

## Wildcats In The Appalachian Coal Fields

William Cleaver

*A little blow-out don't hurt nothin'.  
A coal miner ain't nobody until he goes on strike,  
then everybody's looking at him.*

The 1974 coal strike and settlement were an attempt by capital to stabilize class relations in Appalachia by bringing 'labor peace' to the mines. The contract was a response to the miners' decade long wildcat movement. That movement involved not only the mineworkers but the entire class community in struggle against mine owners and operators. The contract was an attempt to end that movement by denying locals the right to strike and by designing grievance procedures that could isolate problems inside the mines before they could develop into a wildcat. The wildcat movement, however, has not only survived but developed new intensity.

The wildcat movement has survived because it has become a method of community struggle and not simply a measure of 'labor discontent' to be controlled at the point of production. The focal point of that struggle is the breakdown of the main capitalist division of the waged and unwaged. The wildcats not only brought workers out of the mines, but women, children, invalids and the unemployed out into the streets with their own demands. Because that breakdown has meant the joining of the strategies and demands of the waged and unwaged in Appalachia, wildcats have been directed against anything from corrupt local law enforcement to gasoline shortages, to substandard health care in addition to specific mine issues such as safety and job posting.

The joining of the struggles of the waged and unwaged grew, in part, out of the failure of capital's plans for Appalachia in the Sixties --the failure of the poverty programs. These programs attempted to respond to such community phenomena as 'tax revolts', 'welfarism' and 'automation unemployment', without distinguishing between waged and unwaged sections of the community. Such a lack of distinction made it easier for those sections to end their political separation. In order to understand the terms and consequences of the failure of the poverty programs, it is necessary to understand the broader class context out of which the contemporary wildcat movement developed.

The struggles in the coalfields over the last twenty-five years may be divided into three distinct phases. The first, from 1950 to approximately 1962, saw the formalization of a union/industry alliance as capital's response to the wage struggles of the Forties. The second phase that dominated most of the Sixties saw the re-organization of the institutions that had formerly mediated the struggle and the collapse of capital's plans for the division of different sectors of the miners. The third phase that began in 1969 has seen an abortive attempt to re-establish Union control over the working class, the expansion of the wildcat movement, and the introduction of the "energy crisis."

### II.

During the Forties the Federal government was forced to intervene against militant strikers several times in order to keep coal flowing to the war and reconstruction efforts. By the end of the Forties it became clear that things had to change ("bayonets cannot mine coal," as Lewis said), or the Appalachian working class would fly out of control.

The strikes of the war years were victorious in part for occurring within a protected energy market. Government policy and ARAMCO rapidly changed this at the end of the war. ARAMCO increased its annual production of crude oil by a factor of ten between 1945 and 1950. The restructuring of international energy policy quickly made itself felt in North American market and transportation policies. Oil and gas competition brought stagnant prices. The transition from freight trains to trucks, from rails to roads, from barges to pipelines amounted to a revolution in primary goods transportation that struck the Appalachian miners "behind their backs." "The Brutus blow of dieselization" was decisive.

This is the background required to understand the massive attack on the miners that was codified in the 1950 National Bituminous Coal and Wage Agreement. Signed between the operators and the United Mine Workers (UMW) it marked the end of the Union's role in representing the struggle and announced its new position as an

agent for the repression of struggle. By this agreement the Union engineered a sweeping technological re-organization of coal mining that drastically curtailed the power of the miners. It cleared away miners' opposition to the introduction of improved hauling equipment for thin seam coal, to the spread of the continuous mining machine, to new drilling and ripping equipment, and above all it guaranteed peace for the development of surface mining where the stripping shovel, the dragline and the bulldozer revolutionized productivity.

Against this, the wage structure was overhauled. Rates and differentials were simplified. Tonnage and yard payments were transferred to hourly rates. A substantial increase in individual earning was made possible by the reduction of the total payroll: between 1950 and 1960 the employment of coal miners dropped from 415,000 to 180,000. The combination of a wage and technological attack caused striking changes in productivity. Output per miner increased by 100% between 1950 and 1960. Surface mines were twice as productive as shaft or slope mines. To be sure this made mining more vulnerable to interruptions and attack as it placed a premium upon continuous operation at full capacity. Only the new Health, Welfare and Retirement fund was tied directly to productivity and this meant that pensioners who retained the right to vote in union elections formed the basis of internal union power that would be used more than once to diffuse local wage demands.

