

to neuter the trade unions with the Industrial Relations Act failed because of the policy of non-compliance adopted by the Trade Congress. The groundwork for that act in part was a campaign by the Tory media to convince the nation that trade unions were «too powerful» and therefore warranted laws to curtail their activities.

One of the first overt indications of what the Tories were up to was the Ridley Report of 1978, the implications of which are only now becoming apparent. Published in *The Economist* of 27th May 1978, over a year before Thatcher's election, it suggested six points to be considered: (1) The build-up of coal stocks. (2) Plans to import large amounts of coal. (3) To encourage road haulage employers to take on non-union labour. (4) For dual coal / oil-fired power stations. (5) Changes to social security payments to strikers. (6) A large mobile police force. All these points have in fact been carried out to the letter as the miners and their families have discovered to their cost.

Since Thatcher's election in June 1979, we have witnessed the introduction of anti-trade union legislation, not on a wholemeal basis like the infamous Industrial Relations Act, but on a piecemeal basis, culminating in total to legislation far more draconian, legislation that allows the judiciary to interfere in the democracy of our union and to bankrupt it for non-compliance with their diktat. We have also seen the frightening increase in the power of the police as well as a substantial increase in their numbers. One of the first policies to be carried out by the Tories was to award the police a handsome wage increase.

The Nuclear Catch

In December 1979, the Secretary of State for Energy announced the government's nuclear power intentions which were to construct one nuclear power station of the pressurised water type (P.W.R.) every year for ten years from 1982 on; at the same time they authorised the construction of two advanced gas-cooled reactors at Heysham and Thorness. It is estimated that one P.W.R. will remove 2 1/2 million tonne capacity from the industry which in turn will mean 5,000 miners' jobs. Twelve such projects therefore will remove up to 60,000 miners' jobs.

On 23rd October 1979, two months before the announcement of their nuclear programme, a leaked cabinet document noted that «a nuclear programme

would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity generation from disruption by industrial action by coalminers and transport workers». Also in 1979, Mrs. Thatcher was heard to comment: «We will rid Britain of every vestige of socialism». We must regard this as a major threat to almost every democratic gain the working people have enjoyed and struggled for in the past.

It is quite clear that one of the weapons the Tories are going to use to smash the miners is the increased use of nuclear power. It is not just a question of the immediate closure of the five named pits or even the much talked about «20» pits which represents Mr. Mc-Gregor's so-called 12% uneconomic capacity, but a long term attack which would result in the loss of over half our industry and up to a hundred thousand jobs up to the turn of the century. We must also recognise that many jobs outside the industry will also be lost, like railmen, busmen, transport and mining machinery to name but a few.

It is extremely difficult to argue a case for nuclear power on economic grounds or social preference. Contrary to Central Electricity Board claims, nuclear power is far more expensive than good old king coal, and it is plain for all to see the problems being created by nuclear waste, its disposal and the fact that it is being washed up on our beaches and polluting our seas to the extent where the leukemia incidence in some areas is considerably above the national average. What of the future? How will we dispose of nuclear power stations when they have completed their useful life? Will they remain an edifice to man's folly like Three Mile Island at Harrisburg in the U.S.A.? Three Mile Island exposes the risks of possible catastrophic situations which would pale into insignificance any mining disaster the world has ever known. Are we to sacrifice an immense indigenous asset for this form of generation which only has two by-products: nuclear waste and the materials for expanding nuclear arsenals.

It is fact that the U.S.A. has abandoned many nuclear projects on grounds of expense and danger to the environment, and is once again basing its energy policy on coal. Many countries are also basing their energy policies on coal even though they enjoy no appreciable coal reserves, unlike Britain which is built on coal.

Returning to the economic arguments for closing pits, even a moder-

ately close scrutiny of National Coal Board and government claims proves them to be without any real foundation. If we can keep our comments to the so-called 12% uneconomic capacity which they claim is costing the veritable taxpayer some £275 millions per annum, closures on this scale would mean the loss of 40,000 miners' jobs and probably up to 35,000 other jobs outside, but connected to the industry, it would also mean the loss of over £500 million worth of coal each year. The cost of redundancy payments, unemployment benefits and transfer costs, where and if they apply, together with the loss to the exchequer of income tax revenue, national insurance contributions and so on, will it is estimated add up to about £345 million per annum. It is quite clear that to close pits would cost twice as much as to keep them open.

We must also not forget that the majority of these pits are rendered «uneconomic» by lack of investment, the greater part of investment being pumped into the super pits with the view to privatisation at some later date.

It is generally accepted, even by the National Coal Board, that the British deep mined coal industry is one of, if not the most, efficient industry in the world as far as actual production cost is concerned, but it does face unfair competition by highly subsidised foreign markets and a market suppressed by Tory economic policies.

Now returning to the Tory political thinking behind all this. It is quite clear that the miners are facing a two-pronged attack: first the use of nuclear power to decimate the industry down to one of super pits, and the other, facing the trade union movement as a whole, the repressive anti-trade union laws being introduced and used on an ever increasing scale, particularly by the sequestration of assets.

It is apparent to many in the trade union and labour movement in this country, and indeed abroad, that a victory to the miners is paramount to the interests of the working class as a whole, although they may not be in possession of all the facts about the industry that have brought about the present situation.

Many, I think, hoped for the day when the miners would take up the gauntlet with all the power at their disposal. Many doubted the wisdom of commencing industrial action in March with the spring and summer in front of them, but the miners were quite clearly