

100,000 MINERS CAN'T BE WRONG

HORNER SELLING OUT

BY JOCK HASTON



THE strike of 100,000 Welsh miners is the most powerful argument which has been used in the course of the war by a section of the British workers for the settlement of just grievances. After months of patient negotiations the miners have been forced to use this argument to demonstrate the character of their case, and to show that they are no longer to be played around with.

The rejection by the Porter Arbitration Court of the miners' demand for a £6 minimum had already caused a great wave of resentment throughout the coalfields, but the Government, by its blunt refusal to agree to cover the additional cost of wages for bad working conditions and other anomalies—which are not covered in the Award—is primarily responsible for the present strike.

Wage Anomalies

The following are a few of the wage anomalies which the miners want cleared up:

The majority of the piece-workers were already earning more than the £5 minimum which was awarded by the Porter committee.

Instead of increasing the wages of these men—the key workers in the pit—the Award wrested away many concessions which the miners had won in the past as the result of hard battles against the coal-owners.

A haulier working in water before the Award had a wage of £4 10s. 4d., to which was added 6/- making the total £4 16s. 4d. The Porter Award gave him a wage of £5, thus increasing his wage only 3/6 instead of 9/6 as formerly. Such a haulier got no special money for working in water.

Under the Award hauliers also lost the right of extra payment for the term haulier—i.e., the haulier who is responsible for sharing the tubs and timber. Hauliers also lost the right to additional payment for



**T.U. OFFICIAL:
"DON'T STRIKE
BOYS — I'VE
GOT MINE!"**

breaking in new horses. A surface labourer who receives $2/4$ under the Award pays $1/6$ per week to the Coal Charges Fund if he receives house coal. The $2/4$ makes his wages up to £4 10s. 0d. and thereby increases his poundage fee for doctor by two-pence. If he pays income tax at $6/6$ in the £1 he is charged 9d. on the $2/4$. Therefore $1/6$ for coal plus 2d. for doctor plus 9d. for income tax makes $2/5$, and this worker is down a penny on the basis of the Award.

Each colliery worker who receives household coal at cheap rate has to pay $1/6$ per week to the Coal Charges Fund. Some get a ton per month, some for 6 weeks, some a ton per two months and others a ton for 13 weeks. Thus under the Award some miners pay an additional 6/- a ton, some 9/-, some 12/- and others 19/6! These are only a few of the anomalies of which the miners demanded the immediate settlement, which the Government refused, and which precipitated the strike.

The haste with which the Government capitulated once the miners were on the streets demonstrated not only the soundness of the miners' demands but the strength of the strike weapon in getting an immediate answer to these demands.

PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST MINERS

The press attack against the miners was conducted in the most venomous strain. This was particularly true of the cartoonists who all made great play with the theme that the miners were letting the fighting men down. But among the general mass of the workers this press campaign has little effect. It has been impossible to whip up an antagonism to the miners, so deeply embedded among the masses is the justice of the miners' claims.

Far from the soldiers being hostile, the miners' case is receiving a sympathetic hearing, and indeed, coming as it does at a period when the soldiers themselves are asking for better wages, gives the soldiers an inspiration to press for better conditions.

For the first time the strike-breaking press of the boss-class—including the *Daily Worker*—are unanimous that the strike was spontaneous and not instigated by "Trotskyists" and "outside agents", etc. This testifies to the genuine feeling of grievance among the ranks of the miners. But the capitalist press tried to give the impression that there was complete confusion among the miners and they did not know exactly what they were striking for. But this smoke-screen was only to confuse those who were unfamiliar with the mining industry. The examples we have given above are only a few of the many grievances of the miners—apart from a general wage grievance—which were the basis of the strike.

STRIKE - BREAKING ROLE OF "COMMUNIST" PARTY

Instead of trying to rally the workers throughout the country behind the miners the Stalinists through the *Daily Worker*, made insidious attacks against the miners and tried to destroy the morale of the strikers.

NATIONALISE THE PITS Without Compensation

They did not directly attack the miners, as they did the engineers at Barrow and elsewhere. Instead, they quoted the official statements from trade union and Government leaders without comment. The theme of all their reports was: Yes, we support you, but for God's sake get back to work.

But behind the scenes the C.P. conducted a vicious campaign. Wherever they had control of a shop stewards committee and could get away with it, they sent telegrams calling upon the miners to get back to work. The telegram from a Chiswick factory which was loudly hissed at a mass lodge meeting, was directly sponsored by the Stalinists. This was also the tenor of the resolution passed at the Stalinist shop stewards' conference which was called at the Stoll Theatre, London, to discuss production and the Second Front.

