

nationalisation or workers' management?

articles and arguments by:

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the
commune

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18 de diciembre, a worker-managed textiles factory

social ownership for the 21st century

Building the new common sense: Social ownership for the 21st century, Ed. Andrew Fisher

Reviewed by Chris Kane

The publication of *Social ownership for the 21st century* by the Labour Representation Committee on behalf of the Left Economics Advisory Panel is a significant development. For the first time in nearly three decades an important section of the labour movement is at last developing a discussion on the questions of forms of social ownership, workers' control and workers' self-management. The Tragedy of the historical moment is that at a time when the inadequacy of capitalist society is so glaringly apparent, there is a lack of confidence in the viability of an alternative society fit for humanity. Amidst all the declarations that 'another world is possible' the traditional left has failed to conceptualise what that other world means. Without developing an idea of what we want to replace capitalism with, the struggle of the labour movement is trapped in a spiral of fighting to ameliorate the conditions of life **within** capitalism. In that regard this series of seven articles is a breath of fresh air in the arid plains of English socialism.

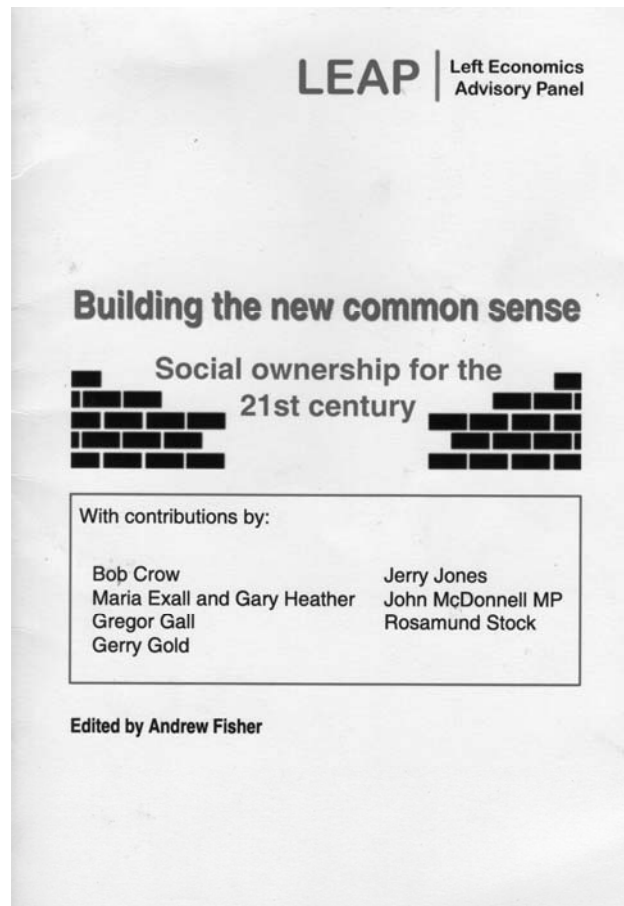
The fact there has been no serious discussion of these matters since the upsurge of working class struggle in the 1970s means that a lot of the lessons to be learnt from that period still remain to be worked out. That is apparent in this pamphlet, for many of the old ambiguities clearly remain to be cleared up. This is especially important in light of ideas of Social Partnership which are the official policy of the TUC and have had a corrosive effect in the labour movement.

Within the context of the British labour movement industrial democracy/workers' control has become popularly defined as meaning several things, such as:

1: **Greater consultation** – where management retains the final decision-making rights, but workers have direct input to the decision-making process, exercising greater influence beyond the set parameters of collective bargaining.

2: **Worker participation** – where management and workers jointly participate in the decision-making process, the workers' representatives having parity with the management and shareholders.

3: **Full workers' control** – where workers take over the responsibility of management and hold exclusive decision



the left economics advisory panel produced the pamphlet on social ownership

-making rights, overall control being the responsibility of workers' representatives, elected from and by those working in the industry.

Clearly industrial democracy/workers' control cannot be all these things. Clarity is therefore necessary if we are to develop the struggle for workers' self-government in the 21st century. During the discussions on industrial democracy in the 1960s and 1970s these ambiguities were being ironed out, it was however an unfinished debate. We believe it is necessary to overcome these ambiguities: in light of historical experience it would more helpful to make a clear distinction between forms of **workers' control** and **workers' self-management**, these can be broadly defined as:

1: **Workers' control** – whose variants stretch from a lower range – with the extension of the scope of collective bargaining and increased influence over the labour process and erosion of the managerial prerogatives – to a higher range, with wide-scale involvement of the workers in actual decision-making. Whilst preserving the distinction between the workers' representatives and the management, this would mean in its highest level a form of dual-management in the workplace.

2: **Workers' self-management** – the workers would have total control: managers as such would be abolished, and management would be eliminated as a function separate from the workers themselves. It would be a system of direct democracy: everyone would participate in the decision making and the workplace would take on a communal form, collectively run at the various levels.

The relationship between workers' control and workers' self-management is that of a process of struggle to realise the forms of workers' self-management latent in capitalism today, which can be developed in the fight to extend forms of workers' control into workers' self-management. The new pamphlet by LEAP opens the discussion again on these issues and rightly links it to the question of social ownership and seeks to put the questions back on the political agenda.

Gregor Gall opens the discussion with his essay *The case for industrial and economic democracy*, pointing out that there is a “democratic deficit” in British society. “While there are some limited forms of political democracy through representative institutions, such as Parliament, there are no corresponding bodies for governing workplace relations.” Gall includes in his argument for industrial democracy a point that the traditional left has largely ignored - the limitations of trade unions. Whilst workers have traditionally sought to promote their interests through unions he writes “...but unions are dependent upon other parties, namely employers and the state for acceptance, legitimacy and recognition, so workers have no automatic inalienable or inviolable rights for exercising some form of control over their working lives”.

Industrial democracy as such should not be dependent on the changing influence and power of unions. A further point that could be made of course is that many unions now are even less democratic and do not necessarily provide a democratic channel for workers to run their workplaces.

Gall considers that it is generally accepted in liberal democracies that “workers should have a right to participate in the making of decisions that affect their working lives”. What prevents this is “the imbalance of power between “labour (workers), on the one hand, and capital (employers) and the state, on the other.” In the UK this has taken the form of de-regulation of employment relations, a hallmark of industrial relations since Thatcher, except in the case of regulations to curb union powers and discipline labour. Gall also highlights how this system actually achieves the opposite of what capital wants – raising productivity – instead it leads to low productivity, “waste and duplication.”

There are problems with this analysis. Firstly this imbalance is not unique to the ‘collective laissez-faire’ form of capitalism: it is a problem of capital itself. Capital's proclaimed equality in the contract between a worker and employer is a myth and the worker is a wage-slave with no alternative but to sell his/her capacity to work – labour



during argentina's 1999-2002 economic collapse a number of workplaces were expropriated by workers and some continue to be democratically run under workers' self-management, including the **18 de diciembre** textile factory in buenos aires (above, formerly known as brukman) and the **fasinpat** (*fábrica sin patrón*: factory without a boss) ceramic tile factory in neuquén (below, formerly known as zanon).



power. As such the imbalance of power is integral to the system of producing capital.

Gall holds out the possibility of change not only to make work more effective and democratic but “more fulfilling and enriching”. It is heartening to hear anyone on the left pointing to the possibility of eradicating the alienation of work. This is to be achieved by a system of “joint-control and co-determination”. This must be of “considerable depth and breadth” and not merely the use of the existing frameworks already established by senior management. The conditions for “democracy and participation” which are set out combine elements of existing negotiating frameworks, such as rights to information and initiative

proposals, and also new rights to “impose obligations on management” and restrict their ability to unilaterally impose their will. In a nutshell, this would amount to representative structures “balanced between workers and employers”.

Gall's proposals would represent a major step forward compared to the current situation in which the labour movement accepts collective bargaining and social partnership as the most we can ever achieve. But Gall's proposals cannot be an end in itself. If workers do not manage production then clearly someone else does, and such is the nature of our class-divided society, inevitably capital will re-assert itself with new techniques of control. This is similar to what happened when the working class gained access to Parliament: more and more power was centralised, away from Parliament itself.

Achieving new forms of workers' control will require a real cultural shift: this is addressed in **Rosamund Stock's** *Why we need a Culture of Social Ownership*. This starts with a precondition which undermines her own proposals. That is that she will “not deal with the forms of social ownership” but starts with the assumption that “social ownership will take many forms, from state ownership to small co-operatives”. It is difficult however to see how we can develop the “supporting culture of social ownership” necessary for its success separate from conceptualising what social ownership means. This is no small matter.

From our 21st century vantage point, from all our experience of the last century of failed state-socialist models, we need to take a firm stand to **exclude**, not include, the equation of state-ownership with social ownership. These days many socialists use the term “social ownership” instead of nationalisation. But whether “public ownership” or “social-ownership” – they both mean the same things – state-ownership. But they are in fact two very different things. **One cannot equate the state with society**, social ownership with state ownership, without advocating the recasting of the capitalist system.

Stock, to be fair, does pose various forms of social ownership, such as cooperatives. Her aim is to build a counter culture to that of anti-cooperative capitalist ideas. Her conception is of social ownership which is very different from just membership of an association but truly participatory. This is an important question and her plea for a cultural revolution to enable social ownership is an important question. The process of developing workers' self-management does involve a cultural revolution: this is directly linked to how social-ownership is created. If it is developed through the solidarity of struggle **from below** then by its very nature it involves cooperation in its very foundations.

The other forms, both state-socialist and the “cooperatives”, are something brought about externally to workers themselves. For example she writes that: “people learn from doing: if people are put into a structure of co-operative relations, they will not only start to co-

operate more, see others as more similar to themselves, and support egalitarian outcomes such as redistribution and equality of outcome”. In fact experience has shown otherwise: for real lasting social ownership cannot come from above. As she herself writes “you have changed the concept of ownership from being an individual one to an inherently social one. Such accountability would be a spur to grassroots organisation.” This is precisely what we need to do.

The essay by **Jerry Jones**, former economics correspondent for the *Morning Star*, is entitled *The economic case for worker-owned co-operatives*. In his opening line he states that: “An economy based on worker-owned co-operatives would not look much different from the economy we now have”. The reader won't be disappointed: the economy he depicts is indeed not much different. Essentially what Jones conceptualises is a worker-controlled capitalist economy, where “the major difference would be that the profit would go to the workers rather than the capitalist owners”. The political economy is Keynesian, “it is likely that workers would choose to pay themselves more” which “in turn, would stimulate more investment and employment in production”, etc. Jones knows the dangers inherent in this system, such as the drive to reduce labour costs to be more competitive: his solution to the workers engaging in such practices is minimum wage legislation. This is partly connected to Jones's mistaken view of the crisis which can occur in capitalist society as being caused by the workers not earning enough to buy goods and the bizarre idea that capital is accumulated because of it having nowhere else to go due to lack of investment opportunities.

