

"NEW REALISM"

THE POLITICS OF FEAR

Arthur Scargill



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S. O. Davies Memorial Lecture

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FOREWORD

Each year, the Merthyr Tydfil Trades Union Council invites a guest speaker to present the S. O. Davies Memorial Lecture, given in honour of the South Wales Miners' leader and Labour Member of Parliament.

An understanding of our collective history is especially important in these times, when unemployment and hardship (at their worst for half a century), have opened the door to a defeatist attitude which has, sadly, invaded certain sections of the Labour and Trade Union Movement.

This defeatism is both analysed and challenged in the 1987 Memorial Lecture, which was delivered on Friday, October 30th, by Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers. He drew what his audience described as an outstanding historical comparison, showing clearly that the philosophy known today as "New Realism" is the same as "Mondism" which in the 1920's/30's was so vigorously opposed by S. O. Davies himself.

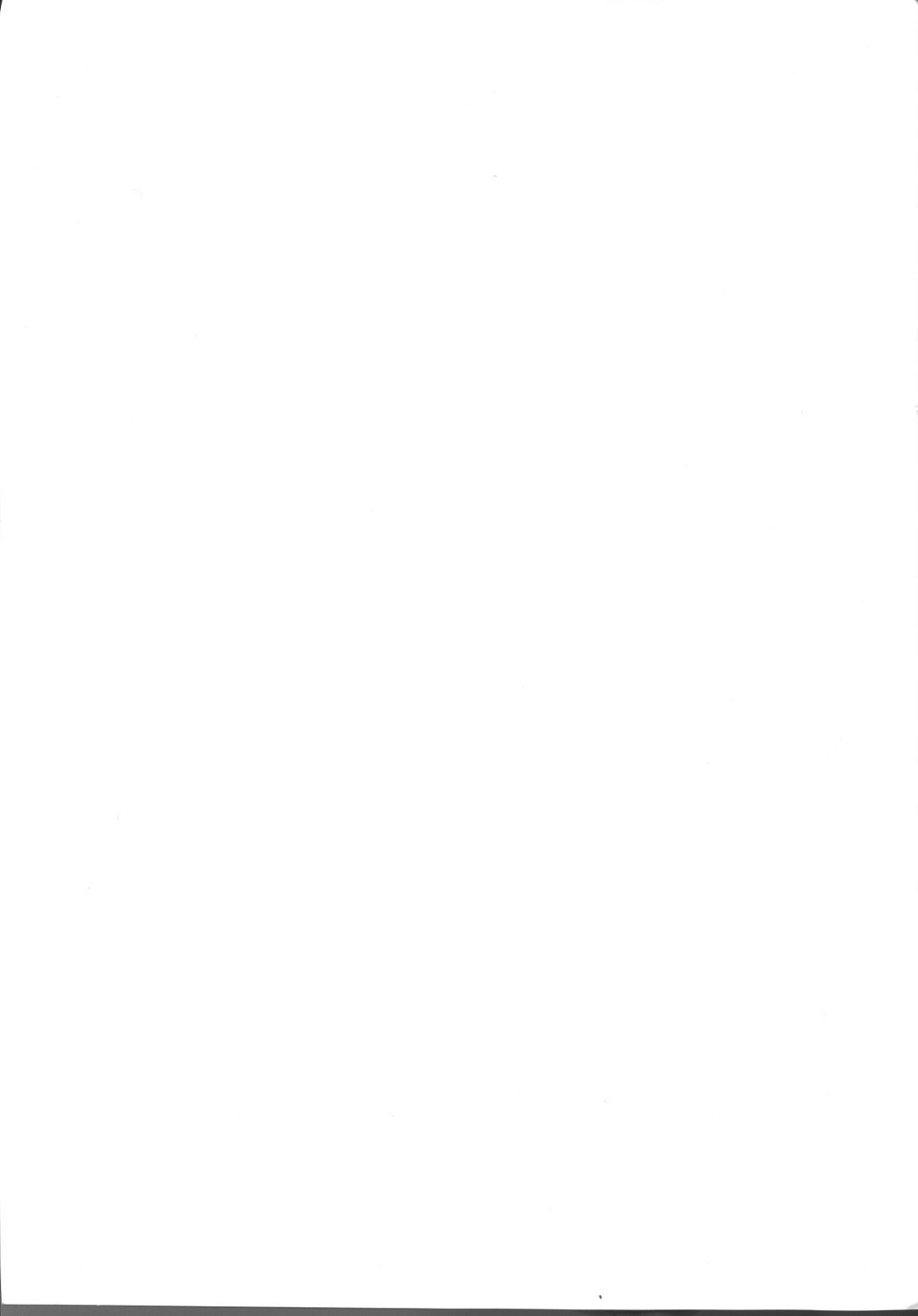
In the wake of the Tories' third election victory, Arthur Scargill presented such a clear, fighting alternative to defeatism and surrender that the Trades Council has decided to publish his speech in this pamphlet. We believe it is a vital contribution to understanding and dealing with the major struggles we face today; it should be read and discussed throughout the British Labour and Trade Union Movement.

Merthyr Tydfil Trades Union Council
November, 1987

I had the pleasure of attending the S. O. Davies annual lecture and listening to Mr. Arthur Scargill's hard-hitting speech on the state of the Mining Industry. There is little doubt that Mr. Scargill feels passionately about the welfare of the miners, and the core of his speech indicated what he regards as necessary to promote the future of the Mining Industry in this country.

I am sure that if my grandfather and four uncles had been there they would have endorsed every word that he uttered.

Councillor Gwynne Williams
Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil



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When I was invited to present the S. O. Davies Memorial Lecture, I welcomed this as an opportunity to analyse and attack the dangerous concept known as “new realism” currently being canvassed in the Labour and trade union Movement — and to draw comparisons between this supposedly new concept and the class collaboration philosophy of the late 1920’s known as Mondism, which was opposed so vigorously by S. O. Davies 60 years ago.