A direct consequence of the success of the capitalist initiative of the Fifties was an increase in the reserve army of the unemployed both in Appalachia and in the cities that were to become the major terminals of migration:

As the mines shut down, as the farms could no longer produce a living for those who worked them, as stores closed because of loss of sales, men and families by the thousands began a flood of migration from the mountains to the cities of the North and East. Over the past decade, a hundred thousand or more persons a year moved away from the mountains to Chicago, Columbus, Detroit, Cincinnati, and other metropolitan centers where at least the possibility of jobs existed.<sup>2</sup>

Mining families had to choose between unskilled jobs in the North or inadequate welfare in Appalachia.

By the early Sixties, the broad outlines of a new working class strategy began to take shape in the mining communities in the form of independent action against both the operators and the union. The first opportunity for this had been the national union's call in 1959 for a strike against operators who were not abiding by the National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement (by then amended several times.) To its evident dismay, the national leadership was to discover that the strikers of 1959 were not the strikers of 1950. Even in their violence those previous strikers had been ultimately controllable. In 1959, all hell broke loose. By the time the strike was over, the strikers had destroyed millions of dollars of property, killed several scabs, and by their actions brought multiple damage suits against the union. Growing insubordination resulted when the national union 'agreed' to allow numerous mines to go nonunion by either simple inaction or by actually withdrawing local certification. The workers' revival of the roving picket was a dramatic indication of the collapse of union management of the struggle. Other worker strategies included refusal to migrate, refusal to vote more taxes for community services, and most of all refusal to work. These, together with the demand for direct cash subsidies, provide the essential background to the new capitalist initiative represented by the war on poverty. Here is 'state intervention' upon an entirely new basis.

### III.

The new capitalist strategy that initiated phase two was called the War on Poverty, and the social planning it represented was first of all an attempt to reduce militant class struggle to manageable proportions. Capital's task was to take a movement that threatened the effectiveness of collective bargaining, and which had already demonstrated the inadequacy of union-managed wage struggle and union-managed community services, and shape it to its own purpose. This attempt involved a poverty program strategy of community organization that amounted to an attempt at community unionization in the sense that its purpose was to force all sections of the working class to come together into Community Action Programs (CAPS) to bargain for a social wage. The CAPS, like the legalized labor unions which emerged from the Thirties were to become the fundamental bargaining units of the community.

By forcing all segments of the community to bargain for a social wage, the poverty programs brought many previously unwaged sections of the community into an explicitly waged relationship. The methods by which this was accomplished were numerous. Manpower programs tied the wage to a willingness to be 'retrained' to a 'useful' skill. Matching Federal funds tied many aspects of the social wage (such as education and health care) to a willingness to vote for some kind of local tax. Much of the available funding was tied to road building, loans to local

businesses, and construction of public facilities. That is, receipt of those funds was tied to a willingness to submit to capitalist development.

As the poverty programs picked up steam, the CAPS and their community organizers began to develop their full potential as managers of social pressure. Numerous 'self-help' programs (retraining projects, handicraft production, and so forth) 'creatively' channeled community energies into acceptable outlets. Daniel P. Moynihan, then Assistant Secretary of Labor, best characterized their function:

... the primary function of community welfare programs is to provide surrogate family services. The logic of this relationship has taken us well beyond the original provision of food, clothing, and money, to far more complex matters of *providing proper attitudes toward work*, reasonable expectations of success and so forth.<sup>3</sup>

The CAPs, designed to function through the 'maximum feasible participation of the residents of the areas' were intended to be the means through which residents of the areas systematically traded stability for an increased social wage. But what in fact happened was that the CAPS and similar programs subsidized the social struggle. Their mixing of waged and unwaged in various community development projects provided a new terrain in which the unwaged could use the newly available social wage (day-care, community kitchens, health care, 'drop in' centers, etc.) to free them from unwaged labor. The mineworker began to use aspects of the social wage (such as food stamps) to better reject the constrictions of work. And it is precisely this connection of welfare struggles and mine struggles that was to provide one of the material bases of the third phase of struggle.