But these resolutions and telegrams did not express the true feelings of the workers who were not consulted before the telegrams were sent. For the feeling of the workers was solidly behind the miners.

This activity of the **renegade Communist Party** was the most reactionary form of splitting which we have seen practised in the labour movement for many years. For instead of binding all sections of the industrial workers together in a common effort of struggle it sought to split them apart and thus assist the boss class.

The failure of the miners' leaders to take up a hard and determined stand behind the men has aroused a bitter criticism throughout the pits. The jingoist statement issued by the Executive that the strike "... **places in jeopardy the lives of our colleagues on the fighting front,**" is deeply resented.

For the miners know that it is precisely **they** who are fighting to keep the soldiers from being betrayed by the boss-class on the home front when they fight for better

BOSS:

**"THE MINERS
ARE LIVING
TOO WELL
ALREADY!"**



wages. It is no accident that the capitalist press seized on the statement of the Executive and made great play of it.

The general feeling which is now sweeping the pits is that Horner and his cronies of the C.P. are playing the same role as J. H. Thomas and the Labour leaders who betrayed the general strike of 1926. And this is exactly the position.

DEMAND THE ORIGINAL £6 MINIMUM

One thing is certain, if the leaders had really been prepared to conduct a struggle against the coal-owners and Government, the miners would long ago have won hands-down. **Even the threat of strike action by the leaders would have brought the Government into line.** Had the leaders done so, there would have been no strike. All the futile negotiations and window dressing would have been swept away. The failure of the Government to make proper plans to end the chaos in the coal industry and stop the sabotage of the coal-owners, would have been exposed to the public and a nationwide support gained for the full miners' demands.

Several of the larger miners' lodges are continuing to **press for the £6 minimum wage and the retention of all existing privileges**

tion and Operate them Under Workers' Control

and customs. And this is the demand which must become the focal point of the present struggle. In diverting the struggle onto the secondary issues of wage differentials between miner and miner, it appears that the Government deliberately provoked a conflict to split the miners and turn their attention away from the original demand. The miners must not allow this to happen. Back to the original demand for a £6 minimum!

In the long and bloody history of coal-mining the employers have never been so fully exposed and in as weak a position as they are at the present time. It has been clearly demonstrated to almost the entire population that they are sabotaging coal production in the interests of private profit. But instead of using this situation to nationalise the mines and operate them under workers' control as a guarantee of efficiency, the Government covers up the coal-owners

and protects them from the public gaze and public wrath. In such a situation if the miners fail to press their claims and gain their demands now, they will certainly not be able to do so after the war when the coal-owners can turn round and smash them.

Miners! Now is the most favourable period in history to press the miners' demands. The £6 minimum and the retention of all existing privileges and customs is an urgent and immediate demand. The immediate nationalisation of the pits without compensation and their operation under workers' control, is the only possible basis for a central mining plan, for stable conditions for the miners and the ending of the crisis in coal production.

Force the leadership of the Union to conduct a vigorous national campaign for the immediate introduction of these measures.

BREAK THE COALITION

LABOUR TO POWER on the following Programme .

1. Immediate despatch of arms and material to the Soviet Union under the control of the Trade Unions and factory committees.
2. Nationalisation of the land, mines, banks, transport and all big industry without compensation.
3. Confiscation of all war profits—all company books to be open for trade union inspection.
4. Workers' control of production to end chaos and mismanagement in industry to be exercised through workers committees.
5. Equal distribution of food, clothes, and other consumers commodities under the control of committees of workers elected from the distributive trades, factories, housewives committees and small shop-keepers.
6. Rising scale of wages to meet the increased cost of living with a guaranteed minimum.
7. Repeal of the Essential Works Order and all other anti-working class and strike-breaking laws.
8. Clear out the reactionary fascist officer caste in the Army and Home Guard. Election of officers by the soldiers. Trade union wages for all workers in the armed forces.
9. Establishment of military schools by the Trade Unions at the expense of the state for the training of worker officers.
10. Arming of the workers under control of committees of workers elected in factories, unions and in the streets
11. Freedom for Ireland, India and the Colonies.
12. A Socialist appeal to the workers of Germany and Europe on the basis of this programme in Britain to join the Socialist struggle against Hitler for the Socialist United States of Europe.