Outstanding trade union leaders such as Arthur Horner and S. O. Davies conducted an effective mass campaign against Mondism, consensus politics and the breakaway Spencer organisation established in the British mining industry following the 1926 strike. A constant class campaign by people like S. O. Davies paved the way for Labour’s victory of 1945.

Following the general election of 1945, most people in the Movement believed that we stood on the threshold of an exciting new world. Most were convinced that Mondism, class collaboration and consensus politics had been consigned to the dustbin of history.

It is, therefore, not only ironic but sad that 42 years after that victory it is necessary to expose and attack the “new realist” elements in our Movement today. In order to understand why their philosophy is so dangerous, so destructive and so degenerate it is necessary, also, to examine the current crisis in our society and its underlying causes.

BRITAIN TODAY

Today our nation, after 8 years under the Tories, is on the brink of utter chaos, facing both social and economic collapse. Our basic industries have been butchered. Our manufacturing base has been eroded with hundreds of businesses, large and small, gone to the wall while the nation has become increasingly dependant on imported goods.

The human consequences of this industrial and economic devastation are terrible. Over 8 million people struggle for survival on or below the poverty line and 4½ million people are unemployed.

Thousands of families are homeless: the number of homeless families in Britain has doubled since 1978, while the enforced repossession of homes is at an all time record because so many can no longer manage to maintain mortgage payments. Even more people, meanwhile, try to cope as best they can in derelict, often dangerous dwellings — 1¼ million homes are unfit to live in, while house building investment throughout Britain has been slashed by 60% since 1979.

Sickness and ill health of all kinds are rampant, and they are made even more terrible by the crisis in the National Health Service and throughout the welfare system.

The Tories have been utterly ruthless in their butchery of health and welfare provisions. The NHS, once the pride of our nation, has been reduced to a critical condition through hospital closures, medical staff cutbacks, the lack and withdrawal of resources and vital equipment, and the privatisation of key services. Approximately 700,000 people wait today for hospital treatment and an increasing number will not receive that treatment before it is too late. Thousands of people who are suffering from serious, often fatal diseases are being turned away through lack of hospital beds and staff.

Our social services are faced with ever increasing family and community problems as Tory attacks take their toll, with children and old people among those most vulnerable.

Our education system is also in chaos, as students and teachers struggle against yet more cutbacks, fewer resources — and for our youngsters it must seem often a pointless exercise, with jobs, training and access to higher education becoming more and more difficult to attain. Their teachers meanwhile, like many other trade unionists, have had their negotiating rights removed by the Government, and their commitment to teaching the nation's children treated with contempt.

This has become a grim and desperate society — fuelled by unemployment and its social consequences, frustration, rage and despair are rampant all around us. More and more people, I believe, are coming to see themselves as **under attack** — and they are correct.

We are indeed facing a deliberate political attack by Britain's ruling class. A war of attrition is being waged as capitalism, in a condition of acute crisis, lashes out with increasing ferocity to protect itself. The existence of this crisis is now clear for all to see. It has been exposed by

the recent collapse of stock markets throughout the capitalist world, triggered off by the slide on Wall Street (which according to experts is the worst slump since 1929).

This collapse will in my view lead inevitably to more hardship for the British people, with a massive increase in unemployment and reduced living standards as capitalism seeks once again to make working people pay for its pursuit of profit and power.

The Tories have based their savage policies on an ideology called monetarism — it is this philosophy which has led to the virtual destruction of our manufacturing industries and in particular to the devastation of our coal, rail and steel industries. The steel industry has lost over 150,000 jobs, and the coal and rail industries have lost approximately 100,000 each within a period of 8 years. Parts of our nation such as South Wales have been reduced to a lunar landscape as the Tories have systematically butchered our manufacturing and industrial infrastructure.

At the same time, the Government gives out handsome rewards to those who have carried out the closures, cutbacks and job losses suffered by the working class. For proof of these handsome rewards dished out to captains of industry, we need look no further than the coal industry — where British Coal's latest accounts have revealed that Chairman Sir Robert Haslam, having presided over closures and job losses that have devastated coalfields such as South Wales, took a salary last year which, at £145,000, was **double** that of his predecessor Ian MacGregor! Sir Robert's opinion on his wage, apparently, was that the nation was getting his services "on the cheap".

In seeking to win that absolute control which it must have for even limited survival, the State through the Tory Government has introduced twin measures to destroy or render ineffective all those who oppose it. On the one hand, it has deliberately increased unemployment from just over 1 million to 4½ million in 8 years creating as in the 1930's a situation where 30-40 people pursue each job vacancy, driven by this emotional blackmail to increasing fear.

At the same time it has introduced vicious legal measures designed to render the British trade union Movement completely ineffective. Indeed Margaret Thatcher has made it absolutely clear that she wants to wipe socialism off the agenda of British politics; to achieve this aim the Tories are determined also to wipe effective trade unionism off the industrial agenda.

Since 1979, we have seen a whole range of anti-trade union legislation — all of it designed to dismantle the gains achieved by trade unionists

in more than a century of struggle. Today, the extent of this legislation is such that Britain's trade union Movement must now be regarded as one of the most oppressed in the world!

Tory legislation has removed trade union immunity, made secondary action including secondary picketing and mass picketing illegal, and rendered all trade unions vulnerable to legal actions which could result in their bankruptcy. Britain's trade unions have found themselves no longer free to determine their own policies in relation to industrial solidarity action.

Not satisfied however with the most vicious anti-union legislation in the world, the Tories are currently introducing new measures which are so draconian they have staggered and brought forth opposition even from some traditional enemies of the trade union movement.

The steps taken against British trade unionism can probably only be compared with those taken against our German comrades by Hitler in the 1930's. If this new Tory legislation is left unchallenged, then civil liberties and human rights in Britain are in danger of being wiped out.