Jones's problem is he sees the importance of production relations and the need to change them but does not see the market as a manifestation of these production relations. Marx long ago showed that crisis is not caused by a shortage of consumer demand. On the contrary, it is the crisis that causes a shortage of demand. A crisis occurs not because there has been a scarcity of markets but because from the capitalist viewpoint there is an unsatisfactory distribution of income, Marx, based as he was on the capital-labour relationship, saw the decay in capitalist production in the tendency in the rate of profit to decline, which has nothing whatever to do with the inability sell. On the other hand, like Jones, the bourgeois economists see the decline in the rate of profit merely as a result of a deficiency in effective demand.

Jones seems to think these problems are overcome by placing the workers in control in a profit share system. It is basically Market Socialism, reminiscent of the form practiced in Yugoslavia, which actually undermined workers' self-management. Capital lives by obtaining ever more surplus value from the worker who produces it. For this reason any effort to control capital without uprooting the basis of value production is ultimately self-defeating. What is entirely missing in the views of Jones is the idea of transforming the economy – to end value production

and exchange. Instead with Jones we have simply capitalism with some socialist flavouring.

If Jones repeats the errors of Market-Socialism, the essay by Communication Workers' Union activists **Maria Exall** and **Gary Heather** *Telecommunications of the future under public ownership* disappointingly repeats those of state-socialism. They make a well researched indictment of the post privatisation set-up in the telecommunications industry, however their statement that "Under public ownership surplus was used to finance social investment for the many, while under privatisation was used to finance social investment for the few", is a more than exaggerated view of the previous forms of state-ownership in the UK.

The authors advocate a re-integration of the telecommunications industry into the state-sector and explain the tangible benefits that could thus arise. This would be achieved by the exchange of shares for interest bearing bonds. One can understand this as an ameliorative programme within an overall drive for something far better but it is not presented in that way at all. Instead "this bright future will only become reality if communications industries are, planned, organised and democratically controlled under public ownership to serve the public good along egalitarian lines". But instead of painting the picture splendid the authors leave us on the arid plains of state ownership. This is far from a "bright future". A call centre worker remains alienated and exploited whether in a state owned or private owned call centre: this vision offers little hope to the wage slave. This proposal by the CWU activists is far cry from the views of their predecessor union the UPW who in 1956 organised a campaign to foster support for the "principles of Industrial Democracy and an appreciation of how those principles can be applied to our everyday working lives." What they said in *The Business of Workers' Control* presents a far brighter future to the generation of today:

"We believe that industry should be so organised that its *social* purpose should be recognised by all those who engaged within it as paramount. In other words, while we must recognise and accept the importance of production techniques, this must not blind us to the essential importance of man as man. This makes us hold fast to a basic belief that industry provides us with an opportunity to develop our qualities not only as producers, but as human beings and as citizens."

The vision outlined by **Bob Crow** of the RMT in *Rail privatisation – a failed experiment* contrasts sharply to that of the CWU comrades. Crow similarly presents clearly the utter failure that privatisation has brought in the railway industry, with £1 billion being extracted each year by the private operators in guaranteed profits delivered by the government from tax-payers' money. But Crow makes clear that "there can be no desire to repeat the mistakes of the BR era". He wants a rail re-nationalisation which would see trade unions "involved at the ground floor of change, drawing up and delivering an

integrated and environmentally sustainable national transport plan". Furthermore he does not rely on government bonds, calling for re-nationalisation "without compensation".

His immediate form of ownership would be a combination of "trade unions, national, regional and local authorities, passengers, and the industry itself". But he goes further: "Public ownership and democratic accountability must go hand-in-glove, but also in the context of wider social and economic change." Crow traces the long history of the rail unions' demands for greater workers' control from 1914, 1917 and 1945 – in 1953 they argued that nationalisation should be a "preliminary to socialism, and it is in that context that democratic self-management becomes a realistic proposition." In this regard Crow stands head and shoulder above the other contributors to the LEAP pamphlet.

The essay by **Gerry Gold**, *The Growing Case for Social Ownership*, does take the pamphlet to a different level in stating clearly that "ethical production and capitalist production for profit are mutually exclusive opposites". Gold recognises the long and often neglected history of co-operatives, which in the world provide over 100 million jobs. He does go out of his way to emphasise that lessons must be learned from the "failures of the bureaucratic, state-run forms of social ownership of the Stalinist period". Instead – "new forms of participative democratic control and accountability will be needed".

But he goes one step further, recognising that "self-managed organisations" will have a role in a new form of economy: "The campaign for social ownership and control should explore ways to distribute the income from the operation of an organisation. The key issue is the replacement of the wages-for-labour employment contract which along with ownership by investors interested solely in profits are the foundations of the failing social and economic system. Gold calls for a new kind of government resting on an independent social movement, and concludes that it is necessary to recognise "that the old politics is finished and that creative, new solutions must be found."

The LEAP pamphlet concludes with an appeal by **John McDonnell MP** that now is the time to "reinvigorate the debate about a new role for social ownership in the 21st century". From this debate he argues "we need to take forward a campaign for a worker controlled economy, accountable to our communities" into the whole labour movement.

In 1953 The TUC published an *Interim Report on Public Ownership* which bemoaned criticism of existing structures of industry by advocates of 'workers control'. They were branded "out-of-date ideas" and it said that a "determined effort ought therefore to be made by education and propaganda" to rinse them out of the movement. Fifty-five years later communists can celebrate their failure: the 'good auld cause' is rising again and to that end the LEAP pamphlet is a most welcome contribution.

the struggle for self-management

An open letter to International Socialist comrades: published by *Solidarity*, September 1968

Dear comrades,

It is remarkable how few socialists seem to recognize the connection between the structure of their own organization and the type of 'socialist' society it might help bring about.

If the revolutionary organization is seen as the means and socialist society as the end, one might expect people with an elementary understanding of dialectics to recognize the relation between the two. Means and ends are mutually dependent. They constantly influence each other. The means are, in fact, a partial implementation of the end, whereas the end becomes modified by the means adopted.

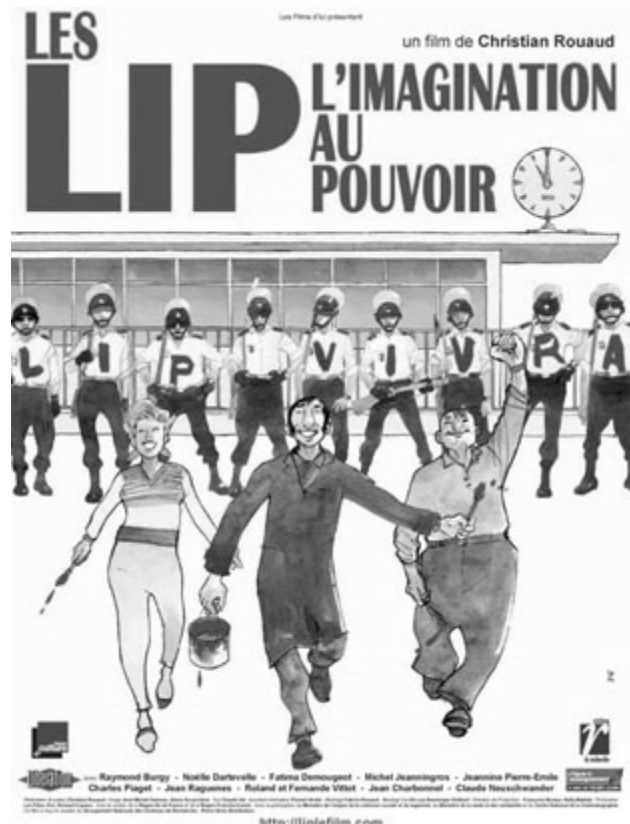
One could almost say 'tell me your views concerning the structure and function of the revolutionary organization and I'll tell you what the society you will help create will be like'. Or conversely 'give me your definition of socialism and I'll tell you what your views on the revolutionary organization are likely to be'.

We see socialism as a society based on self-management in every branch of social life. Its basis would be workers' management of production exercised through Workers' Councils. Accordingly we conceive of the revolutionary organisation as one which incorporates self-management in its structure and abolishes within its own ranks the separation between the functions of decision-making and execution. The revolutionary organisation should propagate these principles in every area of social life.

Others may have different conceptions of socialism. They may have different views on the aims and structure of the revolutionary organisation. They must state what these are clearly, openly and unambiguously. They owe it not only to the workers and students but to themselves.

An example of haziness in the definition of socialism (and of its repercussions concerning revolutionary organisation) is to be found in the material published by the central bodies of International Socialism (IS) in preparation for the bi-annual conference of September 1968.

In the duplicated 'Statement of basic principles' (IS constitution) we find that IS struggles for 'workers' control'. But we also find that "planning, under workers' control, demands nationalisation". These are the only references, in the document, to the structure of the socialist society towards whose creation all of IS's activity is directed.



In 1973-74 lip, a watch factory in france, was a leading example of workers' self management, as documented in this 2007 film imagination in power

How, precisely, does IS conceive of working class 'control'? What does 'nationalisation' mean? How does IS relate to 'workers' control'? Does the working class implement its 'control' through the mediation of a political party? Or of trade union officials? Or of a technocracy? Or through workers' councils?

Are those who formulated the IS constitution aware that 'nationalisation' means precisely relegating authority of decision-making on industrial policy to a group of state officials? Don't they realise that the struggle of the French students and workers for 'autogestion' (self-management) renders 'nationalisation' irrelevant? Apparently they do not. In the analysis of the French events (*The Struggle Continues*) written by T. Cliff and I. Birchall (and produced as an official IS publication) the relation between self-management and nationalisation is not discussed at all.

Why should a national federation of Workers' Councils (composed of elected and revocable delegates of regional Councils) allow any other group in society to wield ultimate authority in relation to all aspects of production?

In political terms the question could be posed thus: does IS stand for the policy of 'All Power to the Workers' Councils'? Or does it stand for the policy of 'All Power to the Revolutionary Party'? It is no use evading the issue by saying that in France no workers' councils existed. When this is the case, it is the duty of revolutionaries to conduct propaganda for their creation.