The political unification of the struggles of the waged and unwaged in their demands for more money and less work laid the basis for the erosion of productivity that has characterized the last decade of struggle in the coal fields. A frustrated social worker described the breakdown in these terms:

They are crafty when it comes to receiving an income without working. An unemployed miner will inquire about which mines are operating and which are hiring when fulfilling the requirements to qualify for unemployment compensation. He astutely applies at the mine that is on limited shift operation and that has a complete complement of men. Upon being told that no jobs are available, he asks the foreman to sign his slip indicating that he has sought work and been refused. When channeled through the proper agency, this "proof" enables him to continue "rockin'" for another month. Through repetition of this procedure he is able to draw unemployment compensation until he has received maximum allowance. When he is sincere about working, benefits are computed in cash. A paid vacation, year-round employment, and a job with a definite future are neither desired nor attractive fringe benefits<sup>4</sup>

As the link between wages and productivity was being severed, the union's authority began to disappear within the traditional wage struggle of the miners. When the union's unwillingness to extend its activities beyond its basic relationship with the operators became evident with the 1964 contract (Boyle's first), miners spread a wave of wildcat strikes across the coalfields. Roving pickets closed mines and some 10,000 miners took a week's vacation from the pits. This protest strike sparked the real beginning of the open rebellion against the operators that could be called the wildcat movement.

One hundred forty five 'work stoppages' erupted in 1965. Most of them were wildcats against bad working conditions, deepening poverty and lousy pensions. In August some 3000 miners walked off the job protesting the firing of one of their number. Union officials were unable to get them back to work. In September, separate walk-outs in Pennsylvania developed into a wildcat that spanned three states, freed 10,000 workers and shut down 15% of the nation's coal production for a month. As roving pickets threatened to close more mines, Boyle was able to take the steam out of the strike by promising to get the workers who had been fired reinstated - which he never actually attempted to do. His false promise was never forgotten.

The following year 50,000 miners walked off the job during contract talks when the BCOA attempted to dismiss Boyle's inadequate contract demands as 'too expensive.' In 1967 60,000 miners took an unofficial holiday protesting conditions in five states. Even Boyle's personal appearance could not get them back to work. Later, 10,000 Pennsylvania miners walked out in support of a group trying to organize two mines owned by the Solar Fuel Company. In less than a month, 70,000 miners followed them out of the pits.

In March at Oneida, Tennessee, the headquarters of the Southern Labor Union was dynamited. Later, in 1960, 10,000 miners ignored another Boyle 'promise' to avert a strike during negotiations and walked out a week before the expiration of the contract. Ten days later 80,000 miners declared they would stay out until the 'details' of the

tentative agreement were worked out. One of the clauses of the final version of that contract provided a \$120.00 Christmas bonus to any miner who had not participated in a wildcat strike during the year.

As the wildcats undermined the traditional authority of the union another aspect of the conjunction of welfare and mine struggles appeared in the demand for the subsidized treatment and elimination, along with compensation for, Black Lung disease. The West Virginia Black Lung Association, whose statewide propaganda effort and legislative lobby provoked a massive wildcat and forced a barely adequate bill through the state legislature accomplished in these successes two far more important things. First, it shifted the focus of struggle from the job site and community to the state. Secondly it successfully combined a demand for an expansion of the social wage (Black Lung benefits) with an effort to influence job site conditions that bypassed the union.

Not only was the Black Lung Movement an organizational expression of autonomy from the union, it was also a demonstration that Boyle could be openly resisted. In 1969 the strength of Jock Yablonski's challenge to Boyle arose in part out of Boyle's inability to control the rank and file and the resulting decision on the part of the operators not to place anything in the way of his campaign drive. That Yablonski's campaign was a real reflection of the power of the struggle is indicated by the successful formation after his death by factions that had supported his candidacy of an opposition caucus within the union. This caucus, the Miners for Democracy, was sufficiently grounded in the previous cycle of struggles to offer a plausible option to the 'anarchy' of the wildcat movement. It promised that the UMW could again become a 'fighting' union firmly within the control of the rank and file.

Thus the crisis in the U.S. coal industry took several forms, only one of which is indicated by the crisis of the union. In the late Sixties, early Seventies, the welfare roles and unemployment statistics rose sharply without affecting the decline in productivity. The miners' attack on productivity is most dramatically shown by the halving of the death rate at a time of increasing levels of employment: over 1972/73 it fell from 300 to 150 miners killed. To the community organizers of the JFK/ LBJ mold, the crisis was summed up by an attitude toward work:

Because work's only purpose is earning a living, the mountaineer when unemployed has a different attitude toward unemployment insurance from the one middle class leaders envisioned when they set up such payments in the law . . . . The mountaineer; . . . , sees this insurance as a legal substitute for work for the entire period that it comes to him.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the reserve army of the unemployed was ceasing to be the threat that could guarantee acceptable levels of accumulation and productivity.