The proposed new Employment Bill contains, for example, the following provisions:

1. It empowers trade union members to prevent their union — through the use of High Court injunctions — from sanctioning any industrial action which is not the result of a secret ballot vote.
2. It protects union members who refuse to abide by a ballot vote for industrial action from being disciplined by their union.
3. It prohibits trade union trustees from using monies and properties where they are forbidden to do so by a Court order — even though the monies and properties in question belong to the members themselves; even if at a later date it is established there is no case against either the Trustees or the Union, this new measure will effectively prevent the Union having access to its own assets — a prevention which could last for months or even years!
4. It also gives union members for the first time a statutory right of access to inspect their union's accounts **accompanied by professional advisers** — a right which is denied to other citizens in all other fields.
5. Industrial action to establish or protect a union membership agreement will be illegal — and it will be illegal also to pursue dismissal for non-trade union membership.

6. All ballots for union executive elections and political funds must not only be fully postal but supervised by an outside body.
7. There will be a statutory requirement to compel union Presidents and General Secretaries to stand for re-election in a postal ballot with outside supervision, even when such a process is against the rules of the union itself.
8. A commissioner for the rights of trade union members will be established whose purpose is to assist **and fund** legal actions taken by individual members against trade unions.

It should also be noted that under the new Employment Bill's provisions there are two other items which are very significant. First the Bill stipulates that where proposed industrial action would not include every union member employed by the employer on a particular grade, then the union must conduct separate strike ballots for **each single place of work**; moreover, no immunity will be granted from industrial action at any work place where the ballot does not show majority support. This measure is a legal step by the Tories to prevent effective national co-ordinated action by a trade union.

Secondly, Section 3 of the 1980 Employment Act will be amended in order that the Secretary of State for Employment will be empowered to supervise the conduct of trade union balloting through statutory codes of practice. I submit that this is clearly in violation of the ILO Convention which states that there must be no Government interference in the internal affairs of a trade union.

The first four provisions of the new Employment Bill have all been drafted by the Tory Government as a direct consequence of the miners' strike of 1984/85 — while the section dealing with statutory elections for union Presidents and General Secretaries has been prepared on the public admission of Lord Young to deal specifically with one particular person: Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers. We have the spectacle of an un-elected, unaccountable Peer with the audacity to tell independent trade unions how their own internal democratic affairs should be managed.

All the legislation drafted and adopted since 1979 adds up to a strategy for destroying effective British trade unionism.

Looking back, it was less than 6 years ago, in the Spring of 1982 that trade union leaders, gathered for the TUC's Special Wembley Conference, declared that they would rather face jail than accept the anti-union laws which were then being proposed by the Tories.

What has happened however is that while a substantial number of rank and file union members have adhered bravely and loyally to the

principles adopted at the Wembley Conference and thus found themselves in jail I have not seen many union officials practising what they preached with such enthusiasm in 1982.

With just a few honourable exceptions, the trade union Movement as a whole has not resisted but succumbed — allowing the Tories to march steadily forward on behalf of their class interests. Thus, both the effectiveness and the membership of trade unions has been badly weakened, with terrible results — especially for women and young people, who have lost access to even the very limited improvements in education, training, wages and conditions achieved under Labour Governments.

As life in Britain becomes harder, as frustrations and tensions rise, the State must bring into play all the elements of its machinery in order to suppress any attempts to throw off its power.

The police are used increasingly in para-military fashion. The judiciary use greater ruthlessness against any trade union that attempts to stand by its rules and constitution, as the experience of the National Union of Mineworkers over the past 4 years proves. The Courts have dealt just as savagely with the Lambeth and Liverpool Councillors who refused to betray the commitments made to their communities.

Meanwhile the media now quite openly under the control of international capitalists such as Murdoch and Maxwell, becomes even more blatantly the mouthpiece of Tory philosophy. The British capitalist press can make no claim to either objectivity or integrity, whether through the gutter journalism of the tabloids, or the more restrained style of the so-called “quality” papers; they both play a key role in the daily dissemination of lies and misinformation to the public.

This is but an outline of the situation which today faces the British Labour and trade union Movement. The terrible irony about it is that whilst throughout our Movement there is general agreement on the ravages of the Tory attack — and agreement that it should be stopped — we have not united in an effective force to combat those ravages and challenge the system which has forced them onto our class.

On the contrary! Rather than uniting to fight our common enemy, our Movement has been diverted time and time again by internal attacks: attacks aimed, disgracefully, at the very sections which have fought so bravely to carry out Labour Party and TUC policies by battling to save jobs, industries, communities and services.

Margaret Thatcher has been absolutely clear in recognising **her** enemy — it is socialism, and she has openly declared her intention of wiping it off the British agenda. How tragic, therefore, to see within

the Labour Movement witch-hunts against those who have been at the same time under direct attack from Thatcher and the Government!

The witch-hunts currently being conducted in the Labour Party against the Lambeth and Liverpool Councillors are reminiscent of witch-hunts against outstanding Labour leaders of the past like Aneurin Bevan, Michael Foot and many others whose only crime was fighting for socialism. **Those behind the current witch-hunts are the same people who failed to give whole-hearted support to the miners, the printers and to the Silentnight workers and the teachers** — their argument for this lack of support is their belief that industrial militancy should be replaced by campaigns, demonstrations and lobbies. They obviously have not yet learned the lesson so brilliantly put by Aneurin Bevan that “silent protest evokes no response”.

Since the Spring of 1985, sections of the Labour Movement including the right wing Party leadership and some of those labelled “soft Left” have argued increasingly for a concept known as “new realism” — a concept that calls for an end to “confrontation” (i.e. class struggle), seeking a strategy of coalition, collaboration and compromise to combat the disasters we face today.

WHAT IS “NEW REALISM?”

“New realism”, initially conceived by those in the Communist Party grouped around the magazine “MARXISM TODAY”, is a rejection of class politics. Its response, ultimately, to the Tories’ savage attack on the NUM during the year-long miners’ strike of 1984/85 was to suggest that it was our Union leadership’s uncompromising resistance to pit closures which was to blame.