In Russia, in 1917, Workers' Councils (soviets) did exist. On July 4, 1917, Lenin raised the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets'. He ended his article with the words 'things are moving by fits and starts towards a point where power will be transferred to the soviets, which is what our Party called for long ago'. Yet two months later, on September 12, he wrote: "The Bolsheviks, having obtained a majority in the soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies of both capitals can and must take state power into their own hands".

However one analyses Lenin's transition, in the context of Russia in 1917, from a policy of 'All Power to the Soviets' to a policy of 'All Power to the Bolshevik Party', one must recognise that his choice was a fundamental one, whose implications for Britain in 1968 cannot be evaded.

The leading (i.e. decision-making) bodies in IS are very careful not to state explicitly that, like Lenin, they believe that the Party must take power on behalf of the class. This principle however runs through the entire Cliff-Birchall analysis of the French events. Their analysis is, in fact, tailored to fit this principle.

We say to these comrades: if you believe that the working class itself cannot 'seize power' (but that the Revolutionary Party must do it on behalf of the class), please say so openly and defend your views.

Let us put to you our own views on the subject. Political 'power' is fundamentally little more than the right to take and impose decisions in matters of social production, administration, etc. This authority is not to be confused with expertise. The experts give advice, they do not make the decisions. Today, during the development of the self-management revolution, it is precisely the authority of decision-making in relation to the management of production (whether the means of production be formally in the hands of private bosses or of the state) that is being challenged. The challenge is being repeated in all branches of social life.

Those who think in terms of 'seizing power' unwittingly accept that a political bureaucracy, separate from the producers themselves, and concentrating in its hands the authority of decision-making on fundamental issues of social production must be a permanent social institution. They believe its form (the bourgeois 'state apparatus') has to be changed. But they refuse to question the need for such a social institution. They want to capture political power and use it for allegedly different purposes. They do not consider its abolition to be on the agenda.

As for us, we believe that once self-management in production has been achieved, 'political power' as a social institution will lose both its social function and justification. To speak of 'workers' control' and of 'seizing political power' is to confuse a new structure of society (the rule of the Workers' Councils) with one of the by-products of the previous form of class society, which was based on withholding from the workers the right to manage.

Comrades Cliff and Birchall fail to recognise the specific, new features of the May events in France. They fail to explain why the students succeeded in inspiring 10 million workers. 'The student demonstrations created an environment in which people were free to coin their own slogans' (*The Struggle Continues* p.17) What slogans? The two most important were 'Contestation' and 'Autogestion' (self-management). What was being contested? What does self-management mean? How are the two slogans related to each other? Not a word on all this. What we do find however is the important statement - p.18 - that "when a worker went to the Sorbonne he was recognised as a hero. Within Renault he was only a thing. In the University he became a man".

Comrades, you should seek to clarify this assessment (with which we agree). Please tell us what was the mysterious element in the 'environment' which transformed a man into a thing and vice-versa. Are we wrong in assuming that a man feels like a 'thing' when he has to live as an executant of social decisions which he cannot influence, whereas he feels like a 'man' when he lives under social circumstances which he has shaped by his own decisions (or in whose creation he was an equal partner)?

If this is really your opinion, why not say it in so many words?

But if this is really what you believe how could your Political Committee suggest an organisational regulation saying that:

"Branches must accept directives from the Centre, unless they fundamentally disagree with them, in which case they should try to accord with them while demanding an open debate on the matter." - Perspectives for IS, September 12 1968

Isn't the Political Committee attempting to transform IS members from 'men' into 'things'? Isn't the attempt to limit the right of rank-and-file IS members to initiate political decisions - while democratically permitting them to debate (not overrule!) the directives of the Centre, after having carried them out - an indication of an ideological disease more serious than being out of touch with the spirit of the young workers and students? If IS is to play a significant role in the revolution this regulation must be defeated, not only organisationally but also ideologically.

In the last chapter of their analysis of the French events, comrades Cliff and Birchall quote Trotsky to the effect that "unity in action of all sections of the proletariat, and simultaneity of demonstration under a single common slogan [Are these really essential? Did they ever exist in history?] can only be achieved if there is a genuine concentration of leadership in the hands of responsible [to whom?] central and local bodies, stable in their composition [!] and in their attitude to their political line". (*The Struggle Continues* p.77)

This is to confuse the technical and political aspects of a real problem. Coordination is essential and may require



tony cliff was the guru of the socialist workers' party, the organisation which succeeded the international socialists in 1977

centralisation. But the function of an administrative centre should not include the imposition of political decisions.

Trotsky's argument (and Cliff's) sound almost Stalinist. A centre "stable in its composition" concentrates in its hands the authority of political decision-making. "The branches must accept directives from the Centre". The Party 'leads' the working class and 'seizes power' on its behalf. Workers are 'summoned' - p.78 - to an "open revolutionary assault on capitalism." From this it is but a short leap to Trotsky's statement that "the statutes should express the leadership's organised distrust of the members, a distrust manifesting itself in vigilant control from above over the Party".

This approach reveals a very definite view concerning the role of the Centre in relation to the Party and of the Party in relation to the class. But it is wrong to identify this view with Stalinism. It preceded Stalin, Lenin and Marx. As a matter of fact, it has been part of ruling class ideology for centuries.

Cliff and Birchall mobilise every possible argument to support the doctrine of 'Centre leads the Party, Party leads class'. They write: "Facing the strictly centralised and disciplined power of the capitalists, there must be no less centralised and disciplined a combat organisation of the proletariat" (p.77). Yet two pages earlier they had admitted that "the 14th July 1789 revolution was a spontaneous act of the masses. The same was true of the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the February 1917 Revolution (p.74). In other words they admit that two of the most centralised regimes in history were overthrown by masses that were not led by any party, let alone a centralised one. How do they reconcile these facts with their assertion that "only a centralised party can overthrow centralised power"?

The conscious factor in changing history, embodied in revolutionary organisations, can play a significant role in shaping the new social structure. However after the Russian experience it is clear that this 'conscious factor' must develop its own self-consciousness. It must recognise the connection between its own structure and practice – and the type of socialism it will help achieve.

Writing in 1904 Lenin took sides unequivocally for 'bureaucracy' (as against democracy) and for 'centralism' (as against autonomy). He wrote: "Bureaucracy versus democracy is the same thing as centralism versus autonomism. It is the organisational principle of revolutionary political democracy as opposed to the organisational principle of the opportunists of Social Democracy. The latter want to proceed from the bottom upwards and, consequently, wherever possible and to the extent that it is possible, it supports autonomism and "democracy" which may (by the over-zealous) be carried as far as anarchism. The former proceeds from the top, and advocates an extension of the rights and power of the Centre in respect of the parts".

With all due allowance to the objective factors which contributed to the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, these ideas (the conscious, subjective factor) must also be stressed, certainly in 1968.

We can only add here what Rosa Luxemburg, answering Lenin, said in 1904: "Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary working class movement are infinitely more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee".

Are these words less relevant in 1968 than they were in 1904?

Today in Britain the danger is not that future society will be shaped in the image of a bureaucratic revolutionary organisation based on "genuine concentration of leadership in the hands of responsible central and local bodies, stable in their composition", organisation in which "branches must accept directives from the Centre", etc. The danger is rather to such organisations themselves. They will cease to be relevant to the social self-management revolution now developing. Before long they will be identified as just other 'centre-managed' political bureaucracies, to be swept aside. This is the fate now threatening IS, should the Political Committee's recommendations be accepted.

We wish all IS members a useful Conference and a serious discussion that will help them clarify their ideas about socialism, workers' management and the structure and function of the revolutionary organisation.

what is workers' control?

From the *Solidarity* group: a polemical exchange with Tony Topham of the Institute for Workers' Control.

In the first issue of Solidarity (West London), we carried a five and a half page article on the failure of the September '69 occupation at Liverpool's G.E.C [General Electric] and E.E [English Electric] plants, Netherton, East Lanes and Napiers. Feedback from the men up there indicates they appreciated our of the September events. In contrast, we recently received a confused and hysterical letter from Tony Topham, on behalf of the Institute for Workers' Control complaining about our article's coverage of the Institute's activities in Liverpool. We print below the complete letter. Our reply follows it.

Dear Editor,

Your unsigned article "GEC Liverpool, The Occupation that Failed" contains a section on "The Role of the Institute for Workers' Control" which is inaccurate, scurrilous, and gratuitously hostile. I must request space to reply to your attack in detail.

You allege that our "strange sense of priorities" led to question of affiliation fees to the IWC "being considered as the first on the agenda at our Initial meeting with the Action Committee. This is untrue. Representatives of the IWC attended two meetings of the committee. On the first occasion, IWC affiliation was not discussed; we offered certain services - the drafting and circulation of an appeal to the labour movement, the preparation of a printed pamphlet on the GEC and the redundancies, research into the question of world markets for GEC products and into the legal issues raised by the proposed occupation of the factories. We set this work in process and completed it without any exchanges between the Institute and the Action Committee concerning affiliation. At our second meeting with the committee, the question of affiliation was raised, (not as a "first item" or with any sense of priority) because we wished to be placed even more fully and clearly, for the outside world, in a position of servicing the committee. Those who followed the events and publicity closely will recall that the usual accusations were made in the press, that "outside" bodies were directing the occupation plan. We felt that, had the committee taken out a formal (and in financial terms, merely token). Affiliation, it would have been even better placed to refute these suggestions, and to give us directions on the services required of us.

In the event, we accepted fully the Committee's wish to defer consideration of the affiliation, and we proceeded with our programme of assistance and research without giving the matter a second thought. You then make cer-

tain allegations about the content of our pamphlet Workers Takeover, which show that you either have not read it, or have read it with closed minds, determined to discover within its pages the appropriate sins according to the gospel of *Solidarity*, West London revised version. You say that the term worker's control' is never allowed to stand on its own, but always occurs in the phrases "public ownership and workers' control" or "social ownership and workers' control" in our pamphlet. Even if we take this "criticism" at its own puerile level of infantile semantics, we do not find it difficult to refute. If readers will refer to our pamphlet, page 3 line 10, page 6 line 28, page 7 line 6, page 10 lines 21+ 25, they will find workers' control used without reference to public or social, ownership. It is the *Solidarity* version of workers' control that is misleading and not that of IWC or the GEC workers.

