Miller and the Bargaining Council came up with sellout agreement No. 2. Carter announced the pact on TV and threatened to impose Taft-Hartley if the miners rejected...

—excerpted from **WV No. 195, 3 March 1978**

FEBRUARY 28—... With the bosses' backs to the wall, Jimmy Carter has been stepping up the pressure, announcing an eleventh-hour "settlement" on nationwide television Friday night. Carter backed up his appeal for ratification with a pistol pointed at the miners' heads: if they didn't agree to the contract proposal immediately, a Taft-Hartley injunction and government seizure of the mines was next on the agenda. But slicker politicians than Carter—namely Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman—have tried these threats and the miners outlasted them every time. The Democratic administration has refrained from these strikebreaking measures so far only because it is afraid they wouldn't work.

At the height of the historic 1937 sitdown strike which led to the foundation of the United Auto Workers through a fierce struggle against General Motors, the embattled strikers faced a similar situation. Their strike had been enormously successful in shutting down the company, but the strikers were faced with political attacks, public vilification and corporate intransigence. At that moment one strike leader expressed the strikers' determination in a message to CIO leader John L. Lewis: "We got 'em by the balls. Squeeze a little." That is our advice to the miners now.

Carter's contract should be voted down, torn up, burned in bonfires and its ashes flung back at the government and the mine bosses' faces! With the coal operators, industrialists and capitalist politicians on the run, now is no time to give in....

The big business press is playing up wailing complaints of BCOA executives over the "concessions" they have made since their initial February 6 deal with Miller, thrown back in disgust by an outraged membership. By their intransigence and solidarity, the miners *have* beaten back a number of the BCOA's take-away demands. The current contract proposal does not contain the earlier clauses allowing incentive speed-up schemes, probation periods for new employees, Sunday work, the unlimited right of unionized companies to process non-union coal or a \$20-a-day fines for wildcatters.

But deleting these provisions does not gain a single thing for the union. Even if some of the teeth have been removed, every major point the coal bosses have demanded is accepted in principle. Everything *new* in the proposal is a crippling step backwards for the UMWA. If this is accepted the miners will have been on strike for three months, demonstrating exemplary militancy and forcing the bosses to nearly exhaust their stockpiled coal... in exchange for a contract which allows the firing of "strike instigators" (i.e., any picketer) and dismantles the hard-won health program!... ■

Miners Ready for War

Miners burned Carter's contract in one bonfire after another, voted it down by an overwhelming margin and dug in to resist the hated Taft-Hartley Act that was immediately invoked against them...

—excerpted from **WV No. 196, 10 March 1978**

CHARLESTON, West Virginia, March 7—"We've been on strike for 91 days and we know that within the next week we're going to be fired, we'll be harassed, we might be put in jail and some of us might even die. But we're not going to go back to work with someone pointing a gun at our head. And if we have to die we'd rather die on the surface than go back to work and die under that contract that was just turned down by the membership."

This bitter defiance of President Carter's back-to-work order came from Jim Nuccetelli, a United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) safety committeeman from Local 1197 in western Pennsylvania's District 5, at a press conference in New Stanton which was called by officials representing 36 locals. Following the miners' stunning 70-30 rejection of the latest sellout contract proposal, Nuccetelli's bitter promise is the answer of the striking miners to the coal operators, union misleaders and the federal government which is seeking to force the miners back into the pits under the strikebreaking Taft-Hartley Law....

Strikers were not surprised by Carter's actions. But unlike UMWA president Arnold Miller, who stated that he had "no intention to preempt President Carter's own responsibility," the union ranks are preparing to oppose this government strikebreaking. In the 36 hours since Carter's televised announcement that the hated "slave-labor

law" was being invoked, *Workers Vanguard* teams in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Illinois-Indiana have found a solid will to resist. Government speculation of a return to work by a minority of union members appears to be based on nothing but wishful thinking.

"There's going to be pickets," a Cabin Creek, West Virginia miner said simply after the White House announcement. In Kentucky, one of the few top UMWA officials to openly assail the contract told *WV*, "Here the people say they are not going back to work regardless of what President Carter said or what anyone else says." He added that the anti-injunction fight would be initiated by the ranks and "we are leaderless." A Pennsylvania miner said, "If Carter sends in the troops we'll have a Vietnam in this country. If he's asking for war, he's going to get one."