#### IV.

Miners' struggles in the Sixties should not be understood simply as a struggle against the mediation of the union to which the MFD 'reform' was an appropriate answer. In fact, the struggle persisted and deepened with the success of the MFD. The content of the struggle bypassed the 'reform' movement and left it to fight skirmishes on incidental terrain. The wildcat movement, the productivity decline, and absenteeism were responses to the new bases of capital's power. The only appropriate setting for this struggle is the expanded and integrated circuit of energy capital that by the end of the Sixties included the international energy network. OPEC, Alaska, Montana, and the Dakotas, as well as the Duke Power Company. Within the context of this circuit the 'rationalization' of the industry during the Sixties and the formation of an international energy policy were, as such, responses to working class power.

In the mid-Sixties the position of coal in U. S. Industry was transformed from a group of cooperating companies to a division of the growing energy industry.

But before the early Sixties such a reorganization and rationalization of energy production and distribution would not have been possible. Before then there was no unified energy industry. Thus any rationalization into an energy industry was premised on the ordering of the affairs of the coal industry. The union/ industry alliance was able to accomplish this by: 1) rationalizing the means of dealing with labor by implementing a national contract - a single means of establishing relations with the working class in coal, and 2) development of a national centralized marketing apparatus - the means by which consumption patterns could be easily realigned.

During the Sixties most of the large coal companies were either acquired by oil companies or 'captured' by industries with an immediate need for coal (steel, railroads, utilities, etc.). Between 1962 and 1969 the share of

production controlled by independent coal companies fell from 32% to 10%.<sup>6</sup> By 1969 thirteen companies controlled 52% of total U.S. coal production. The largest of these were able to dominate the marketing and pricing policies of the others. With market control and growing centralization it is probable that the thirteen largest companies controlled about two thirds of coal sales on the commercial market.<sup>7</sup> Seven of these had already diversified into coal, natural gas, shale and tar sands. Most of the others had already been significantly penetrated by oil and gas interests.

However, the simple vertical integration of the coal companies (the 'captive' mines) with steel, etc. is not the 'rationalization' of the Sixties. To speak, on the other hand, of horizontal integration (coal, gas, oil) can be equally misleading unless it is understood as lending fundamentally new international flexibility and velocity to the circuit of energy capital. Through it "social planning" of transport, fertilizers, steel and energy is made possible. This power of planning is nothing less than a new effort to establish a basis of command over the working class as a whole.

Beginning in the early Sixties, the American centralization of coal companies must be seen as a national aspect of an international process, the leading catalyst of which is the U.S. government. U.S. coal reserves are increasingly under the control of the government. Federal leased coal acreage quadrupled between 1960 and 1970 with the top ten leasers controlling 60% of the acreage. At the same time the percentage of leased Federal coal lands under production fell during the period from 13.7% to 2.4%.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps as important as Federal leasing policies in the reshaping of American energy policy was the passage of federal anti-pollution and environmental legislation. While this is not the place to provide an adequate analysis of this legislation or the movement out of which it came, there are two points to be stressed. First, and in part, it represented an attempt to socialize the militance of the coal operators. Throughout the Sixties the operators attempted to reestablish control over the working class by revolutionizing production by means of speedup in deep mines and the mechanization of strip mining. But this technological offense faced the immediate danger of open warfare against fixed capital.

In August 1968, \$800,000 worth of machinery was blown up in Bell County Kentucky. One evening in December, four months later, just across the border in Campbell County Tennessee local saboteurs dynamited nearly one million dollars in machinery belonging to the Blue Diamond Coal Company, including a diesel shovel, a railroad car, two large drills, and several trucks and bulldozers. Sabotage on a smaller scale occurs frequently; steam shovels worth between \$50,000 and \$90,000 are often found demolished. Armor piercing bullets have been fired at working bulldozers during the day and gun battles with company guards are not unknown at night.<sup>9</sup>

In the face of a possible expansion of this violence, the technological offensive had to be coordinated via the state as a part of regional planning. The selective restraints imposed in the name of environmental legislation became one form of accomplishing this.

Second, anti-pollution legislation aimed against the mining of high sulfur coal, stimulated the operators to move West-an area where the UMW had had little organizing success. The western reserves which were low in sulfur content had the added advantage that they did not have to be mined by a working class experienced in the wildcat movement of the Sixties.

The magnitude and scope of capital's counter-attack in the Sixties entails the most diverse elements: anti-pollution legislation, the rationalization of the industry through multinational financial enterprises, the development of energy as a pole of command over the entire working class, and finally the geographical 'reorientation' of production and its international integration.