For your writer workers' control is a great abstraction, pie-in-the-sky, to be deferred until the second coming, when "workers themselves run society". Our pamphlet, on the contrary, is based on the belief that the GEC occupation plan was the concrete expression of the aspiration towards such a society, and that the practice of workers' control (the affirmation and imposition of the workers' will over and against that of the employer) constitutes a valid school and strategy to be applied here and now. Our pamphlet's concluding words are: "The lessons of direct democracy of the school for self-management which will open on the Mersey, must therefore be carefully marked" Oddly enough and despite his inability to understand our thoughts on this question, your own writers' conclusion ("The seed has been planted: don't just watch it grow, help it") is not all that different. But his confusions on the way don't help at all. For instance, having accused us of always linking workers' control with public ownership, he then asks almost in the same breath: "what is the pamphlet referring to when it talks of 'public'and'social' ownership as something entirely separate from workers' control.

The real doctrinal base of your writers' hostility however, emerges in his attitude to the trade unions, and our advocacy of a TU programme against the redundancies. If the article represents the *Solidarity* (West London) approach, we are bound to conclude that your organisation is anti-union. We are rebuked for advancing a programme of demands to be taken up by the unions, instead of by "the workers themselves". The approach of the whole pamphlet assumes of course that it is the workers themselves who are acting in Liverpool, and who are involved through their unions in the evolution of strategies and policies. We specifically call for workers' control to be carried into the heart of the unions themselves. But *Solidarity* (W.L.) would have the GEC workers turn their backs on their own organisations and in consequence ensure their isolation, at a time when every effort should be bent to guarantee that in our words "a vast political and trade union solidarity movement arises" (incidentally, even your reporter has to record that the proposals to occupy the

factories came from a union bureaucrat”).

Your writer's next step however, must take first prize for distortion and lack of logic. Having found us guilty of advocating a militant trade union programme, he concludes, "that the future society according to the IWC would not be run by workers but by self-styled representatives from either the so-called Workers' Parties (as in Soviet Russia) or the Trade Union bureaucracy. Your writer at this point reaches a level which can only honestly be described as drivel. We invite you to give any references either in the GEC pamphlet or elsewhere in IWC's literature, which substantiate the assertion that our movement advocates management along Russian lines, or through a Trade Union bureaucracy.

It would indeed be meaningless as your writer suggests, to advocate further nationalisation without demanding workers' control. Which is precisely why the workers who meet in the working conferences organised by IWC – dockers, miners, steelworkers, public service workers, etc – have prepared programmes for the advancement of workers' control in their industries. But perhaps your writer has been too busy contemplating Judgement Day to notice this upsurge in workers' control activities.

In a final spasm of ill will and malevolence, your writer accuses IWC of profiteering by charging 2/- for the pamphlet. He judges of course that your readers have not seen the document, which is a 24 page printed booklet, with a stiff card cover done in two colours. We have probably incurred a loss on its production in addition to the considerable postage and telephone bill incurred during our numerous activities on behalf of the GEC struggle. For this last sneer, if for no other part of your tirade, we can do no more than demand an apology.

Yours sincerely

Tony Topham

solidarity's reply

Dear Tony Topham,

To deal with your first and last points:- The information on affiliation fees to the IWCTUC was given to us unasked by a member of the Liverpool Action Committee, the day before the scheduled take-over of the three GEC-EE plants,. If you still wish to pursue that argument, we suggest you look towards Liverpool rather than London.

With regard to the cost of your publication GEC-EE *The Workers' Takeover* we felt then (and still do) that 2/- is an exorbitant price for a small half-quarto leaf- pamphlet, which could have been produced for 6d (say 1/- with labour costs) and might then have reached the people we assume it was originally intended for. The fact that it was printed with a two-colour cover (and no doubt could have been bound, in white leather and gold-edged) is beside the point.

As we have neither the time, paper or ink to waste on the kind of professional idiocy practised in your third paragraph, we'll get down to the real differences between us straight away. All IWC literature is based on the assumption that 'workers' control' in Britain can best be brought about by strengthening the Trade Union movement.

E.g. "As we have repeatedly argued -all those demands which strengthen trade union powers (our emphasis) and self-confidence have a control element within them." (Ken Coates and Tony Topham, *Participation and Control*, p.8) . *This in turn is based on the assumption that the membership in some way exercise control in 'their' unions. When we questioned both these assumptions in our Liverpool article you accused us of being "anti-union" and of wanting the GEC workers to "turn their backs on their own organisations".*

This accusation evades the point. No one in their right mind would surrender the rights and benefits that the trade union movement has gained through struggle over the last century. However, the question we are asking is not generally, whether unions have been a good thing, but quite specifically, whether the majority of them could possibly be the vehicles for an emerging workers' control movement in this country, as the IWC suggests.

Of course it all depends on what you mean by 'workers' control', and this is something' the IWC refuses to come clean on. As far as *Solidarity* is concerned a valid workers' control movement requires that power be effectively held by the mass of people making up that movement; that the rank and file membership be self-organised and self-reliant. Let's look at the larger Unions. None of them fulfils these requirements.

For a start it's worth reminding ourselves that over 90% of all strikes in this country are 'unofficial' (not recognised by the union executive). While the men are often back inside before the executive has met to consider recognition, this still leaves an alarmingly high number of cases where executive councils ignore democratic decisions to strike taken at membership level (emphasising incidentally the lack of control members have over funds which they swell by weekly subscription) usually because the union top brass has already implicated itself in agreements with management over ...the heads, and often without the knowledge of the members involved.

Even district committees and officers with a fine record of rank and file contact perpetually face this same problem finding, themselves hamstrung time and, again by their own executive councils. In these cases the IWC usually makes 'no comment' for the 'unofficial' strike shows the members actually exerting their power over and against both employers and their own union hierarchy, raising the crucial and embarrassing question (for the IWC) of whether the members' objectives are at all similar, to those of their executive officers. Indeed while the president of the ASF, 'leftie' Hugh Scanlon, churns out *The Way Forward for Workers' Control* (IWC pamphlet series,

No. 1), the AEU's executive council '(now amalgamated into the AEF) is devising ways to prevent; power moving out of its own fists towards the membership -- "The Executive Council shall have the power to call, and terminate, a strike of members, other than provided for in Rule 14, Clause 15, when in their opinion it is in the best interests of the members concerned." (Our emphasis.) .

This lack of membership control is the rule rather than the exception in each of the larger unions - "Of the "128 largest, unions, no less than 86 appoint their major officials permanently. Of those which do hold elections, it's almost unheard of for a sitting tenant to be evicted. Among the two of the largest unions which have elections, there have been since the formation of the unions 134 general secretaries'. Of these only one - Jenkins Jones of the A.S.E - was ever defeated while in office.

Your pamphlet *GEC-EE Workers Takeover* consistently strains to create the impression that the Liverpool men were involved through their unions (our emphasis) in the evolution of strategies and policies". This is quite misleading as our Liverpool article made very, clear in the section entitled "The Unions". The men were involved "in the evolution of strategies and policies' by being employees Weinstock intended to axe. Union membership is beside the point here. Why not talk to the lads at Netherton, as we did, about the usefulness of 'their' unions in a mass redundancy situation? May we 'draw the IWC's attention to the two-day national conference of GEC-EE shop stewards held twelve weeks after the failed occupation. This 'unofficial' shop stewards committee commented that union officers on the N.J.T.J.C had done little more than rubber stamp the managements redundancy proposals. It seems to be a case of the organisation turning its back on the membership rather than, as you suggest, us turning our backs on 'our' organisations.

The once sacred area of 'policy making' is being attacked all along the line by the shop stewards movement. Given this situation we suggest that the combine committees, with all their shortcomings (there are still too many stewards that feel themselves answerable to the shop committee rather than the shop floor) might be much more appropriate vehicles for an emerging 'worker control' movement in this country than the unions themselves.

The question of just how 'policy' would be decided in any future socialist society leads to the final Major reservation we have about the IWC's operational methods. All IWC literature (*GEC-EE Workers Takeover* is no exception) throws terms around such as 'public ownership' and 'social ownership', usually in formulae like 'public ownership and workers' control' or 'social ownership under workers' control'. Yet not one pamphlet indicates just what is meant by 'public' or 'social' ownership.

Even the pamphlets produced under IWC patronage by workers in mines, steel and the docks, suggesting programmes for the eventual establishment of 'workers'

councils' in industry, hesitate to step outside the industrial front and begin thinking in terms of how they would like to see politics and society as a whole organised. Ken Coates views this hesitancy in a commendable light claiming that "it (the IWC) carries a minimum of preconceived ideas and relies on the creative drive of the workers themselves".

Yet this stance is evasive, and in being so, dangerous. Evasive, since all IWC assumptions are based on one fundamental 'preconceived idea' - that workers' control will be brought about through the strengthening of the T.U movement; and dangerous to the extent that workers accepting this philosophy will be tempted to hand over the organisation of society and politics to T.U leaders, rather than extending their ideas on collectively controlled Workers' Councils to embrace politics and society as a whole in a system of collectively controlled People's Councils (the real meaning of 'Soviets').

The 'workers' control' movement in Britain today could probably learn a lot from the way the Workers' Council movement in Russia was broken by the Bolsheviks after the 1917 revolution:

"The forces fighting for the rule of the Workers' Councils did not produce (not even for themselves) a total scheme, or vision, of the organisational structure of the whole society, derived from their views on the management of production. They left a vacuum in the realm of ideas concerning the social and political structure of the rest of society." Lenin stepped into this vacuum with the scheme of the political party managing production, society, and the state. This contributed massively to the defeat of the soviet (in the real sense of the word) tendencies in the Russian revolution.

Unless the movement for self-management puts forward its ideas for the organisational structure of the whole society, the political bureaucracy (however well meaning it may be) will go on managing not only production, but also politics and society as a whole."

the ambiguities of workers' control

Solidarity, For Workers' Power, Vol.6, No.6, 1970.

'Merits of Workers' Control in Industry'

(Title of an article by Alasdair Clayre, *The Times*, September 19, 1969.)

"Workers Control exists wherever trade union practice, shop stewards sanctions and collective power constrain employers".

(Ken Coates and Tony Topham, *Participation or Control*, p. 10, March 1969.)

"Workers' Control, like charity, should begin at home... It is no use hoping for the workers to control industries if they don't control their own unions".

(R. Challinor, *International Socialism* no. 40, October/November 1969.)

"The working out of even the most elementary economic plan - from the point of view of the exploited, not the exploiters - is impossible without workers' control, that is without the penetration of the workers' eye into all open and concealed springs of capitalist economy".

(L. Trotsky, *The Transitional Programme*, 1938)

'In the long run Workers' Control is a political rather than industrial concept ... To accept that a man who works for an organization has the right to own it and direct it challenges the whole basis of property-owning capitalism'.