Both Miller and Carter, whose agents engineered the rejected proposal, were counting on a so-called "silent majority" of the UMWA membership to approve the contract. Instead, the majority spoke loud and clear, and everywhere the message was the same. On Saturday as members of the 1,200 man Local 762 (Jones and Laughlin Steel's Vestaburg Number 5 Mine) lined up to vote, typical remarks were "Miller's silent majority is giving it to him," and "You tell the pricks down in D.C. that the silent majority is speaking."

Early on it was clear that Carter's contract was in trouble. In 1974 UMWA locals in West Virginia voted two-to-one to accept Miller's tentative agreement with the BCOA. This year, even in the UMWA president's home District (17) the pact was decisively turned down and in District 19 (southeastern Kentucky) the margin was better than nine-to-one against the sellout.

Miller paid a Washington public relations firm \$40,000 to help sell the sellout. Pro-contract International and District officials went on the radio to urge ratification. Last week in Barnesboro, Pennsylvania a group of miners reportedly blocked the entrance to radio station WNCC in an effort to keep two officials from taping such a pro-contract announcement. The media blitz backfired, however, as the miners wondered why a good contract could not speak for itself. "How can they lay their hands on that money if we're broke?" a striker asked.

Miller warned of financial ruin for the UMWA if the contract were rejected, resulting in the possible destruction of the union. But the UMWA ranks didn't buy this excuse for capitulation either. "If it [the proposed contract] is *accepted*, the union is going to be destroyed," a striker at Bethlehem Steel Local 750 in Kayford, West Virginia countered. A striker from Pennsylvania added, "The UMWA ain't in danger of being destroyed. The only faction that is disintegrating is the top leadership. The miners are more united than ever..."

Last night on their own initiative miners in West Virginia's District

17 took the first step to mounting an organized challenge to the treachery of Miller & Co. Seven hundred strikers meeting in a fieldhouse in Logan reaffirmed their determination to resist a Taft-Hartley injunction and elected three representatives from their sub-district to meet with other such delegates from sub-districts throughout the UMWA. According to one miner this delegation would "replace or sit in on Bargaining Council meetings" to voice directly the contractual demands of the ranks. If in the coming days a union-wide delegate body were formed by the membership through such elections, it could provide a vehicle to sweep aside the existing Bargaining Council, demonstrate the solidity of rank-and-file defiance of Taft-Hartley and chart a course of militant action to achieve victory. The UMWA ranks must take up the initiative of the Logan miners. ■

ILWU Votes One-Day Work Stoppage to Support Miners

The Spartacist League championed attempts by labor militants to bring other unions out on strike to smash Taft-Hartley and exposed the fake-lefts who helped sabotage this crucial defense of the miners...

—excerpted from *WV* No. 197, 17 March 1978

SAN FRANCISCO, March 14—As the mine workers face the most critical hour in their 100-day-old strike, the labor movement must ensure that they do not stand alone. With Carter lowering the boom by invoking Taft-Hartley it is the urgent duty of the unions to undertake protest strike action against this government strikebreaking. Last week the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) became the first major U.S. union to move in this direction.

On Friday, March 10 the ILWU International Executive Board (IEB) adopted a resolution whose substance was as follows: 1) to authorize the International officers to call a 24-hour longshore strike coastwide, to protest the use of Taft-Hartley against the miners; 2) to call on the rest of the ILWU, particularly Hawaii and the Warehouse

Division, to join in this action; 3) to call on the rest of organized labor in cities where the ILWU has locals to join the 24-hour stop-work action.

Such solidarity action with the coal miners is precisely what is needed at this moment. It could be the spark which ignites the rest of labor to join in this crucial battle, but some of the ILWU tops are predictably dragging their feet. Trade-union militants must raise an urgent clamor demanding that a coastwide dock shutdown and citywide work stoppages against Taft-Hartley and for victory to the miners strike be implemented NOW!...

Ferment in the ILWU

The earliest breakthrough leading to the ILWU resolution came in Local 13 in the San Pedro/Long Beach/Los Angeles area where

Australian Labour Council Vows to Aid U.S. Coal Strike

SYDNEY—On 16 March the Newcastle, New South Wales Trades and Labour Council approved the following statement of solidarity with striking coal miners in America:

"The U.S. coal miners are currently in the forefront of American labour in their battle to safeguard their union rights and working conditions against the onslaught of the coal bosses and the Carter government. A victory by the miners in their strike is in the interest of the labour movement internationally and all attempts at strikebreaking by U.S. employers and the Carter government must be resisted. We pledge our full support and we condemn the U.S. government union bashing through its use of the Taft-Hartley Act."