This sort of approach has been warmly welcomed by the traditional right wing within the Labour Party and the trade unions. Equally significant it has been seized upon with delight by the SDP and Liberal Parties; it is a philosophy with which they can easily identify, because it rejects the existence of class struggle.

Describing “Thatcherism” as a new and mysterious phenomenon, this philosophy argues for a “fresh approach” to combat it. It calls for consensus with those of our class enemies who at present (recalling many capitalist philanthropists of the past) find themselves appalled at the **excesses** of the Thatcher Government. This approach is not unlike wooing the executioner to win either a slight delay or a less painful death.

By abandoning such strategies as industrial action and working with these forces, "new realism" argues that it may be possible to build an "anti-Thatcher" coalition/alliance in order to win the next General Election. "New realism" says virtually nothing about capitalism itself even though it is this system which has produced the crisis we now face.

This philosophy reflects the failure over decades of successive Labour Party and trade union leaderships to recognise that the key to a real political victory lies in the mobilisation of all those **most** oppressed within our society.

Labour's natural constituency — **in fact the only base which can give it power** — lies with the millions of workers who struggle against injustice, low wages and the constant threat of unemployment, with the 4½ million unemployed, millions more struggling every day against poverty and attrition, our 9 million pensioners, women facing a special dimension of oppression, Black and Asian Britons struggling against racism — and of course young people under increasing attack from the hopelessness and frustration around them.

This is the ground on which the Labour Party must build a campaign not merely to win a general election, but to win power to change our system, bringing an end to capitalism and the beginnings of a socialist society.

"New realism", which is neither new nor realistic, **is in essence a doctrine of fear**, whose true nature has been exposed most clearly through its constant attacks against the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers during the 1984/85 strike, and on the Unions's policies since then.

While on the one hand the NUM leadership has faced a never-ending onslaught by Government, Coal Board and the media (using such devices as the breakaway UDM in attempts to destroy our fight for pits, jobs and communities), we have been attacked simultaneously by the "new realists" conducting a campaign warmly welcomed by our more traditional enemies.

Among the most fervent advocates of "new realism", busily writing away in "MARXISM TODAY" "7 DAYS" or "NEW STATESMAN", there appears to be a complete failure to understand the lessons of history which demonstrate that their approach, as in the case of Mondism, leads only to disunity, despair and disaster.

The attacks made by the "new realists" today on both the NUM and the very concept of class struggle have resurrected the twin evils of Mondism and MacDonaldism which, in the bitter years following the

betrayal of the 1926 General Strike, were deployed so vigorously to convince the working class not only that it was beaten — but that it could never hope to control its own destiny.

Then — as today — the miners and their union were primary objects of State attack, as were their leaders, among them not only A. J. Cook but Arthur Horner and S. O. Davies himself, who as part of the leadership of the South Wales Miners' Federation fought with all his heart and soul against the combined pressures of Mondism, MacDonaldisism and Spencerism (a company union which operated in South Wales as well as Nottinghamshire).

Today, it is acknowledged that the TUC General Council in 1926, by calling off the General Strike and leaving the miners isolated in their fight against wage cuts and longer hours, allowed the ruling class to move against all British workers and their families. Capitalism at that time faced a crisis equalling in many ways that of today; indeed, the current ferocity of the State and Government recalls some of the savage measures taken against workers and trade unions 60 years ago.

There commenced a period of savage intimidation and victimisation, symbolised in the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, which introduced draconian measures against trade unionists not dissimilar to those in today's new Tory legislation.

Secondary action was made illegal; trade union funds were made liable for civil damage; picketing was severely restricted and trade unions were prevented from taking disciplinary action against scabs who crossed picket lines.

Does all this sound familiar? Within these ruling class provisions can be seen the strands of that ideology and class loyalty which governs Margaret Thatcher today.

In response to this open declaration of war on trade unionism, the TUC General Council proceeded to embark upon one of the most shameful chapters in its chequered history. Within weeks of the passing of the Act it offered to open talks with a group of powerful, influential employers "in a common endeavour to improve the efficiency of industry and to raise the workers' standard of life". In other words, class collaboration — which was to become Mondism.

This offer was in fact the result of manipulation by the employers — the brain child of their leader, Sir Alfred Mond, Liberal MP and (more significantly), founder of Imperial Chemical Industries: ICI.

What Mond proposed was a bargain in which the employers conceded — not to workers but to the bureaucracy of the trade unions — a type of union recognition not dissimilar to the sham recognition agreed

between British Coal and the UDM today — sham recognition which British Coal is trying to force the NUM into accepting as well. In turn, the unions would accept whatever measures the employers might take in terms of cutting wages and conditions in order to maintain their profits.

This was a bargain to which only one TUC General Council member objected — that one objector being A. J. Cook. The TUC's offer to meet Mond and his colleagues was presented at the 1927 Edinburgh Congress, and from there the General Council prepared for an initial meeting with the employers held in January 1928.

A document prepared by the then TUC General Secretary, Walter Citrine, at the end of 1927 in preparation for that meeting revealed quite clearly an absolute betrayal of the principles, the hopes and dreams on which the British trade union Movement was built.

Citrine's thinking, furthermore, echoes in the most disturbing way that of today's "new realists" who argue against a strategy of class struggle in the face of a fierce determination to destroy our resistance to unemployment and hardship.

The "new realists" in the leadership of both the Labour Party and TUC today would agree completely with Citrine that "the approach to a new industrial order is not by way of a social explosion"; the aim instead, he argued, should be "an effective relationship which will ensure greater stability and harmony in industry". Citrine went on to urge that trade unions must go into partnership with guardians of capital, making a "concerted effort to raise industry to the highest efficiency". At the same time — and this is one of the ugliest betrayals of all — he accepted a subordinate role for the unions in this grotesque "partnership", confining his hopes to "a larger share of control in directing industrial changes", but asking only for "an equitable share in the gains resulting from increased productivity".