Only within this context can either the inadequacy of the reform movement or the 1974 contract be understood.

## V.

By 1970, the state, through the Labor Department, the Senate, and the Federal courts began active intervention against the old union and the Miners for Democracy mounted a massive and successful organizing effort in most union districts. The disruption of production and the still increasing number of work stoppages) which in fact underestimated the man days idle and the value of lost production) could now be seen as a part of the union reform movement. This appearance, though very short lived, required that the Federal government grant substantial

concessions to the MFD as it seemed to be making headway in the transformation of the 'anarchic' situation into stable though costly labor relations.

The May 1972 MFD convention nominated Arnold Miller, Harry Patrick, and Mike Trbovich to run for top union office. The convention also committed the MFD to the demands of the wildcat movement. These were: 1) the local right to strike, 2) the separation of income from productivity, 3) miner-enforced safety regulations, and 4) district autonomy. The slate and platform represented the first rank and file action in an international union election in over fifty years. On these bases the Boyle machine was swept out of office. Immediately Boyle sympathizers were purged from the national office. Pension and hospital benefits were increased. The union took the lead in the enforcement of safety regulations in the mines.

Perhaps the most dramatic action by the new leadership was the decision to support the reunification of the Brookside mine in 'Bloody Harlan County' Kentucky. But the Brookside strike of 1973 was more than a simple revival of a depression-style organizing drive. The violence and publicity surrounding the strike would have appeared as an orchestrated revival on traditional terrain of struggle had it not given sanction to the generalized wage struggle which had begun in the Sixties.

The unwaged and miners alike wanted safety committees and hospitalization benefits, they also demanded their own homes, recreational facilities, plumbing and bathtubs.

At the Pittsburgh convention in December 1973 rank and file delegates rewrote the union constitution and outlined the collective bargaining demands for the 1974 contract. Loudly rejecting pleas for a no-strike clause, the miners made several important demands clear. First, no contractual abridgement of the right to strike would be tolerated. Second, all safety rules must be rigorously enforced. Third, by combining demands for paid vacation, sick leave, a cut of two hours from the working day, a substantial increase in the wage rate, and a cost of living allowance, as well as by voicing their resentment of the tie of the pension fund to productivity, the mine workers sought to further sever their wage rates from productivity.

From the point of view of actual struggle during this period, the demands expressed at Pittsburgh were a pale reflection of the developing movement. In the Spring of 1974 mineworkers in southern West Virginia formed the Miners' Committee to Defend the Right to Strike. This, with similar formations elsewhere, forced the Union to include the right to strike over local issues in the 1974 contract demands. The number of work stoppages in Bituminous coal mines during that year approached two thousand - double the number in 1973 and nearly ten times the average number of the first half of the Sixties.

Two elements of the 1974 wildcats must be stressed. First, in the wake of the Yom Kippur war and the 'energy crisis' they presented demands for the price roll back of gasoline. The miners leveled this demand against the state - a principle planner of the energy circuit. Thus it is a movement that recognized that capital now seeks to control the relationship between the community and the pit by the political manipulation of basic commodities. Secondly, these wildcats intersected with the independent truckers strike and, to a lesser extent, with the collapse of union authority in the auto strikes of that year. In both the expansion of struggle and in its new content there is a clear recognition on the part of the miners of the new basis of capitalist planning. The UMW and for that matter any organization which seeks to organize the working class simply on the basis of its nominal wages can have no role in a struggle about the *real* determinants of the wage.

Throughout 1974 Miller attempted to brand the right to strike movement as a local concern of southern West Virginia and the gasoline price roll-back movement as no concern to the union at all. By August *Business Week* could speak of Miller as:

.... no longer indulging in the tough talk of a six month strike as he did last December in his first UMW convention. ... Miller and the operators are also talking seriously about modernizing a union management relationship that is probably the worst in industry .... At a series of district conferences, top members took great pains to try and 'reduce the members' expectations to realistic levels. 10

The real significance of the 1974 national negotiations and the contract that resulted from then resides neither in the "betrayal" of the demands of the Pittsburgh convention nor in a personal 'sell-out' by Miller. The contract was designed to get the miners back to work and to remove the basis of the wildcat movement.