The motion was referred for action to the Waterfront Group of Unions in Newcastle, which is a major port for shipment of Australian coal. On 21 March the WGU also passed this motion and sent a cable in solidarity with U.S. miners. Bob Rose, secretary of the Waterfront Group, told the Spartacist League that they are not going to ship coal to the U.S. as an expression of solidarity with the coal strike.

The Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand held demonstrations in support of the American miners strike in front of U.S. consulates in Sydney and Melbourne on 14 and 15 March respectively. At these demonstrations and in its press the SL/ANZ called for a black ban [hot-cargoing] on all coal to the U.S. for the duration of the strike, a demand for which it alone on the Australian left has consistently fought.

several hundred longshoremen passed a resolution at the March 2 membership meeting calling for a one-day work action. According to a statement circulated by Chick Loveridge, an IEB member: "Local 13 is urging President Carter not to interfere on the side of the mine owners, no Taft-Hartley. Local 13 is calling for a one-day supporting action, by closing down the port of LB/LA and urging all other ports on the West Coast to do the same. Local 13 is also inviting all other labor organizations to join us in a meeting of support on the day the ports are closed down"....

Parallel to the Local 13 action, Stan Gow and Howard Keylor, members of the Local 10 (S.F. longshore) Executive Board and publishers of "Longshore Militant," a class-struggle opposition newsletter in the Local, along with the Militant Caucus in Local 6, began circulating a petition on March 8 to "call on president Herman and the Bay Area ILWU local presidents to organize a 24-hour Bay Area-wide protest strike against government strikebreaking in the coalfields." The petition quoted a statement made by Herman at a February 24 rally, where he boasted: "If they try mining coal with bayonets or visit harm on the miners, there will be actions here and throughout the country...."

With a couple of days' circulation the petition gathered over 100 signatures in Local 10 and 150 in Local 6, as well as the signatures of Local 13 president Art Almeida and Seattle Local 19 president Dick Moork. This petition was an important factor in forcing the Local 10 Executive Board on March 9 to come out for some kind of solidarity action in support of the miners strike.

Strike Support Coalition

Herman himself had made the call for solidarity actions before some 1,000 assembled trade unionists at a February 24 rally organized by the so-called "Miners Strike Labor/Community Support Coalition," a collection of top Bay Area labor bureaucrats such as John Crowley of the Central Labor Council and Walter Johnson, president of Retail Clerks Local 1100. When this coalition held an organizing meeting March 11 at the Retail Clerks headquarters, about 200 trade union militants showed up, clearly upsetting the conservative trade union tops. Early in the meeting the Coalition's co-chairman, Larry Wing, president of ILWU Local 10, mentioned that the ILWU IEB favored a 24-hour coastwide work stoppage and was calling the rest of labor to join in. Wing also noted the IEB had voted a \$25,000 donation to the mine workers as well as a \$1 per-month/per-member assessment of the ILWU membership for the miners' families.

At this point a militant Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) worker announced that a similar motion for a "one day stop work mass labor rally of all Bay Area labor" had been passed 44 to 1 at a membership meeting of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1555 on March 8. Noting the parallel course of the two unions, she put forward a motion calling for implementing the work-stoppage motions and extending them to Bay Area labor as a whole:

"This body calls for a 24-hour Bay Area-wide stop-work protest strike against government strikebreaking in the coalfields. We urge all local unions and the Central Labor Council of all nine Bay Area counties to immediately prepare for such an action."

This simple motion immediately polarized the meeting, for the encrusted U.S. labor bureaucracy cannot abide even such elementary actions of class solidarity. Caught off guard, the nervous bureaucrats sought a way out of this dilemma and found it with the criminal aid of the Communist Party (CP) and the SWP. While both groups are vying to play chief hatchetman against labor militancy for the union tops, at this meeting the SWP clearly led the pack in wrecking the chances of solidarity strike action.

The fight which followed found the CP supporters caught in the middle. With the BART militants' motion simply calling for implementing the ILWU resolution, they did not want to completely disavow it. But aware that the ILWU bureaucracy was seeking to minimize its impact, neither did they want to go too far out on a limb. Thus early on in the heated discussion Franklin Alexander, well-known CP supporter in ILWU Local 6, said he was "not ready" to vote for such a motion because it was "too soon," and later tried to kill it by referring it to the steering committee. (Ironically Billy Proctor, a CP supporter in Local 10, had signed the "Longshore Militant" petition earlier in the week.)