Thus did the General Council, quite openly, surrender and betray its responsibility to Britain's trade unionists. The deal struck with the Mondists was an act of outright class collaboration aided by the climate of fear and uncertainty — again very similar to today.

Within the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, that fear had, of course, taken its toll. Much of the union's leadership was gripped by confusion and indeed panic over how to protect its membership from a combined attack on jobs, wages, conditions and trade unionism itself.

The South Wales Miners' Federation marshalled itself alongside A. J. Cook in ferocious opposition to Mondism and all that it stood for. No leaders were more articulate or forceful than Arthur Horner and S. O.

Davies in rejecting “Mondism” as a betrayal of everything trade unionism represented.

Arthur Horner, in his foreword to Cook’s pamphlet “Mond’s Manacles”, gave a clear, historical analysis of what Mondism was really about. He wrote:

“To those familiar with the history of the Labour Movement, it is not strange that suggestions for industrial peace and closer co-operation with the employers should occupy the activities of the trade union bureaucrats in times of industrial defeat . . . industrial peace is the last straw of defeated, demoralised and in some cases treacherous men who have lost all hope in the future of their class . . . The fight against Mondism in the trade union movement is also a fight against MacDonaldism, which is the accepted policy of the Labour Party today . . . the influence of the Labour Party on the defeatist trade union officials has been a decisive factor in fostering the growth of a Mondist policy in the trade union movement.”

There are many trade union officials today who would benefit from Horner’s clear and uncompromising approach to the responsibilities of trade unionism.

At a stormy M.F.G.B. Conference in 1928 (our Conferences are always stormy) the South Wales Miners’ Federation, led by Horner and S. O. Davies, fiercely attacked both “Mondism” and “Spencerism” in the mining industry.

Horner in a speech which could have been written today about “flexible working”, the 6-day working week and the UDM, said: “By rationalising industry you eliminate human labour in every possible form and glut the unemployed market . . . we are told that these proposals (i.e. rationalisation) will give us a status, will give us a place in the sun as unions.” He went on to say “We could always get a place in the sun as Spencer has done if we are prepared to transform the trade unions from instruments of struggle against capitalism into units of production for capitalism . . . In the name of the South Wales Miners . . . I say this Federation should have nothing to do with Mondism.”

The effects of Mond’s “industrial peace” quickly became apparent; miners’ average wages, by 1928, were only 30 percent above the 1914 levels while the cost of living index had risen by 65 percent! Throughout British industry, that situation was reflected — conditions steadily deteriorated; there was extensive speeding up; piece-rate agreements were broken — indeed, agreements generally were violated wholesale across the spectrum of British industry. The Mondist accord between employers and the TUC had been made on

the cynical assurance of trade union recognition by the employers — yet in the period following 1927 trade union membership plummeted.

Today, the lessons of the 20's and 30's are, I believe, very clear. The path signposted by “new realism” leads straight to disaster as our history proves.

It is disturbing, therefore, to see that even here in South Wales with its proud history of educated struggle, with the legacy of such giants as Arthur Horner, Bill Paynter and S. O. Davies, there should appear to be confusion and vulnerability to the trap of “new realism”.

As with the M.F.G.B. 60 years ago, the NUM today is under massive attack. The Government sought to smash us in the 1984/85 strike, and why? **Because** we fought for jobs, and to save our pits — so many of which have been lost in South Wales — and because we fought for communities and trade unionism. Let us be absolutely clear on this central point; our resistance to the destruction of our industry infuriates our class enemies and produces incessant attack on the NUM and its leadership.

The devices employed to destroy us are straight-forward yet complex — the ingenious use of the Courts, not only sequestrating our funds but making us the first union to be placed in receivership; the use of the police against our communities in a display of State force not seen since before the First World War; the creation of the breakaway UDM, supported by Tories and employers; British Coal's unilateral scrapping of conciliation and consultation machinery which were part and parcel of nationalisation; the refusal to negotiate with the NUM on wages; the imposition of a savage disciplinary code which is a charter for sacking trade union activists and intimidating the workforce into accepting so-called “flexible working” and a 6-day working week.

All have been devised to smash the National Union of Mineworkers which apart anything else stands directly in the way of Government plans to privatise Britain's rich and vital coal industry.

How do we deal with this onslaught? It cannot be appeased — events since the 1984/85 strike have proved that. The Board has moved most swiftly to shut pits and decimate communities in those areas where there has been no appeal and no co-ordinated resistance or fight back — and some of our coalfields have lost 50-60 percent of their pits and workforce.

I believe that our Union has an obligation, a basic responsibility, to stand by our members and their families; furthermore to stand by all others whose industries, jobs, services and standards of life are under outright, uncompromising attack from the Tory Government. The

NUM has recognised this in its continued affirmation through Annual Conference of the policies we have stood by since 1982.

In the face of despair we must re-affirm commitment and hope and build the fight back which will include electing a Labour Government committed to taking power and implementing socialist policies.

It is, therefore, deeply disturbing to see the destructive and degenerate defeatism implicit in "new realism" operating in certain sections of my own union, and to see even in journals such as the "SOUTH WALES MINER" reflections of this philosophy.

Instead of arguing for a fight-back against pit closures, the "new realists" actually welcome British Coal's proposals for a 6-day working week, although it is obvious that "flexible working" arrangements in the mining industry would destroy as many as 40,000 jobs. We should remember that the introduction of a 6-day working week would increase output by 20 percent and result in the closure of at least 32 pits.

The supporters of "new realism" constantly argue for lobbies of Parliament, marches, demonstrations, meetings and broad alliances involving all sections of society including the churches — they see this programme of action as a substitute for, and not complementary to, industrial action.

While they go on at great length about the need to mobilise against privatisation, they actually seek to limit effective industrial action against British Coal's savage new disciplinary code, which was designed specifically to pave the way for privatising our industry.

