

# OUR PARTY SUPPORTED THE MINERS WHILE THE LABOUR AND T.U. LEADERS HELPED THE BOSS

## OUR DEFENCE OF THE MINERS INTERESTS Has Been Consistent LOOK AT OUR RECORD:

**SOCIALIST APPEAL**  
THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY

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**LESSONS OF THE MINERS' STRIKES**  
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By JOCK HASTON

**LANARK MINERS FINED**

Our record here printed from the "Socialist Appeal" clearly shows that the R.C.P. has supported every struggle of the miners against both the coal-owners and the Government. This consistent support has earned us the hatred of all the reactionary press—not excluding the "Herald" and the "Daily Worker"—and was the real reason why four of our comrades (Haston, Tearse, Lee and Keen) were railroaded to prison last June in the now famous Newcastle strike Trial, charged under the "Trades Disputes Act."

In these months there were 112,000 miners involved in no less than 234 strikes.

The Foster Committee was also set up and made recommendations for wage increases for lads under 21 only because of the widespread strikes among the young pit workers. This is also true of the Porter Award. When the Government tried to jip the miners and refused to meet the cost of the anomalies, the miners' leaders tried to hold the workers back whilst the Government sat tight and the coal-owners were happy. But 90,000 Welsh miners out on strike, fighting to end these anomalies, soon changed the Government's mind, and some of their demands were met.

The 70,000 Yorkshire miners also struck after useless negotiation for an end to the anomalies, and their demands were only then granted.

Thus, it was as a result of the direct action of the workers that wage increases were gained, in spite of the threats of the Government and the strike-breaking actions of the Labour and Trade Union leaders.

The revolutionary communists were consistently on the side of the workers. But the Labour leaders were on the side of the coal-owners and their government.

The Sankey Commission set up as the result of strike threats following the last war, recommended the nationalisation of the pits as the only solution to the chaos in the industry and the well-being of the miners. The Government promises were soon scrapped, however, once they felt strong enough for a showdown with the miners. The trade union leaders were again able to harness the workers to reformist methods of struggle.

In the course of this war, the crisis in the British coal industry is a national and international scandal. The coal-owners have demonstrated their incapacity to organise the industry efficiently. The half and half measures, joint production boards, and joint production committees, with dual control of the Government and owners through the Ministry of Fuel, is a bankrupt policy, incapable of solving the crisis in the interests of the miners and working class as a whole.

Mr. Robert Foot, the new Gaullier of the coal-owners, has issued the capitalist plans for the post-war period. The concentration of greater monopolies—the speed up of the workers, and the inevitable drive against the conditions of miners that followed the last war, are the essence of this plan.

The only solution to the coal crisis, as to the crisis of capitalism as a whole, is the nationalisation of the pits without compensation to the owners, and their operation under the control of the miners and technicians committees.

Now is the time for the miners to make an all out drive for the confiscation of the coal mines in the national interest. The coal-owners have never been so completely exposed and weakened in their position. The whole country including the forces, and the middle class, are solidly behind the miners in this struggle to take over the coal mines. Instead of using this favourable opportunity for an all-out campaign, the leaders are still temporising and have even concluded agreements with the coal-owners on the basis that there will still be private ownership for years after the war.

Miners! The Revolutionary Communist Party is the only party that has consistently fought in the interests of the miners throughout the whole course of the war, and will continue to do so inside and outside of Parliament.

The record of the Labour, Trade Union and Stalinist leaders over the same period tells a very different story. It is a black record of shameful betrayal and sabotage of the miners' struggle. Every rotten device known to scabs and strikebreakers has been used by these "misleaders" of the workers in their efforts to shatter the fighting morale of the struggling workers.

Not content with acting as the most vicious strike-breakers the Lawthers, Halls, and Horners have slandered and abused the striking miners in the most disgusting manner imaginable.

Here are a few choice examples:

Mr. T. J. Brown, prominent official of the Lancs and Cheshire Miners' Association, speaking in October 1942:

"The whole fabric of the industry is being upset by irresponsible youths... (who are)... insolent and ill-mannered."  
Joe Hall, President of the Y.M.A., referring to the 80,000 Yorkshire miners out on strike in April 1944:

"We are no longer going to tolerate rule by rabble."

Official circular issued by Lawther and the Executive Council of the D.M.A. as a reply to the Durham miners then on strike in defence of their pitifully low standards of wages and conditions:

"These reckless strikes are not a manifestation of the high standard of valour... for which the Durham miners have been renowned. They are a violation of pledges and can only be designated consciously or otherwise, as sabotaging the war effort and assisting the enemy."

In October 1942, the M.F.G.B. issued an official Circular to all miners' Lodges. This document set out to describe the reasons for the coal output falling in coal production and, just like all the statements of the coal-owners, it placed the blame on the shoulders of the miners. In fact, but for Ebby Edwards' signature and the patronising reference to "our members", it could very easily have been taken for an editorial out of the "Colliery Guardian". Here it is in part:

"... well may the community look upon our industry as one that can be charged with criminal neglect in this hour of the country's peril. Coal output is falling per man employed. Lack of regularity of attendance without reason is on the increase. Unnecessary stoppages have occurred. There is a mentality among some miners that reflects an unconcern for the danger with which the country is faced. These and other deterrent production factors perpetrated by the men reflect no credit to our organisation. We are not satisfied that all of our members are doing all they can all the time to produce all the coal the nation needs."

In South Wales it was the same story. During the great strike of 90,000 Welsh miners last March, the Executive joined together with the South Wales miners' M.P.s, in issuing the following statement to the "Western Mail" on 13th March 1944:

"We are united of the opinion... (that) the stoppage fails to serve the best interests of the miners and

places in jeopardy the lives of their colleagues on the fighting fronts."