But the SWP supporters present did not beat around the bush. Mobilizing their small army of hitherto silent "Coalition" members to come out and defeat the motion, they effectively denounced the ILWU resolution as "ultra-left"! First Roland Sheppard, SWP floor leader, openly attacked the solidarity motion on the grounds that: 1) "The job of this body is to support the miners" [read Miller]; 2) "The ILWU actually isn't calling for the action, only looking for the mood in the ranks"; and 3) One must "walk before you run." Actually the SWP is on its hands and knees, a position it got used to during its 1960's peace crawls. And as if the miners who have been on strike for three months would not appreciate the support of a solidarity strike, John Olmstead, a Teamster, seconded Sheppard's remarks and actually cautioned that the motion would "alienate the union membership"!...

By voting time the several score SWP supporters had lined up a solid voting bloc of themselves and the most rabid right-wing bureaucrats present. Even so the first voice vote was disputed and a second hand vote was only defeated by a margin of roughly 120 to 70, with CP supporters such as Figueiredo, Franklin and several others abstaining. As if this wasn't enough, the SWP even opposed a subsequent proposal for nothing more frightening than a Saturday rally. (This was tabled to the steering committee!)

This sabotage of the solidarity strike proposal is the most blatant proof yet that the SWP's "turn to the unions" means covering for the bureaucrats and outright *sabotage* of vitally needed militant labor action. Surely the spectacle of these "socialists" denouncing the call of the ILWU Executive Board as, in substance, adventurist is downright grotesque. No conscious union militant can consider these reformists as anything but despicable *betrayers* of labor's cause. Because they are seeking to establish themselves as sophisticated braintrusts and apparatchiks for the liberal wing of labor officialdom these pimps for the bureaucracy are fiercely determined to maintain capitalist stability—sometimes even more so than the union tops themselves, who are occasionally subject to pressure from the ranks. *Today the most rabid opponent of sympathy protest strikes to aid the miners—excepting only the reactionary Meanyites—is the SWP!* ■

Dump Miller! Elect an Emergency UMWA Convention!

VOTE NO!

One hundred days into the strike, the UMWA leadership produced sellout No. 3. Despite the miners' successful defiance of Taft-Hartley they were handed an agreement that represents a major step backward from even Miller's rotten 1974 contract...

—excerpted from WV No. 198, 24 March 1978

... After rebelling against one no-strike agreement after another and staying out for over 100 days, the coal miners have forced the operators and government to back off on their demands for explicit

no-strike language in the contract. Squeezed between the miners' intransigence and their need to replenish their rapidly dwindling stockpiles, big businessmen began yelping for a "softer" approach to the miners. The 20 March issue of *Business Week*, a major journal of business opinion, wrote:

"The biggest sticking point in the negotiations has been the effort by management to use this year's contract to push through productivity incentives and penalties that would stop wildcat strikes. At this point they should refrain from insisting on dramatic changes in the new contract and agree instead to an easier-to-achieve settlement along the lines of the earlier 1974 agreement."

That the proposed agreement does not contain a no-strike clause or enforcement powers is a real setback for the coal operators, won by the miners' determined drive not to sacrifice their most honored traditions. But by failing to win an explicit unlimited right to strike, written into the contract, the miners are left open to renewed attacks by the companies, courts and arbitrators.

The weapon the coal bosses will now try to wield against the miners is Arbitration Review Board decision No. 108. Handed down last October, shortly before the strike began, ARB 108 ruled that the companies had not only the right to fire their own employees for picketing, but that "roving pickets," one of the miners' most crucial weapons, could be fired. "Picketing" was construed to include even handing out literature at another mine site! This incredible decision deserves to be quoted, since it will now be the major tool the companies will attempt to use to crush the miners' militancy:

"We now turn to the rule which we are declaring with respect to picketing. To begin with, we lump picketing with strike instigation and other strike-leadership manifestations as being of the same gravity. They constitute a capital offense—by which we mean an offense which itself warrants discharge and which Management therefore need not treat as an offense calling for the application of progressive discipline.