In the October issue of the "SOUTH WALES MINER" on the front page, the Area President writes "I feel it regrettable to say the least that one of the reasons for our failure to reach a proper settlement was the premature rejection of the Coal Board's offer on September 4th by our National Officials, who decided to reply to the Board on their offer, without having first put that offer to the full NEC who were meeting two days later on September 6th"

I have to say that these comments are unhelpful and actually misrepresent events.

For example on September 4th, 1987 Peter Heathfield sent a letter to British Coal which reiterated union policy agreed by Annual Conference, the National Executive Committee and the members in an individual ballot vote, that there had to be withdrawal of the disciplinary code and/or renegotiation on the principal points, in particular on the question of independent binding arbitration. The response from Peter Heathfield was not only in line with Union policy

but his actions were endorsed by the National Executive Committee on the 6th September, 1987.

British Coal had not made any real offer or attempt to negotiate, and this is confirmed in a letter to the Daily Telegraph from British Coal's Chairman, Sir Robert Haslam, on September 17th, wherein he stated categorically on the new code "**We have not compromised on any significant issues**".

"New realism" is seen even more clearly in the October issue of the "SOUTH WALES MINER" in a piece titled "New Hopes, New Ideas" — one of the most bizarre and distorted attempts at analysis I have ever had the misfortune to read. It appears from the outset that the article's author fully expected Labour to be returned to Government in last June's General Election — **firm proof of his removal from reality**. Consultation with any cheap computer would have revealed that the Tories (assisted by the Labour leadership's disastrous campaign) would win a third successive election victory.

In the wake of a continued Thatcher Government, the author predicts a fresh round of pit closures (something of which the National leadership has always warned), but claims that the public clearly no longer believes that pits should remain open simply because they provide access to coal reserves.

It is precisely this sort of degenerate defeatism which makes "new realism" deplorable as well as dangerous. If the Labour Party, for example, had had the same level of support reflected in opinion polls as the miners did at the end of the strike, we could have seen the end of Thatcherism and the election of a Labour Government in 1987. The author of this article suggests that Thatcher can be virtually certain of carrying major public support for the implementation of a new round of pit closures and anti-trade union legislation. This suggestion ignores the fact that nearly 60 percent of the British electorate actually **opposed** Thatcher's policy at the last General Election, and that a major new survey published recently on British social attitudes shows that only "a modest quarter to one third of voters have adopted her line on policies".

The "SOUTH WALES MINER" article goes on to complain that there are few signs of the existence of any co-ordinated and effective resistance to electricity privatisation — on the contrary, the massive ballot vote for action by our members against the Coal Board's disciplinary code and the implementation of industrial action provides one key example of the kind of campaigning needed. Let us be brutally honest — if the NUM doesn't win the fight against the code, our chances of halting privatisation will be severely weakened.

The article continues: "Those who didn't vote Conservative are paying the price of defeat, just as we in the NUM are still being forced to pay it in the aftermath of our failure as a union to win a decent settlement in 1984/85." Again, there is no reference to the fact that the Tories were elected on a **minority** vote, nor to the overwhelming evidence of the past four years that only united, effective solidarity and industrial action can stop the Tories' sustained attack on jobs, industries, services and communities.

The article in the "SOUTH WALES MINER" advances a number of objectives which are claimed as essential if the coal industry is to survive this Government's term of office.

1. It argues that the NUM should return to the mainstream of the Labour and trade union Movement. I hear similar statements from trade union leaders like Hammond and Jordan, who argue against social principles and policies, accept flexible working, support single-union deals and no-strike agreements. If that is the kind of mainstream to which the "SOUTH WALES MINER" refers, then God help us.
2. It argues that we have to build "real alliances" with workers in the other energy, transport and manufacturing industries. What the hell do they think we were doing prior to the 1984/85 strike in relation to both the Triple Alliance and members of the TUC Energy Committee? Why is there no criticism of those unions participating in this "alliance" which betrayed the miners by accepting deliveries of foreign coal and oil and actually encouraged their members to breach our picket lines?
3. The "SOUTH WALES MINER" article says that it is the NUM not British Coal which must "break the deadlock on negotiations . . . on conciliation, wages and conditions". There are, of course, only two ways to do that — and let's have no ambiguity about it: either we concede to British Coal especially on the crucial issue of trade union representation and recognition — or we stand by our policies. Here, as on all the other fundamental questions facing us, there is no middle ground, and there can be no fudge on the issues involved.

British Coal wants the NUM to accept the majority/minority concept of conciliation which was first introduced in the United States. This system fits in nicely with the new Tory Government legislation, and if accepted will prevent the NUM having recognition or representation rights for thousands of our members.

This concept, by the way, has been employed by United States coal owners — and fiercely rejected by the scarcely militant leadership of the United Mineworkers of America. It is nothing more than a device for ending trade union representation altogether. There must be no deal on conciliation unless it gives the NUM an absolute right of recognition for collective bargaining for all its members.

To talk as the “SOUTH WALES MINER” article does about a desperate need for “new wages structure, a realistic technology agreement and an all round improvement in basic earnings and benefit” — while at the same time arguing **against** intensification of any industrial action in defence of basic conditions is absolute nonsense. We have, in fact, presented an excellent case to the Coal Board on all these issues, but without struggle these improvements will not be attained.

I submit that if we cannot win the fight on the Code of Conduct, we do not have a hope of negotiating an acceptable settlement on conciliation, wages, technology or improved benefits. We are facing a Government-backed employer which has **no intention** of negotiating, but is desperate instead to destroy our Union.

4. The article rejects contemptuously NUM policy calling for a coal output target of 200 million tonnes — a policy which, following an excellent debate at the NUM's 1987 Annual Conference won overwhelming support and is in line with TUC and Labour Party policy. The NUM and the South Wales Area support the phasing out of nuclear power and the call for a ban on all coal imports. If nuclear power (currently equalling 20 million tonnes coal equivalent per year) were phased out and coal imports (currently running at 15 million tonnes per year) were stopped, the demand for indigenous coal would be increased to between 145/150 million tonnes per year.