In other words, Horner and Co., not only condemned the strike and did their best to break it, but—even they attempted to turn the workers in the armed forces against their Welsh comrades on strike. This particular refrain was taken up in loud and gleeful chorus by all the reactionary gutter-press of the country.

Earlier in the strike, Horner and the Executive had solemnly declared, with an unconscious humour, that the strike

"... threatens the unity of the S.W.M.F.!"  
90,000 miners out on strike in the biggest demonstration of solidarity seen in South Wales since 1926, and Horner dares to talk of a "threat to unity"! However, there was such a threat—not from the strikers, but from the Executive Council, the miners M.P.s and those members of the Stalinist Party who loyally followed out their Party's instructions to act as scabs and strike-breakers!

These treacherous activities of the miners industrial and political leadership were not perpetrated without rousing the bitter anger and hatred of the rank and file miners. So great was the feeling of disgust which prevailed throughout every coalfield that these Labour and Stalinist renegades, shorn of whatever moral authority they ever possessed among the miners, finally sought the aid of the capitalist prisons and police in protecting their privileged positions. They introduced IA(a) and used the anti-Labour Trade Disputes Act against the workers.

The increases of wages made to the miners have never been voluntarily granted by the coal-owners or the Government. Nor have they been granted because of "unbiased" arbitration, or the "skillful" negotiating of the Trade Union leaders. In the midst of the war, the first real increase received by the miners which raised their level of wages was the Greene Award. But the Trades Union Board, which was set up in June 1942 after months of wrangling and negotiation, was brought into being only because of the rapidly increasing number of miners strikes between January and May 1942.

### Our Comrades in Court

Our policy was boldly proclaimed in face of Ernest Bevin's anti-Labour attack and imprisonment of our comrades:

"It was my view and the view of my party that the nationalisation of the pits and their operation under the control of the workers was the only solution to the coal crisis."

— Jock Haston in court.  
"You knew that the Government couldn't nationalise the mines in three weeks?" said the prosecutor, Paley Scott.

"Yes, I believe it could be done. The mines and the whole social services were nationalised in one week in Russia in 1917."

— Heaton Lee, Election Agent for Jock Haston.

# FOR A WORKERS' ARMY

On the question of the wages, conditions and control of the armed forces, the Labour leaders have a disgraceful record. They have failed the workers drafted into uniform.

The army as at present constituted, is an army of the capitalist class. Its officers are especially selected as loyal defenders of capitalism. This is particularly true of the higher posts which are filled by those who have gone through special military colleges exclusive to the sons and agents of capitalism. Workers may be promoted to minor officered posts in a period of war such as the present, but in general the workers in uniform are there to do the Jimmy Higgins work and fight.

The Trotskyists believe that this policy should be ended. We say that the Labour and Trade Union leaders must struggle to

immediately legislate a policy of setting up schools for trade unionists to learn the higher military arts, and that these schools should be financed by the Government but operated under the control of the workers' organisations. Workers trained in these schools will know how to defend their class and a Socialist Britain.

In the old days the boss class used to get away with the story that the workers did not have the understanding to become higher officers. The activities of numerous guerilla fighters have finally disposed of this fable. More so, have the exploits of the Red Army.

We Trotskyists also say that the soldier should have full political rights, collective bargaining through soldiers councils and the right to remove officers and appoint officers through

these soldiers' councils. We believe in democracy, and demand it for those who are called to die in its name.

It would not be possible to use this kind of army for the purpose of counter-revolution such as Churchill is doing at present.

From the ranks of the army, navy and air force, there is a constant and insistent demand for a decent wage. There is no record that your late Labour M.P. played any role in fighting for an increase for the forces and for decent living conditions.

It is our view that not a single penny of profit should go to the capitalists while workers in uniform are unable to keep their families or themselves on the bare necessities and minimum luxuries of life. The servicemen should be paid an industrial wage. The Labour-Tory coalition won't do it, only the working class in power will.

# T.U. LEADERS and M.P.'S must be paid working men's wage

Many workers agree with all we say about the desertion of the majority of the official leadership to the capitalists. Because of these repeated betrayals, a mood of cynicism has spread among some of the workers who ask: what guarantee have we that you won't go the same way as the rest? We can only answer this question by saying that there is no absolute guarantee. In the final analysis it depends upon the organised workers themselves.

Our Party, however, has a proud record of struggle. We carried the international socialist banner aloft in the most difficult days when only a tiny few had the courage of their convictions. Our programme and principles have stood the test of history. All this gives us confidence in our Party and its future. It gives us courage to say: Look at our record,

these are our credentials, these are our guarantees.

We have, however, as a part of our policy the demand that state officials and working class officials should be paid working men's wages. The trade union leaders should be subject to democratic recall and live on the same wage as the worker in the trade.

If the workers' wages are increased, the T.U. and other leaders' wages will increase likewise. If the workers' wages drop, the leaders' wages will drop. All income over the working class level must be returned to the workers' party, who nominated the M.P., as a levy. These gentlemen will not talk so glibly about how much better off the workers are than before the war etc.; or that Beveridge is a good level of "social security". They will fight in Parliament and out for a

decent standard of life.

In brief, the workers must have direct control of their organisations, and of all those who claim to represent them. But most important is the question of the programme. It was the false programme of the Labour Party which led to inevitable betrayal. It was the deviation of the Communist Party from the international programme of Lenin to the utopia of "socialism in one country", which led them to follow in the footsteps of the Labour Party. Only by an undeviating adherence to the class struggle based on the theoretical principles of scientific socialism can the working class be guaranteed against betrayal. It rests upon the vigilance and the consciousness of the workers, in the final analysis, as to which direction their leadership will move.