"Next, we do not believe that a distinction can be properly drawn between the picketing of an employee's own mine and the picketing of other mines, be they mines of the employee's Employer or mines of another Employer.

"The choice is the Miners'. They cannot legitimately argue that their survival is dependent on adherence to their picketing and striking tradition. For the shedding of that tradition merely means acceptance of the grievance procedure as the proper disputes-settling forum—which, in turn, amounts to no more than the honoring of the Agreement. There cannot be both pride in the tradition and respect for the Agreement."

The last sentence is certainly true! The miners' powerful traditions are incompatible with the UMWA bureaucracy's sellout contracts and binding arbitration. With ARB 108 continuing in effect, the bosses will attempt to destroy that tradition by picking off miners on

the picket lines and firing them until the proud militancy and strength of the UMWA is broken....

The other major issues of the strike centered on restoration of the miners' health cards and equalization of pensions. On both scores, the current contract doesn't come close to satisfying the miners' demands and needs. The additional health and pension payments the BCOA will make are paltry—they raise the wage and benefit package to a 38.8 percent increase over the 1974 contract, as compared to the 37 percent in the recently rejected proposal.

For the first time since the 1940's, when the miners won their health and pension funds, miners will be forced to pay up to \$200 a year in medical deductibles. The conversion to company-by-company insurance schemes ends the last shred of union control over the health funds. The UMWA historically fought for the right to control these funds, precisely so that the miners would not be subject to the whims of the blackmailing companies. Any time the company says the contract is violated, as in a wildcat or after the contract has expired, the coal barons will seek to cut off benefits. The miners' health clinics, which provided important services not available on a fee-for-service basis, will be doomed.

There will be no pension equalization under this contract. Pensioners who retired before 1975 will get their miserly \$25 increase now, instead of over a three-year period. Yet the older pensioners will starve.

The UMWA negotiators also gave back what they had earlier rejected under the pressure of the membership: the companies' right to institute incentive speed-up schemes. These will be allowed at the discretion of the companies and the vote of individual local unions, another step towards breaking the solidarity of the miners which is their principal strength. Incentive/productivity drives will produce only more death and injury in what is already the nation's most deadly industry.

The miners' safety is thrown into the hands of pro-company arbitrators. Mine safety committeemen can be arbitrarily removed from their elected positions by the companies and their fate is left to the notorious arbitrators. Individual miners who refuse to work in unsafe conditions can also be disciplined should the pro-company arbitrators find that they did not exercise "good judgement" in saving their own lives.

These terms are an insult to miners who have fought unstintingly to win their strike and push through to a real victory. And there is no reason for miners to accept now what they have rejected before! Time and time again the enemy camp has been on the verge of collapse....

Carter jumped into the dispute and also proved unable to make his threats stick. The federal judge who initially issued the back-to-work

Steel Militants Demand: Hot-Cargo Scab Coal

The following resolution was presented to the January membership meeting of USWA Local 65 (U.S. Steel Southworks) in Chicago.

Whereas, the UMWA has become the target of a vicious assault by the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) aimed at eliminating union militancy in the coal fields; and

Whereas, if the BCOA, dominated by the oil and steel trusts, succeeds in its union-busting offensive, it will be a crushing defeat for the entire labor movement and threaten similar attacks against every union; and

Whereas, a coal strike can be effective only insofar as it threatens to shut down steel, and the BCOA offensive relies heavily upon the expectation that scab coal, augmented by imports, will be able to continuously replenish stockpiles in District 31 and elsewhere; and

Whereas, this fact demands that our union, as an elementary act of class solidarity, hot-cargo all coal shipments into the mills, and further demands that District 31, as a major steel district and the largest district in the USWA, take the lead in implementing this policy; and

Whereas, our union has been the target of a massive job-slashing campaign and U.S. Steel has just recently announced plans for future plant closures, sharply posing the need to scrap the ENA and strike industry-wide against layoffs; and

Whereas, the close relationship between the steel and coal industry, the fact that the miners' key demand for the unrestricted contractual right to strike is an urgent requirement for steelworkers chained by the ENA, and the fact that the USWA and UMWA are under attack by a common enemy all point to the tremendous potential and crucial necessity of joint USWA/UMWA strike action; therefore be it

Resolved, that USWA L.U. 65 calls on the District and the International to immediately implement and enforce the hot-cargoing of all coal shipments to the mills, and that our union calls on the railroad, seamen and longshore unions to halt the movement of coal; and be it further

Resolved, that the local call upon the International to sanction and organize a joint strike with the UMWA to win the miners' demands and to win for steelworkers:

- a) the elimination of the ENA and all compulsory arbitration provisions from the contract—for the unlimited right to strike;
- b) the immediate re-instatement of all laid-off steelworkers and the re-opening of all closed plants, either by the steel companies or through the nationalization of these plants without compensation;
- c) the 30 hour workweek at 40 hours pay with full cost of living protection.