Moreover, if overall economic growth were to rise by only 2.5% with only a 1% increase in energy demand — the demand for 200 million tonnes per year output by the 21st century becomes very reasonable.

Despite constant reminders of a need to convince the general public on the virtues of its proposals, the article in the “SOUTH WALES MINER” overlooks or ignores the basic fact that it is only international solidarity action, including industrial action like that taken by the Liverpool dockers, which will halt coal imports from countries such as Colombia (which uses 9 year olds in its industry), South Africa (where our NUM comrades have asked us to stop imports into Britain), and Poland, whose

government has admitted dumping coal which threatens the future of those pits still left in South Wales.

5. The section of the article which I find worst of all speaks about the need “to confront the difficult but crucial task of reuniting as swiftly as possible **all** miners so that, once again, we speak with a single democratic voice”

I reject first of all the implication that our Union today does not speak with a democratic voice — such an accusation would be a slur on every NUM member and on the Union itself. But let us take the point about unity a bit further.

If the energy of those who spend so much time attacking the National leadership of the NUM was, instead, directed wholeheartedly into the long and arduous campaign sustained by the National Union and the NUM in Notts., the Midlands and South Derbyshire, we would be that much further along in our basic aim of winning back all miners who have joined the ailing breakaway. In fact, the nonstop campaign by the National leadership and the Notts. and South Derbyshire Area leaderships, has seen the UDM membership slump by over 50 percent inside two years.

It is necessary to remind the author of this article that it is less than 3 short years ago that the NUM South Wales Area wanted to **expel the entire membership of Nottinghamshire** — and I must also remind both the author and those who support his views today that it was Michael McGahey and I who argued vociferously **against** any expulsions or breakaways in this Union.

We want every miner back in this trade union but we must learn the lessons of history — lessons which the “new realists” conveniently ignore. Fifty years ago, in 1937, the miners’ union accepted the Spencer organisation back into the M.F.G.B. They did so at a time when Spencerism had been smashed and thus made a fundamental mistake. The Spencer organisation like the UDM was created to attack effective trade unionism — and in accepting the smashed company outfit back into the M.F.G.B. we embraced a malignancy which continued to affect the entire body of our Union for nearly 50 years. I am aware that South Wales voted for the merger with Spencerism in 1937, but this in no way diminishes Horner’s analysis in 1928. In the 1937 debate on Merger one of the most telling statements was made by a Yorkshire delegate who said — “You started out on this business to smash Spencerism, and you have swallowed him. It reminds me of the pelican who swallowed a viper. The viper

chewed its way through the neck of the pelican leaving behind a hole and a poisoned carcass". The merger with Spencerism provided the basis for division which occurred in 1984/85 and the eventual breakaway UDM.

I make it absolutely clear that there is a place in our Union for every single mineworker — but there can be no place for the leaders of the breakaway who have sought to destroy the National Union of Mineworkers. We cannot, we dare not and we must not make the same mistake as the M.F.G.B. did in 1937. The UDM — like "new realism" — cannot be embraced: it must be smashed.

I have dealt at such length with this article in the "SOUTH WALES MINER" because it epitomizes and repeats so many of the distorted arguments of "new realism".

Any doubt that the author (a spokesman for the South Wales NUM) is a passionate advocate of this destructive philosophy was removed when he was quoted in "The Guardian" (Wednesday, 28th October, 1987) as agreeing that the Secretary of State for Wales, Peter Walker, was OK, and as saying that "almost everyone was complimentary about him".

How on earth comments of this kind can be made about a Tory Minister who along with Thatcher was responsible for the closure of half the pits in South Wales and the loss of 50 percent of South Wales miners' jobs is almost beyond belief — that is of course unless you happen to be a "new realist".

At the very least all representatives of the NUM should remember that Peter Walker on his own admission prevented an agreement being reached between the NUM and the Coal Board in the course of the strike and he was Energy Secretary during a dispute which saw 11,000 miners arrested, hundreds jailed, thousands injured and 11 people killed.

CONCLUSION

One lesson, surely, that the struggles of the past 5 years have taught the Labour and trade union Movement is that in the fight against this Tory Government and an increasingly desperate capitalist State there is no "middle ground" on which opposing sides can meet and discuss sensible compromises in a civilised fashion.

Those who pretend that such ground exists only do harm to our Movement and to the working class. The miners have learned that in

times such as these we do not have the luxury of choosing issues on which to campaign and fight — nor have we any range of effective campaigning options open to us.

Only direct action — including industrial action — can halt the utter destruction of those basic institutions such as the National Health Service or, indeed, the coal industry, which must form the foundation of a new socialist society. Only by working and fighting to create that society can we halt the destruction of the planet itself, under increasing threat from nuclear war and massive pollution.

None of our struggles are separate — all connect, and all must be built in solidarity with one another.

The role of “new realism” however, has been to attack and isolate those struggles while arguing for an illusory “unity”. It has in the course of this exercise proved itself a pawn in the hands of our class enemies in Whitehall, Westminster, the City and Fleet Street.

The NUM itself must mobilise and fight on the key issues facing us — only our determination stands between the Government and the fate of the coal industry.

But our fight — against the disciplinary code; the proposals for 6-day working; British Coal’s scrapping of conciliation and consultation machinery, and its refusal to negotiate on wages — is far from being “merely” an industrial fight. It is **political**, inextricably linked to the need to win the speedy election of a Labour Government committed to taking power and beginning the transformation towards socialism.

That Labour Government must rebuild the coalmining industry. It must ensure the reinstatement at work of all those who have been victimised by Board and Government policies — and our colleagues still in jail as a result of their involvement in the 1984/85 strike must be released.

The Labour Government must change all senior Coal Board personnel, including all area and local managers who not only participated in the run down of our industry, but who victimised miners whose only crime was fighting to save their industry. We must have management which is committed to the survival and not the destruction of our nationalised industry.