From this perspective the politicking of the negotiations - the rejection of the first draft contract, the 'testing' and 'hardening' of Miller's personal position, the 'timely' intervention of 'informal' federal personal -are of no importance in comparison to the content of the settlement. One of the first demands to be eliminated was the right to strike over local issues - a hedge against court injunctions and restraining orders. One local was fined \$30,000 for striking over a life and death safety issue. All safety issues were to be arbitrated. To be sure, the contract did 'allow' individual miners to withdraw from an unsafe area, but this was a right already guaranteed by federal law. The procedure is such that if arbitration finds against the individual miner he is then subject to disciplinary action including discharge. The power of the company to fire a sick miner as a potential hazard is expanded under the new contract. Accidents and illnesses are under-reported as a result. Benefits on vacation, pensions and retirements are graduated according to seniority, amounting, in a pattern familiar in the auto industry, to a form of blackmail tying the worker to a lifetime in the mines. The rights of the Health and Safety committees were curtailed. They could no longer make unannounced spot inspections. Time limits were imposed on the initiation of grievances. The powers of the committeemen were restricted. The number and articulation of special pay categories were increased. The six hour, four shift day, and the demand for pay during safety shut-downs were lost in the general rhetoric that this was, in Millers' words, "the best contract negotiated in the history of the labor movement."

Fifty-six percent of the miners voting, but a minority of the miners eligible to vote, ratified the contract. Those who voted against the contract consisted largely of the militant base that had proved the MFD with its initial driving force. The strike over the contract should be seen as a continuation of the wildcat movement in that it provided an industry-wide reference point for the elimination of differences among miners and working class communities. Indeed, the month immediately after the contract was signed saw the worst series of wildcats in the entire year.

## VI.

In the first seven months of 1975 the rate of wildcatting is on the increase. Intensification of struggle in the mines and mining communities has grown out of the interlocking of those struggles. And the problems of each have become the struggles of both. The importance of this for the quality of struggle in the mines was lamented by one coal company official: "They're striking over anything. They'll strike if they don't like the local sheriff. How can normal labor-management relations deal with that?" Wildcats triggered by mine "labor" issues are beginning to bring broader community issues into the picture. Increasing miner participation in Mountain Community Unions and Welfare Rights Organizations is bringing a greater intensity to struggle there. Community dependence on the mines is lessened with the broadening of that struggle.

Proposals for the long term solution to labor unrest is beginning to move out of the area of simple 'labor-management relations' and toward the direct appeasement of increased income and 'profit-sharing.' Writing in 1974, Ford foundation energy researcher David Freeman proposes:

There are two environmentally satisfactory ways of enlarging coal production. One approach is to achieve increased production from existing deep- and strip-mine operations. To do that we must solve the problems which are creating 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> day workweek in the coal industry. Unless management adopts a more safety conscious and profit-sharing attitude, we face a deepening crisis in coal production. With the price coal now commands, the mines can be made safe and labor can be given more generous salaries and fringe benefits. Given labor peace in the industry, coal production can be increased some 20% over 1973 production without opening more mines."

What does the expansion of the circuit of energy capital mean from the point of view of the working class? It is a direct response to a cycle of struggle that has outflanked the traditional institution of the management of the struggle - the union. Rumors spread about fast bucks on the Alaska pipe line and mine job notices tacked up on bulletin boards in Detroit show how the expanded circuit is attempting to manipulate labor markets not through the traditional local pools of the reserve army of the unemployed but directly from one productive circuit to another. Along with this, capital is attempting to reimpose its command over the working class in coal by operating 'behind their backs' by attacking them through the sphere of circulation. The institutions through which capital seeks to manage the struggle now shift to include the refrigerator, the school, and above all, the filling station.

The attempts to expand the competition for jobs by stimulating migrations *back* from the North has only served to draw many Appalachian families back to a more familiar terrain and to simply expand geographically the militance of former autoworkers. The attack on income through the sphere of circulation (inflation) is increasingly understood

by miners as attempts to reduce their power by means of high mortgage rates, greater taxes (educational bonds), and soaring TVA electrical bills.

Capital's failure to establish effective control by these methods has meant the collapse of the contract less than a year after its ratification August 1975, 80,000 miners walked off the job demanding the right to strike. The failure of the union and the operators to set up any effective working grievance procedure revived the demand for a local right to strike. The Miller administration's role in that failure along with its continuing efforts to separate "labor" from "community" issues placed it squarely against the wildcatters. When the Miller administration tried to get the miners back to work they were greeted with catcalls, "Miller is a Scab." The Union's tactics in attempting to divide the strikers and its apparent support of government threats of intervention signal the final failure of the initiative to break working class autonomy by the "reform" of the union.

#### NOTES

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