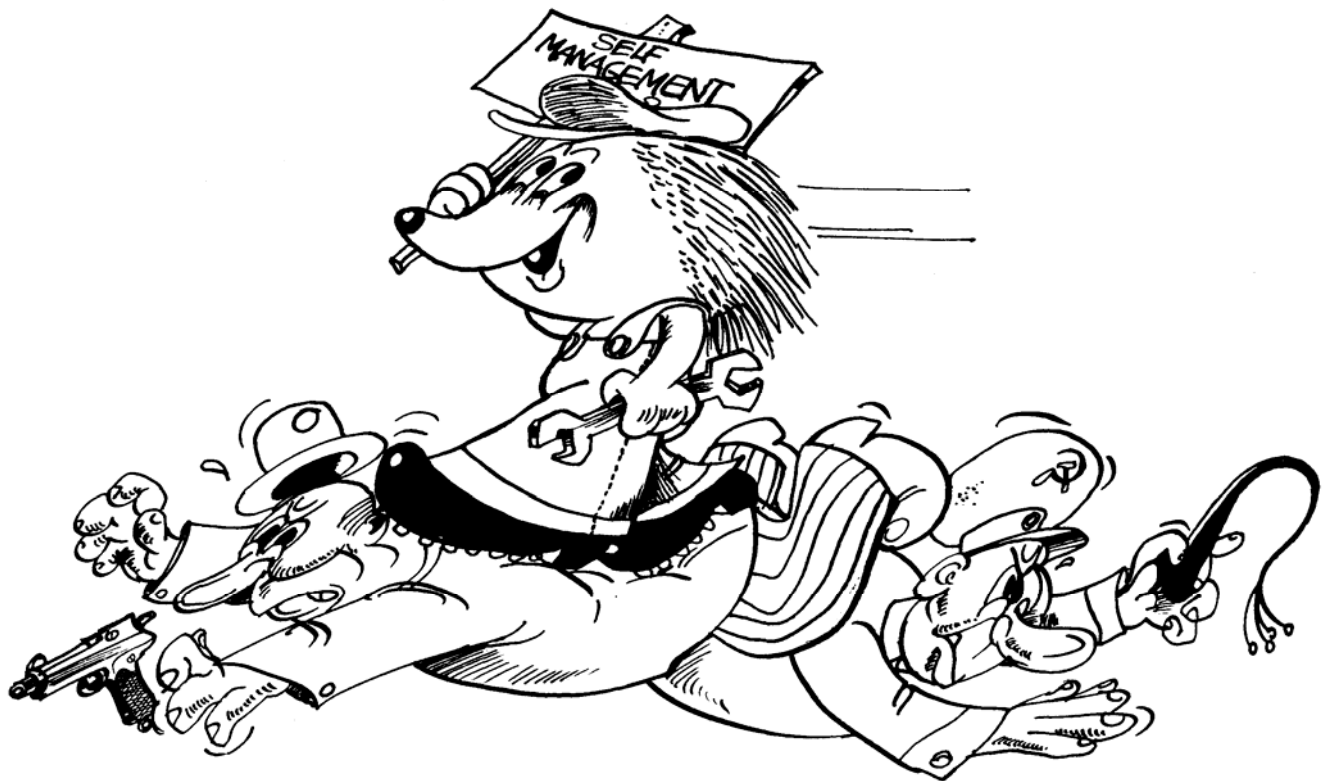
(M. Ivens, *The Times*, December 12, 1969.)

It is obvious that all those quoted [above] cannot be thinking of the same thing when they talk of 'workers' control'. What then does each of them mean when they use these currently fashionable words?' Those who seek to answer this question will discover to their amazement that none of these pundits proposes a clear and unambiguous definition.

'What do you mean by workers' control?' is a question to press on anyone now raising the slogan. Some of the usual answers are listed below. (They are discussed further on in the article.) We have grouped the answers under three-main headings:

1. Workers' control = participation of shop floor representatives on the Board of Management of various enterprises.

There are many variations on this theme. Some propose that the 'representatives' only be observers. Others demand for them the right to advise. Or the right to veto decisions taken by management. Or the right to participate in the taking of these decisions. Some propose that the 'representatives' number less than half the Board, others demand half...or more. Some would restrict their rights to dealing with technical aspects of the work process. Others would include working conditions and pay within their terms of reference. Finally some suggest that the workers' 'representatives' should be union officials, or Company nominees. Still others advocate that they



should be technical experts. Some propose that they should be elected from the shop floor itself.

2.. Workers' control = participation of shop floor representatives in trade union decision-making.

Here too there are many variations. Some who hold this view would demand that workers be given the right to participate in union decision-making - i.e. that the unions be made 'more democratic', for in theory all union members have this right. Others demand the right of groups of workers to veto decisions reached 'on their behalf' - but without consultation by the union Executives. Some would restrict rank and file rights to strike decisions only. Others would extend them to the right directly to negotiate about conditions of work and pay.

3. Workers' control = an adjunct to nationalisation ('Nationalisation under workers' control')...

The function of 'workers' control' under these circumstances is seldom spelt out. Some see it as a 'transitional' demand, others as a characteristic feature of a socialist society. Some see the objective of this kind of workers' control as being to advise the 'workers' state' on matters of overall economic policy - or to seek to influence such policy in a particular direction, or to ensure the smoothest possible execution of an industrial policy elaborated by the political institutions of the 'new' state.

Before going any further let us state here that we of *Solidarity* reject all these meanings of workers' control and consider them ambiguous or harmful. All these interpretations evade the key issue of decisional authority within society. For these reasons we do not in fact use the words 'workers' control' but speak of 'workers' management'.

The variations on the first concept of workers' control ('participation in management') all tacitly accept the authority of someone other than the producers themselves to manage production (i.e., to take the fundamental decisions). The producers are only allowed to 'participate' (i.e. to play a part or look in).

The advocates of this type of 'workers control' seem mainly concerned at 'improving communications' in industry. They see industrial struggle as deriving from defects in such communications rather than from an irreconcilable conflict of interests. Their models are the Joint Production Committees that became widespread during World War II.

As against this viewpoint we insist that the General Assembly of the workers in any plant, or its elected and revocable Council, should alone have all managerial authority at plant level. Regional or national federations should have authority at regional or national level. All other bodies claiming managerial rights (whether they be managers in the pay of capitalist enterprises, trade union officials, government nominees or Party bureaucrats) are parasitic and must be exposed as such. As for the tech-

nical experts - they should advise, not impose decisions. Anyone who discusses workers' control without clearly stating his views on the authority of the General Assembly of the workers at plant level, or of the Federations of Workers Councils at higher levels, is spreading a smokescreen around the central issue.

The advocates of the second concept ('participation in union decision-making') argue beside the point. The rule of the Factory Council implies that they take over all the functions at present carried out both by management and by the unions. 'Workers' control' is not decisional authority in the hands of union officials. The rule of the Factory Councils will make the unions as well as management redundant. That is precisely why the unions (whether democratic or not) will fight to their death against workers' management of production.

As for the third view ('works' councils acting as-pressure groups to influence the government's national policy') it implies the-acceptance by the workers of the authority of a political bureaucracy.

As against this we stand for Community Councils, Workers' Councils, University Councils, Schools' Councils, etc. - federated at local, regional and national levels - becoming the decision-making authority on every aspect of production, services, and social life. It is these Councils who must decide the what, why, and how of the workings of society, including every aspect of production. Needless to say such a state of affairs cannot be achieved without revolution. Our view of revolution is not merely the replacement of the rule of the representatives of Capital by the rule of the Revolutionary Party. For us revolution is the rule of Industrial and Community Councils. Unless the revolution transforms the entire structure of authority relations throughout society it is doomed to degenerate into the rule of an elite. Others hold entirely different ideas on 'workers' control. For example in a recent polemic on the subject between *International Socialism* and the Institute for Workers' Control (see I.S., Oct/Nov 1969). Tony Topham of the I.W.C. declares 'No Incomes Policy without Workers' Control' The author goes on to clarify his meaning by saying 'No Incomes Policy without a Workers' Veto'. Topham seems to consider the right of workers' (unions? shop stewards' committees? General Assemblies?) to veto governmental decisions as 'workers' control' or at least as some part of it. But to demand the right to veto someone else's decisions conceals the acceptance of that 'someone else's' authority to initiate the decisions in the first place. Topham concedes the very principle we are contesting. .

Raymond Challinor of I.S. rebukes Topham, but in a different vein altogether, It is no use hoping for the workers to control industries if they don't control their own unions'. First control the unions, he seems to be saying, and control of the factories will perhaps come later. But what does 'control of the unions' mean? Challinor - believes that the unions must (and therefore presumably



that they can) be made, more democratic. He explains: 'Not only is the idea that workers representatives should receive the average pay of the men they represent intrinsic to the; concept of industrial democracy, but it is equally important that they should be subject to recall'. This is a pious hope and in contradiction with the whole historical development of the unions under modern capitalism. It ignores their gradual but irreversible integration into exploiting society. The view expressed implies moreover that Challinor expects 'workers' control' to be exercised through 'democratic unions'. Why through unions? Why not full managerial authority exercised directly by the General Assembly or its Council in the factory and through Federations of Workers' Councils at regional and national levels? Why this fetishism of the authority of both unions and government?

The Institute for Workers' Control considers its role mainly as 'educational' and 'reformist'. It is 'practical' and 'realistic'. It therefore refuses to discuss such unrealistic issues as Revolution or the rule of the Factory Councils. It accepts the present authority of the trade union apparatus and merely seeks to extend it. International Socialism on the other hand consider themselves, 'political' 'revolutionary' and can afford to 'challenge' the present union bureaucracy (although at election time giving 'critical support' to one bureaucratic faction against another).

Both I.W.G. and I.S. however share a restricted view of how workers should exercise their authority. They both share (without being aware of it?) the assumption that the basic decisions concerning production will have to be taken out of the hands of those directly involved in production and vested in the hands of some political bureaucracy (those managing the 'nationalised' industry). For those who accept such fundamental assumptions, 'workers' control' will always be restricted to techni-

cal or supervisory functions, for it is conceived of as something separate from the question of political authority.

For us workers' management means the same as workers power. Let us spell it out. NEITHER THE RULE OF CAPITALISTS. NOR THE RULE OF PARLIAMENT. NOR THE RULE OF THE TRADE UNIONS. NOR THE RULE OF THE 'REVOLUTIONARY PARTY'. BUT THE DIRECT AND TOTAL RULE OF THE FACTORY AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS. In other words we stand for a society based on self-management in every branch of social life. Community and Factory Councils must take over all decision-making authority at present vested in Parliament, political parties, unions, or capitalist management.