The NUM must take its rightful share of responsibility in running the Coal Board as it should be run. We argue that this must be of the people, by the people and for the people. We support whole-heartedly the fundamental principle of common ownership — and reject the attempts of the right wing Labour Party leadership to promote the false Thatcher doctrine of a “share owning democracy”.

Britain must have a national energy policy based on coal, while the alternative technologies such as wind, wave, tidal, geothermal and solar power are properly developed.

The terrible, uncontrollable nuclear programme must be abolished and phased out as quickly as possible in line with Labour Party policy.

These are but outlines of what we hope to participate in building under a socialist Labour Government; our own campaign must be part of a steady and rapid march towards full employment throughout Britain.

The British people also need:

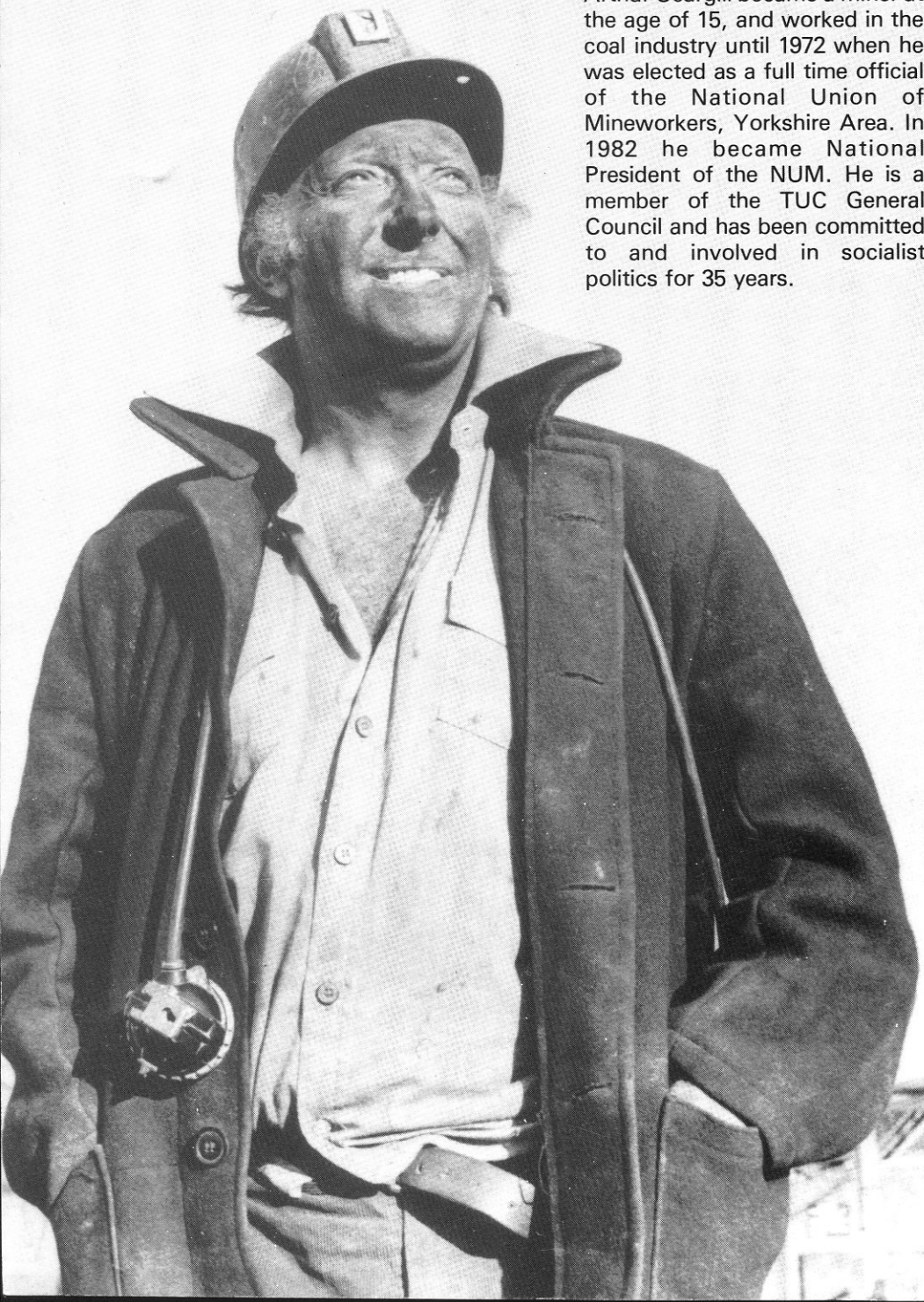
1. a whole-hearted commitment to international peace through unilateral nuclear disarmament — and the redirection of defence spending towards our devastated economy;
2. a massive rebuilding of our health, social and education services alongside the regeneration of British industry to meet the real needs of all our people;
3. an end to the terrible fear, uncertainty and confusion which has allowed decimation and destruction, while preventing us from moving forward. This fear must be overcome.

Sixty years ago S. O. Davies opposed consensus politics, class collaboration and the 1920's/1930's version of "new realism". He and his generation demonstrated that it is a fight which can be won and that compromise must not be contemplated.

History reveals that the compromises and betrayals of the past give us today a clear choice: either we submit to the ravages of the capitalist State and betray not only our parents, grandparents and all those who built our Movement but betray the generations still to come — **or** we realise our strength, mobilise in solidarity and fight back knowing that together we can win.

The battle for socialism will not be won by the philosophy of "new realism" — it will only be won in the workplaces and on the streets of Britain.





Arthur Scargill became a miner at the age of 15, and worked in the coal industry until 1972 when he was elected as a full time official of the National Union of Mineworkers, Yorkshire Area. In 1982 he became National President of the NUM. He is a member of the TUC General Council and has been committed to and involved in socialist politics for 35 years.