Tom Knight, Damon Lewis

injunction under Taft-Hartley later refused to extend it, admitting: "The miners are not paying any attention to what I am doing anyway."

The miners' enormous strength has also shaken the coal operators. Hardliners like Joe Brennan and U.S. Steel's J. Bruce Johnson were removed from the BCOA negotiating team as the major coal firms grew nervous at the miners' rising anger.

Victory is within the miners' grasp. What they need now is to stick to their guns and to replace their sellout leaders with an elected strike committee committed to winning the strike. And the rest of the labor movement can play a crucial role in making sure that the miners are not isolated and beaten down by renewed government threats or corporate resistance. Solidarity strikes *now* would both freeze the government's strikebreaking ploys and unify the labor movement behind the miners.... ■

Miners: Remember the Traitors

Miller and Bargaining Council "dissidents" joined hands to stifle "miners fever." Now the UMWA ranks must like under the wretched takeaway contract. The tasks for militants today: draw the lessons of this monumental strike, purge the traitors, build a class-struggle opposition...

—excerpted from **WV No. 199, 31 March 1978**

The rotten contract which the membership of the United Mine Workers of America accepted with disgust and widespread opposition in a 57-to-43 percent vote Friday represents a defeat for the 110-day-old coal strike, but the combative union membership came out of it far from defeated. Despite their exemplary militancy the hungry miners were repeatedly stabbed in the back by a UMWA president who, as a coalfield jukebox hit put it, "might as well 'been on their [the companies] side." And as for the "dissident" bureaucrats in whom many strikers placed their hopes, when the final pact came down it was these traitors who pushed through the sellout they had voted against ("for the record") in Washington.

The contract is clearly worse than the narrowly ratified 1974 agreement which provoked three years of wildcats. After the longest miners strike since 1922, the miners still don't have the right to strike, equalized pensions or the restoration of their free health care.

Though their militancy and determination managed to beat back many of the sweeping takeaway demands that the Bituminous Coal Operators Association had insisted on when the strike started last December 6, none of the miners' key demands were satisfied.

This contract is a serious setback for the UMWA. But the miners for three and a half months fought the coal operators, gun-toting scabs, state police and court injunctions with unmatched courage and unbreakable solidarity. They defied Jimmy Carter's strikebreaking invocation of Taft-Hartley and threats of worse, rendering the government's efforts to end the strike pathetic and ineffectual. Time after time they repudiated their leadership's efforts to send them back to work on even worse terms than they have now. The miners' fight inspired and won the support of millions of unionists throughout the country.

The miners were not beaten down by the bosses or intimidated by the government. They were not whipped into submission by their avowed enemies—they were betrayed by their own leaders. When the miners went to their voting places last Friday, the majority voted with the bitter and frustrated resignation that with their current set of treacherous "leaders" they were unlikely to do better no matter how long they stayed out...

Carter and the coal bosses know that they have not succeeded in their fundamental objective—to inflict a humiliating defeat on the UMWA that would discourage the miners for years to come. The coal operators are not gloating over the new pact and a worried Carter just yesterday confirmed plans to establish a blue ribbon coal commission to investigate the problems of "labor peace" and productivity in mining. The bosses and their politicians know there will be new battles in the mines. The task now for the miners is to regroup, draw the lessons of this strike and begin to forge a class-struggle leadership that can achieve victory in the future.

Arnold Miller and the UMWA International Executive Board not only kept handing the miners one stinking contract after another, but they joined the companies and government in literally trying to starve them into acquiescence. Though over \$4.5 million had been contributed to the UMWA International Miners Relief Fund, Miller *refused to distribute* this money in his callous determination to force through a yes vote....

Purge the Traitors!