In this we differ from all those revolutionaries (the 'traditional left') who stick to the idea of political authority as something separate from the productive process. We believe that the very system of rule by a separate political apparatus is redundant and that this apparatus will be replaced - in the revolutionary process - by the direct rule of the Councils. All political organisations who will attempt to build a separate power structure outside of the Councils will be challenged by the Revolution as just another set of external manipulators. For workers' power challenges not only property-owning capitalism but the very separation of political authority from production. Sooner or later all revolutionaries will have to choose between 'All Power to the Councils' and 'All Power to the Party'. Their choice will determine not only their political role but also their historical future.

the harrogate debates: the miners debate workers' control

Reproduced below is an unprecedented debate by leading figures of the British labour movement of the 1970s and 1980s on the question of workers' control of industry. It is a debate which has long faded from the memory of the trade union movement. This debate was hosted by the National Union of Mineworkers: it came in the aftermath of a period of intense class struggle whose ramifications continue to be felt in British society. The movement for workers' control and workers' self-management had been growing since the 1970s. Here at Harrogate it was being debated by the shock troops of the labour movement – the miners' leaders Heathfield and Scargill and the leader of British socialism of his generation - Tony Benn. This debate holds many lessons for our generation and should be restored to the place of historical importance it deserves.

The Commune 2008

Introduction by the Ernest Bevin Society. September, 1984

In the mid-seventies the trade union movement was at the peak of its power. The TUC, led by Vic Feather, Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon virtually had the status of an alternative government.

Indeed, Edward Heath went to the country in February 1974 on the specific question: "Who runs the country - the Conservative Party or the trade unions? The Conservative Party did not win the election!

Nevertheless the unions, with all their power and strength, still did not perform or take part in any of the functions of government. They retained their original character - that of a protest movement. But with this difference. The protest movement was now strong enough to prevent government from governing whenever and in whatever sphere it wished.

This was not a situation which could continue for long if there was to be any government at all. Either the trade unions would go all the way and take on some of the functions of government (both nationally and in the government of enterprises) or partake in government in some way, or else they would have to find a way of remaining protest organisations for the indefinite future. The matter was debated in the unions and outside of them, but by no means extensively or thoroughly. Neither course of action was fully explained or understood.

Some union leaders did their best. David Lea of the TUC tried to explain how workers' control and a share in government would preserve union power through the responsible use and development of that power, and the relationship of all that to socialism.

Joe Gormley favoured retaining the protest character of the unions but maintained that they could also retain their new found power if they used this power with the greatest caution.

Both Lea, the workers' controller, and Gormley, the collective bargainer, understood the power stalemate which existed in the mid seventies and they devised practical ways of resolving that stalemate. One may have been a progressive and the other a conservative, but both were practical and feasible.

Unfortunately, Lea and Gormley were exceptions. Most trade unionists did not understand the stalemate, and most of those who did understand it tried to muddle through an impossible middle course. They affirmed, as Hugh Scanlon put it, "management's right to manage" along with the government's right to govern. But at the same time they determined to preserve the power of veto which the unions possessed, in an undiminished form.

The nearest thing to a major debate was organised by the National Union of Mineworkers at Harrogate in December 1977. The NUM journal, *The Miner*, billed the Conference as the beginning of the debate on workers' control versus free collective bargaining.

In fact it was the end of the debate.

Attempts to establish forms of workers' control in both public and private sectors over the previous couple of years (especially the attempts of the Bullock Committee had been effectively defeated by the combined efforts of Hugh Scanlon, Frank Chapple and Arthur Scargill.

Arthur Scargill appears in the pages that follow to get the worst of the discussion. But he was already victorious before Harrogate took place His opponents neither explained nor agitated for their position in any serious way, and Arthur was never compelled to take his own position to its logical conclusion in debate. We have since been experiencing the working out of the crisis of the mid seventies. It was a crisis of the trade union movement and it is the trade union movement which is having to live with the consequences.

First we had the 1979 "winter of discontent" which brought down the Labour government and brought Thatcher to power. Now we have a protracted miners' strike and the next best thing to a civil war inside the trade union movement.

The resolution of the crisis has been taken out of the debating chamber and onto the streets. The union movement which refused to either develop its power or define it, is now having that power taken from it.

If we are to understand our present crisis, let alone do anything about, we need to look at its origins. These can be seen in the debates of the mid seventies. Here we present one of the most important of these.

tony benn

Secretary of State for Energy

It is certainly not surprising that the miners should be in the lead again, because it was the mining industry and the NUM which pioneered industrial unionism, which campaigned longest, hardest and most successfully for public ownership, and the question is—what is the next step to be in the organisation and running, of this industry?

The membership of the unions in the industry must decide what that step will be and, whatever else you mean by industrial democracy, it cannot be imposed on the Government, it cannot be imposed by the National Coal Board and it cannot even be imposed by the National Executive Committee of the NUM without the goodwill and support of the membership.

Whatever is adopted must grow out of the experience of the members of the NUM, experience gained from their work in the pits.

What Is Trade Unionism

What is the basic motivation of trade unionism? It is, in the first instance, to defend those who work in industry, secondly to negotiate with the employers in industry the wages and working conditions, health and safety and prospects of the people in that industry.

But it would be quite wrong to limit our understanding of trade unionism to that, for many of the banners carried at our demonstrations contain the three key words "Educate, Agitate and Control".

Ultimate Aim

From the very beginning, there has always been a strong stream in our trade union movement — in contrast to that of other countries — that the ultimate aim must be to control the industries in which we work.

The use of trade union power in its initial stages was to limit the power of market forces for we have never agreed that market forces produce the right distribution of wealth and power/in our society; to limit the powers of the owners of the industry and to limit the hitherto unrestrained discretion of management to run the industry.

Nationalisation

How many people working in nationalised industries are really satisfied by what came out of the nationalisation statute?

I believe the answer must necessarily be that there was much disappointment in a number of important directions and the disappointment in the case of the coal industry can be very simply stated—it was that, in the early stages of nationalisation, the coal industry contracted when many in the NUM would have liked to see it continue to expand.



We have to realise that nationalisation without the NUM being involved at the heart of the industry's policy, without an integrated fuel policy, and without real change at the place of work, fell far short of what was expected.

Plan for Coal

But a very substantial change in the relationship between the NUM and the mining industry has been achieved by the Tripartite arrangements which produced the Plan for Coal — a joint strategy for the industry has now been hammered out on the basis of joint discussion and joint agreement.

The next step after the Tripartite Agreement was the long haul to get the integrated fuel policy which the NUM has so long demanded, and as part of that the Energy Commission, which includes all the energy unions and the managements of the nationalised energy industries, has just had its first meeting.

These are all major events in the development of industrial democracy, but you and I know that this progress — and it is formidable progress — has not yet had its impact at the place of work except insofar as those of you in the pits have a more secure future in an industry whose future is secured by an integrated fuel policy.

There are three schools of thought about industrial democracy from which, in effect, the NUM will have to choose.

The first is a school of thought prevalent within private industry of what I would call participation without power; the second might be termed power without participation, and the third is a step-by-step programme towards full self-management and workers' control within the mining industry.

Since these schools of thought are very often confused, let me discuss them separately. The first need not detain us too long.

Participation without Power

It is the idea, very widely held by business leaders in the private sector, that the way to get round trade union strength is to offer participation without real power. All the words used about industrial democracy have got to be judged by the simple criterion—do they permit a real shift of power, or not?

I've also heard that better communications—if the workers only knew more fully what the management were thinking—would end the conflict in industry. That's a theory you can read in the management magazines.

Involvement that falls short of a shift of power is very widely distrusted by those whose real objective is to bypass the trade union by offering the shadow of control in place of the substance of independent trade unionism. Nobody in the labour and trade union movement can be interested in participation without power.

Power Without Participation

The second argument is the insistence that we've already got real power and that this is stronger without any form of industrial democracy than weakening it by adding to it something which falls short of full power.

Trade unionists aware of the seductive arguments to move the trade unions away from that real power are going to be tempted to respond by saying, "Very well, we will stick with the power we have and will have no part in any form of industrial democracy that falls short of 100 per cent workers' control in a 100 per cent socialist society."

No one can dispute the power of independent trade unionism—the capacity to represent the membership free from any cloying links of semi-responsibility; free from the compromises that are inevitable when you are engaged, directly or indirectly, in management decisions; avoiding the compromises that are inevitable if you are involved in partly running a system that, far from being socialist in character, is primarily capitalist.

Participation & Capitalism

The argument is that it is not right to involve the trade union in any of these processes until socialism has arrived. But being a Labour Minister in a Labour Government in a capitalist society is, in a way, a sort of worker on the Board,

If I devote time to this argument it is because it is the daily problem that I experience, and it's not an easy thing to do. On the one hand you have to safeguard the interests of the members of the community, and to combine with it a desire and an impetus to transform the society you are engaged in managing.

The theory, however understandable the ideological position may be, that socialists will remain in opposition until socialism is created and then we'll come in and run it is absolutely contrary to the whole history and tradition of the British Labour Movement.



run by the state "on behalf of the people"?

Isolation

If it is really true that the NUM wants nothing to do with the management of the mining industry until socialism is created, what in heaven's name are you doing sponsoring NUM Members of Parliament in the hope that they will run an economy that still falls short of socialism?

What on earth is Alex Eadie doing, first as an NUM-sponsored MP and as a leading and distinguished Minister in the Labour Government, responsible for the development of the coal industry in a capitalist society if the strategy of the NUM is to stand back and wait, like Joshua walking round Jericho tooting his horn until the walls fall down and he moves in to collect his inheritance?

Step-by-Step

There is a danger in the debate on industrial democracy within the NUM of accidentally rejecting the whole of our history of building on strength to strength and going stage by stage.

To sum it up, we've always believed in fighting for socialism and not waiting for socialism because, in the process of fighting for it, you breed the leadership which is capable of running it when it actually has been won.

Therefore it will not surprise you that the programme I'm putting forward is that a step-by-step movement towards self-management is right.

Does anyone really believe that the NUM would not be strong enough to prevent a phoney scheme from weakening its basic strength?

We must build on the structures of strength and how you do it must be decided within the membership of the NUM itself. It's not for me to tell you how it should be done.

Whatever comes forward must come after discussion and agreement by the unions within the industry, including NACODS and BACM. The overwhelming majority of people in the industry are members of the NUM, but NACODS and BACM grew out of the NUM.

Attitude to Management

We must be clear about the attitude to management implicit in industrial democracy. I've never yet met a shop steward, in discussion on industrial democracy, who didn't want to see the finest management managing the company. What they do want is that the management should be accountable to them and not some remote multi-national boss in Tokyo, Milan, New York or wherever it happens to be.

I'm sure that what sometimes appear to be the insuperable problems of how to preserve the discretion of management, the skills of management, the statutory responsibilities of management in the mining industry are wholly soluble if it's possible to get discussions going at the working level between all three unions in the industry.

Miners' Next Step - Workers' Control

I do believe that the time has come for the miners' next step. Great progress has been made and, although there have been difficulties and failures in the past, no one should apologise for what we have achieved so far. It is a very formidable record and it takes us to a point from which we have to move forward.

Our past history, our present experience and our future prospects all point to a staged move to full self-management and workers' control within the mining industry.

arthur scargill

Yorkshire NUM

Over the past few years the question of workers' control has been discussed widely. Initially, it was confined to the academics and intellectuals but, in recent years, has involved the TUC, Labour Party, Liberal Party, CBI and even the Conservative Party.

Suspicion of Workers' Control

The one common denominator between all these organisations is their apparent acceptance of some form of workers involvement. With this in mind, I think that our Union, and the Trade Union movement in general, should consider the matter seriously and regard attempts to introduce workers' control and/or participation with deep suspicion.

The case for workers' control is not new. It has been with us for well over 50 years and has received in that time, varying degrees of support. Former leaders of the NIM like A.J. Cooke and Mabon in South Wales, argued for workers' control in a pamphlet called *The Miners' Next Step*. In recent years, the case for workers' control has found faith with Ministers, such as Anthony Wedgwood Benn, and leading members of the Labour Party National Executive, such as Eric Heffer.

The Case Does Not Stand Up

I believe that their case does not stand up to close examination and that to pursue it will inevitably weaken the British Trade Union movement and delay, if not stop, the advance towards a socialist society.

We have many examples of workers participation and involvement in British industry and it is interesting to look at one or two ways in which workers participation has been attempted, and, more important, the consequences of that attempt.

Consultative Machinery

The National Coal Board, a number of years ago, introduced the Consultative Machinery — its aim, according to its architects, was to involve miners at all levels in what was taking place in the coal mining industry and to listen



to their views in the hope that they could contribute towards the success of the industry.

I am quite sure that every person who has any knowledge of the Consultative Machinery will agree with me that its main function has, in fact, been as a vehicle for pushing the decisions and views of senior management in the coal mining industry.

Conflict of Interest

At local level, its main function has been the analysis of production targets, output figures and absenteeism in the industry and it is with this latter that we can see most vividly the conflict of interest which comes about with worker participation.

A number of years ago, the Consultative Committees at colliery level introduced an Absentee Committee to analyse the reasons why men were not attending for work, to interview them and, if necessary, take disciplinary action including dismissal where the Absentee Committee thought it warranted.

I can remember quite well an example of how this worked at a colliery in the Barnsley Area a few years ago.

Example: Absentee Committee

The members who comprise the Absentee Committee began to look at the statistics and forgot they were representing human beings. They were, in spite of themselves, more concerned with the fact that 20 per cent of the men had been absent over a certain period of time rather than assessing, as Trade Union representatives, why these men had been off work.

When a man advanced an excuse that he had been off work because his wife had been taken ill, or that his children had been taken into hospital, the Committee looked sceptically at the case. They became, in spite of their determination not to, "management orientated".

They started to take decisions which were completely out of character with the accepted role of Trade Union representatives. What followed was to show the conflict of interest more clearly than any academic could ever explain.

Union Put in Impossible Position

The man who had been dismissed took his case to the local NUM and asked them to represent him in an attempt to persuade the management to withdraw the notice of dismissal. It should be remembered, of course, that the Union Branch in question had already participated in the decision to dismiss the man concerned and this placed the Union Branch in an impossible position.

He then took his case to the Branch Meeting and the Branch members overwhelmingly supported his case.

Bizarre Results

The situation was now bordering on the bizarre, i.e. the representatives of the Union having participated in the decision to dismiss the man had then taken a decision that they could not represent him in negotiations with management because they had been part of the management decision to dismiss.

In effect, the rank and file at the pit were challenging not only the NCB at local level, but also the NUM at local level. The men at the colliery threatened strike action and the result was that management had a rethink about the case and the man was reinstated and, according to my latest information, is still employed at the colliery some 10 years later.

A Union in this situation is completely impotent and can do nothing except watch the rank and file pressurise management and, in effect, the Union to rethink their decision.

Discredited Union Leaders

This has the effect of weakening the Union and discrediting the leadership in the eyes of the miners. It also weakens the Union's ability to negotiate effectively with the management because miners begin to distrust a leadership who are prepared to participate in dismissing a member of the Union when this is clearly a management function and a management decision which can, and should, be challenged by the Unions as the representatives of the membership.

Bullock Report

The recent report of the Bullock Committee, which recommended representation on the boards of management, would "compromise" the trade union representatives more than ever.

The National Coal Board, I have no doubt, would be prepared to accept worker representatives on the National Coal Board. If this took place, the Miners' Union would find itself facing decisions which had been taken not only by the National Coal Board but with the agreement of NUM representatives. It would be, on many occasions, a decision which was in conflict with Union policy.

The people who accepted seats on the boards of management would be regarded with deep suspicion by the members of the Union and the workers would be constantly faced with the problem of having to examine de-

cisions which had been taken by the National Coal Board, part of which consisted of their own Union representatives.

Workers' Control Impossible

It is impossible to have workers control within a capitalist society. Capitalism, by its very nature, produces contradictions which cannot be resolved until and unless we change the system of society. We have to change the system; otherwise workers' control cannot be obtained.

What we can have within our society is class collaboration and compromise with the mixed economy.

Those who advance the theory of workers' control in a capitalist society are putting forward "the intellectuals' dream of Utopia" — idealistic, unworkable and unobtainable!

Worker Directors in British Steel

The attempt to introduce worker directors in British Steel a few years ago proved unmitigated disaster. The rank and file in the Steel industry regarded the representatives on the board of management with open hostility and, at the very least, with deep suspicion.

They saw, in my view quite correctly, that participation on the board of management produced a conflict of interest which was irreconcilable with the role of a trade union leader.

There have been attempts at workers' participation in Europe and these only serve to justify my case.

Germany

In West Germany there has been legislation since 1952 providing for workers' councils and trade union representation on supervisory boards. It is fair to say that the unions in Germany are gaining, increasingly, a reputation as "company unions" as a consequence of their involvement in the processes of management.

France

In France, where there has been legislation for a considerable period of time, the only thing to distinguish their workers' involvement system has been its utter failure.

Scandinavia

The Scandinavian countries have long been held as a shining example of how to operate schemes of workers participation. There are workers in countries like Sweden who openly criticise the worker involvement that takes place in that country.

It should be remembered that systems of participation, like those in the Scandinavian countries, still leave the ownership and ultimate control in the hands of the ruling class. The respective roles of the working class and owning class remain exactly the same and for all the grandiose claims, it is generally accepted that, in most of these countries, the ruling class have now probably a tighter control than our ruling class here in Britain.

The Co-Operative Movement

The best example I can offer why workers' control cannot work is the Co-operative movement. I speak as one who has been involved in the Co-operative for many years, including a number of years serving on the Regional Committee of Co-operative Retail Services.

We should remember that the Co-operative movement is completely owned by those who shop at the Co-op and hold a share book. It should equally be remembered that the Co-operative movement operates within a capitalist system and, as a consequence, finds itself competing alongside firms in the private sector and also finds that it is subject to both national and international economic pressures.

The economic principles which determine the Co-operative movements' attitude today have more in common with Marks and Spencer than with Karl.

Those who sit on boards of management in the Co-operative movement find themselves taking decisions from a management-orientated point of view. It may be that many of the representatives are trade union officials themselves but they inevitably find themselves wearing a different "hat" when they begin to sit on the Board of Directors of the Co-operative movement,

If there is any doubt as to the truth of what I am saying, I would say "ask the unions who have to negotiate with the Co-operative Boards and look at the strikes which have taken place within the Co-op movement particularly in recent years, of those who deliver milk".

We Do Not Need Worker Participation

I submit that we do not need workers' participation to play our part as a trade union inside the National Coal Board or any other industry in Britain. Provided the trade union is prepared to exercise its strength, we can convince management to change its views or, at the very least, modify them in many fields.

It is often argued that workers representatives on the National Coal Board would be able to take decisions in planning and investment. I submit that if this is true it is entirely consistent for those who support the theory of workers control to advocate that the representatives on the board of management could similar decisions on wages and conditions.

Experience shows clearly that this would be disastrous for the trade union movement. If the miners in 1972 and been part of NCB management they would have had before them the statistical data then available and, undoubtedly, the decision would have been taken not to concede a wage increase because the finances were not available.

What was required in 1972, and what was eventually decided, was a political decision and not simply an economic decision.

There is no reason why the Unions should not extend their traditional role in collective bargaining to the area of planning and investment without becoming part of the management process.

Those in our Union who support the concept of workers' control are supporting measures which will hold back the development of the working class in its advance towards a socialist Britain.

Participation Will Perpetuate Capitalism

Those who advocate workers' control in capitalist society are, in fact, the apologists for a socialist alternative.

Participation will only perpetuate capitalism. The NUM should not be misled into supporting the theory of workers' control within our existing society.

It cannot work and it is against the basic constitution of our Union and the wider Labour movement. Our constitution calls not for collaboration with capitalism, but for a change of society,

It is only when we have achieved socialism that we can have workers' control.

peter heathfield

Derbyshire NUM

G.D.H. Cole prophesied in 1917 that mining and the railways would be the first industries to seek self-management. He anticipated that, following nationalisation, or state management, workers through their trade unions would demand involvement in the running and control of these industries.

We Have Limited Ourselves

Sixty years have gone by since Cole discussed these ideas, and 30 years have passed since the mines were nationalised. Hopefully, the Harrogate Forums will ensure a more in depth examination of Industrial Democracy than has occurred hitherto. We have rather meekly limited ourselves—like many other sections of the British Labour Movement—to inept practice of an unsatisfactory concept—consultation.