Arnold Miller may have finally gotten a contract, but he has earned the burning hatred of 160,000 coal miners. Afraid to venture out of his Washington, D.C. office without a cluster of bodyguards in his nine-passenger Cadillac limousine and a .38 tucked in his belt, the

silver-haired Judas is trying to fend off a recall effort and mounting demands for his resignation. Miller swears he will stay in office despite the unanimous animosity of the UMWA ranks but has turned over almost all of his day-to-day duties to vice-president Sam Church, the former Boyleite who is becoming known as "Miller's Haldeman." Church is an ambitious bootlicker, but his association with Miller has made him as despised as his boss.

In an exercise of bureaucratic gall, Miller is reportedly planning on calling a special union convention later this year to ask for a dues increase to bolster the union's nearly depleted treasury. The infuriated miners would rather give Miller a coffin than a dues hike. But "dissidents" within the UMWA hierarchy are reportedly planning on trying to force Miller's resignation by submitting a motion to reduce his salary from \$45,000 a year to \$1, which would still leave him overpaid.

Miller may continue for some time to cling to the privileges of the UMWA presidency, but he is politically a dead man in the union. His repeated betrayals have become so colossal that there is no chance of his regaining credibility with the ranks. With Miller on the skids, there are sure to be a host of seekers for the throne. Chief among these will be members of the union's Bargaining Council, composed of district presidents and International Executive Board representatives.

In the fierce jockeying for position now likely to go on in the UMWA officialdom, miners should beware of those so-called dissidents who will find it easy and cheap to pot-shot at Miller. Over half the Bargaining Council backed both Miller's last two contract proposals. And where were the rest of them when the UMWA ranks were standing solid and crying out for leadership? *Not one* member of the Bargaining Council found the courage to defy Miller's orders to recommend ratification of the latest pact. *Not one* called for a special convention to replace Miller when it could have affected the outcome of the strike. *Not one* mounted a concerted campaign *against* ratification that would have strengthened the miners' resolve and defeated the contract.

The UMWA ranks certainly need to give their union a thorough housecleaning. But Arnold Miller should not be their only target. A West Virginia miner hit the mark when he told *WV*, "Miller's got to go but there's a hell of a lot more that's got to go with him. We're going to have to make a clear sweep." While they are regrouping their forces and preparing for new battles, the miners should clean out the dead wood in their International and district offices, picking new leaders willing to stand up to the coal barons, the Democrats and Republicans and the courts. Only with a leadership pledged to a



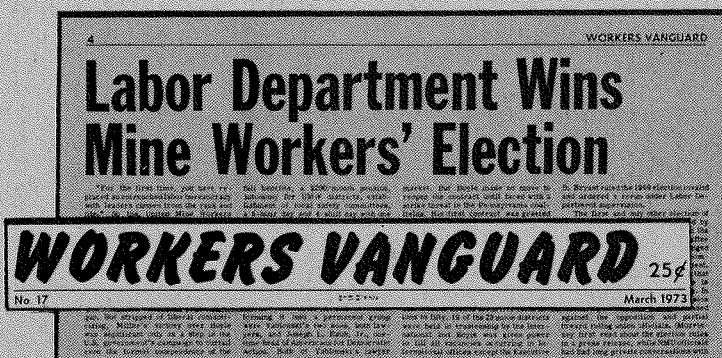
WV Photo

Miners at Kentucky state capitol protesting cop harassment.

consistent policy of class struggle will the miners be able to make real gains....

Constructing such a leadership is the UMWA ranks' urgent, overwhelming need in the wake of their strike. Their current "leaders" stand exposed as traitors, incompetents and weaklings. Careerist bureaucrats will now try to exploit the miners' discontent, but the 1977-78 coal strike has conclusively shown that simply being a militant trade unionist will not answer the challenges of the coal operators and the government. Miller and the Bargaining Council "dissidents" *betrayed* the miners fundamentally because they were tied to the same profit-protecting policies pursued by the coal companies and the government. Bureaucrats who were boosted to power by the grace of the federal government's intervention in their union, as Miller was in 1972, and who continually look to the good graces of the government instead of appealing to the rest of the trade union movement for militant support, will never be able to lead the miners in confrontations with the capitalist state.

While competing bureaucrats squabble, the key task for the miners is to begin building a new leadership truly capable of leading them to victory. The first steps down this road can begin right now, with militant miners joining to build a class-struggle opposition to fight against the policies of betrayal they have witnessed over and over from the Arnold Millers to the Lee Roy Pattersons.... ■



Who Told the Truth About Miller in 1973?