The whole business of "workers' control", or "industrial democracy", has been kicked around in our Union for some time now and while there have been schools, conferences, papers, pamphlets galore involving NUM members in discussion and analysis of the ideas, the subject is obviously felt as a thorn in its side by our NEC which explicitly urged National Conference in 1974 to reject, failing remittance, a Resolution from the Kent Area calling for an extension of Industrial Democracy providing for workers participation in policy and decision making at all levels of the industry and to provide also for majority representa-

tion of workers to management bodies at all levels.

Similarly, Annual Conference in 1976 rejected the South Derbyshire resolution which called for Management Boards to be made up of not less than 51 per cent of Trade Union representatives. Although not totally satisfactory, acceptance of the resolution or remittance would have ensured the debate had continued. However, the NEC opposed the resolution.

Our official position has been one of concern that if we take over the cares and functions of management beyond a very limited point we may cease to carry out our proper functions as trade unionists individually and as a union on the whole.

That's a very valid concern, in my opinion. But I think that it's a way of avoiding the real issues, and that we skate very close to being dishonest with ourselves and our fellow trade unionists. We must ensure that the NUM retains its identity. We must also ensure that Trade Union representatives elected to management bodies reflect the policies of the trade union and are accountable to it.

One of the valuable things about the several conferences on workers' control and the mining industry which have been held over the past few years is that people get a chance to discuss what that elusive phrase "industrial democracy" means. We get beneath the surface of all the business about "worker-directors" and "class collaboration".

Avoiding Real Issues

Of course these concepts lurk as real dangers, but they no more than, sum up the meaning of workers control, than "impersonal bureaucracy" sums up the National Health Service. At Harrogate, we should be able to clear some of the doubts and misunderstandings that workers' control props up capitalism and retards social progress. The reaction earlier this year of BACM to the NUM's limited demands indicates their unwillingness to change management systems and their resistance to ordinary miners playing a part in the control of mines.

The recent attempts to re-introduce piecework systems into coal production stem from management failures to organise successful work patterns. In 1966 on the introduction of the NPLA Agreement, Lord Robens stated "with the right technology correctly applied productivity would improve".

It is not the miners' fault that output is falling. Delays, break downs, manpower shortages, late arrivals of materials, etc are still responsible for major output losses. We still hear of rippers having to go out by and drag arches several hundred yards in order to secure the roof. -

Clear Up Misunderstandings.

Many miners have positive views on what's going wrong,



the national union of mineworkers had five years previously won significant wage increases with its 1972 strike, and in 1974 brought down edward heath's tory government

but their opinions are not listened to in management quarters.

Because of the dangers and hazards of coal mining, there is no doubt that we should be at the top of any wages table going; but beyond maintaining our position there we have to develop an outlook which goes beyond the next couple of years. We have to start looking ahead to a time when North Sea oil and gas are really moving.

A proper Fuel Policy is essential; for that we need to cooperate with other Unions involved to work out the problem of how we are to have access to the facts, the information used by both Government and the management of the oil companies, the NCB and the CEBG to make their decisions — because these decisions presently taken way above and beyond our knowledge and control will crucially affect the coal industry and the coal miners.

Miners Have Positive Views

What steps can we take? An extension of collective bargaining is one answer or part of the answer; both at pit and area level, the management could be moved some on safety, or manning.

But that still doesn't let us in on the decisions coming

from high up which determine for instance pit management's approach to hiring and firing, planning, purchasing and stores, etc. How can it weaken us to learn how those decisions are taken? How can we lose our strength by increasing our knowledge?

It seems to me that our NEC, with respect, has itself caught in a bit of a muddle. Suppose that, at pit and panel level, certain management decisions were subject to agreement with NUM, Suppose we had the right of veto over managerial appointments, over orders for equipment, over subcontracts, over safety tests of new underground machinery. After all, it's our lives that are at stake.

What's the point in fighting for proper wages, the so-called fruits of our labour, if we're in no condition to benefit from them?

What Do We Do?

Our industry is an industry which is ready for experimentation in OUR terms. It's nationalised; we're employed by a single firm, producing a single product; and a single trade union—the NUM—covers those most responsible for getting the product out.

Many of us are well aware of the potential here. Our National President Joe Gormley, has expressed the opinion that workers' control is highly desirable— with at least 51 per cent control—as an ideal.

Mines Ripe for Workers' Control

But the stumbling block seems to be the feeling that no Government would introduce legislation making possible some of these changes, so any push on the part of the NUM would be a waste of time. Well, I cannot recall an? or our demands being handed to us in a silver platter; usually years of campaigning and some very tough battles have gone before achieving anything!

Tony Benn

But does the current Government present such a stumbling block? Think back to our 1975 Annual Conference in Scarborough, and to the speech made there by Tony Benn, the Energy Minister.

He said this "...With public ownership achieved and investment going on apace, what is the next area in which we would hope to see this (coal) industry move? I venture to suggest to you that it must necessarily include developments in the area of democratic self-management. Clause 4 of the Labour Party Constitution, which is often referred to but is not often really understood, speaks of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange but goes on to say 'under the best obtainable modes of popular administration and control'.

No Window Dressing

"...And although workers... quite properly reject window dressing which gives the appearance without of power without reality and reject solutions imposed from above...somewhere is the thought that public ownership must mean more than a new name over the door.

I hope very much in the NUM, in the way you think best, and at the pace you think best, that you will build on the strength and structure of a very powerful and important union...that you will help to reopen a historic debate upon the role of workers in the control of their own industry and in your own time come forward with solutions"

Harrogate presents us with the opportunity to broaden the discussion on Industrial Democracy. Although we shall not be determining policy, we must ensure the mineworkers have the information to continue the debate.

We have the Ability

Many of us feel that miners have the ability and capacity to play a major role in the running of our industry. It is not our intention to prop up capitalism, but rather to formulate and fashion new systems of management that will enable the socialist cause to advance.

Democracy at all levels is a permanent struggle, an expanding awareness. Our failure to advance the cause of

such awareness will inevitably lead to the decline of democracy.

views from the floor

JOE WHELAN - Nottinghamshire

Nottingham Area Secretary and NEC member JOE WHELAN stressed that it was time for the NUM to take "a more vigorous stand, on this question and we should demand a bigger say in the running of the industry to bring about real industrial democracy.

Eighty per cent of British industry is still privately owned and run for private profit. The nationalised industries are a step forward and they have brought about greater consultation- -but it has been consultation after decisions have been made.

Pit Closures

"I appreciate the fact that we have a Colliery Review procedure but where a pit is being closed the decision is made by the NCB and the NUM then has to gather its experts to try and stop the closure.

"Take another example—the arguments over the training of workmen's inspectors. If we had more control, we wouldn't be arguing over this. And there's also the scandal where private manufacturers are making millions out of the industry when we should be making our own machinery in our own workshops with our own craftsmen."

KEN TOON - South Derbyshire

South Derbyshire Area Secretary and NEC member KEN TOON said that his Area believed that it was possible, without taking away the industry's statutory responsibilities, for it to progress in a way better than the present set-up.

We Are Qualified!

"If people say we are not qualified to run the industry," he said, "they should remember that the country is governed by elected representatives in the House of Commons and at local government level.

"There are lots of things we don't like about the consultative procedures, but that's all the more reason for us to be in there fighting. Let's agree to get on with industrial democracy and take the decisions ourselves—and then we will only have ourselves to blame if they are wrong decisions."

BERNARD DONAGHY - Lancashire

Lancashire Area President BERNARD DONAGHY reminded delegates that neither "trade unions nor the workers' control the economic circumstances in which they work "When you are talking about industrial democracy," he pointed out "you have bear this in mind.

Corruption & Collaboration

"Power corrupts and we live in a very corrupt society, and I am concerned about the corruption of power. If we have pit committees democratically elected, what safeguards can we believe in to fight corruption? How can I advocate a system of democracy to members at the pit when I am not subject to any democratic election?"

"I want to know how much responsibility we can ask our members to take on without having real power. Will these management teams with a majority of our members have the power to appoint colliery managers? Would BACM members be prepared to apply for a job knowing that the men who will appoint them will be ordinary miners?"

"Co-operation and consultation we have in the industry, and we should have more of it and we should have it as a right. But collaboration, no. The role of a trade union in any society is to be independent and look after the interests of its members."

JACK DUNN-Kent

Kent Area Secretary JACK DUNN remarked that he was worried that the Forum had been called "not because of the desire to obtain a better form of industrial democracy but because of the Fifth Directive of the EEC, because of the Bullock Report and imminence of Government Planning Agreements." The Kent Area had done a massive amount of research into the subject, he explained, "But we have talked to workers in other countries to find out their reactions and it is tremendously different to what we have been told."

"We will claim that we know more about this from workers than from the National Coal Board. In Germany, we met workers who regarded their system of 'co-determination with the same cynicism as our lads regard consultation at pit level."

Participation Not Enough

"We are against participation—we are for workers' control, we are for the miners taking over this industry, so lets have an end to the confusion over what industrial democracy means. We are talking about democracy for workers that involves workers."

"We appreciate that social and political change in any country has a distinct relationship with that country's development, and we want a British form of industrial democracy that corresponds to British conditions and British historical development ."

Step towards Socialism

"We do not say that industrial democracy is & means of obtaining easy reforms, but we do see it as a step forward for socialism in Britain. We want to get rid of privilege, patronage and the profit motive—we want social control of society as a whole."

"The parliamentary system is here to stay, so how do we get; about achieving socialism? Economic struggle does have a place, but it is not the only way to achieve radical social change. The strikes in 1972 and 1974 were tremendous examples of economic struggle, but apart from the very important fact of creating political consciousness, what impact have they had on weakening capitalism in Great Britain and increasing the desire for socialism?"

DES OUTFIELD - South Wales

"There are no halfway measures in this matter," declared South Wales delegate Des Outfield.

No Halfway Measures

"You either have control or you do not have it, and unless and until we have it the responsibility for the running of the industry must lie where it is now and not on the shoulders of the workmen."

LAWRENCE CUNLIFFE - Lancashire

Lancashire delegate Lawrence Cunliffe stressed that "we have not done our job at the grass-roots level on industrial democracy". After this forum," he said, "We've all got to go back to the pits and graft—we will not get any feedback unless we do that because there is still a large degree of bewilderment and confusion."

Toe in the Door

"This is not something we can simply decide to adopt. It will be a long, steady, gradual progression and if we can't get it all overnight then we go for the next best thing. What the lads will expect is some form of general control and we are starting to get our toe in the door."

For more articles and historic documents on the ideas of workers' control and workers' management discussed in this pamphlet, visit: <http://thecommune.wordpress.com/category/workers-management>

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