'IT'S OUR FUTURE'

youth and the miner's strike



20p

A PAMPHLET PRODUCED BY:

YOUTH IN LABOUR

BRIEFING

YOUTH SUPPORT THE MINERS

THE miners' strike is the most important battle in the class war in Britain since 1926.

The longest national strike in British labour history, it is one of the biggest fightbacks against Tory rule that we have seen.

A victory for the miners would be an enormous victory for the whole labour movement, for everyone who depends on the unions and the welfare state.

And as this pamphlet shows, links have been made during the course of this strike — new kinds of organisations have been set up — that are a lasting gain for our class.

The tremendous organisation of women in mining communities has shattered decades of male domination and given inspiration to working class women. It has created the basis for a mass working-class women's movement. Those women have shown that women are just as good at fighting for their class as men.

Links have been built with the Greenham women, black people fighting for their liberation, lesbians and gay men.

Terrible but lasting lessons have been learned by whole sections of the labour movement about the class nature of the police thugs, and the class nature of the law.

It is plain for anyone to see that the police and the courts work in the interests of the bosses.

Some of that can never really be taken away from us. But the fact remains that a defeat for the miners would be a defeat for the whole working class too.

And the strike has suffered throughout from one major weakness — the feeble, timid and even treacherous role played by the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party.

Norman Willis and Neil Kinnock echo the Tories and the gutter press in their condemnation of 'picket line violence' and their 'respect for the law'.

The TUC in September made fine promises of solidarity. They have done virtually nothing to implement those promises.

Despite TUC policy, the TUC has done nothing to organise massive resistence to the sequestration of the funds of the NUM.

The left in the unions and the Labour Party needs to organise to make real solidarity action a reality.

And youth, and in particular the LPYS, have a major role to play in this.

Youth have suffered terribly under the tories — massive youth unemployment, low-paid jobs or YTS schemes. The miners, in fighting for their jobs, are fighting for the future of all working class youth.

Young people in Youth CND, black and Asian youth, young women, LPYS activists and young miners — together we have mobilised to defend the NUM

Briefing is a journal of left activists in the labour party that shares this view of the importance of solidarity between all those fighting the Tory government.

As youth in Briefing we have an important role to play in the fight to organise the left.

Join us in the fight for a Labour Party leadership that will stand by the struggles of the working class!

Join us in the fight for a campaigning LPYS that will defend the interests of the workers and oppressed!

OUR FIGHT IS YOUR FIGHT!

LESBIANS AND GAYS SUPPORT THE MINERS

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) was set up in July. It had two aims: to build as much support as we could among the lesbian and gay communities for the miners' strike; and to show to the labour movement the important role that lesbians and gay men can play.

The miners' strike is important for lesbians and gay men. The Tories see beating the most powerful union as the first step to going on the rampage against the whole working class, and against other sections of society who are focal points of resistence, or who don't conform to their reactionary values.

Lesbians and gay men suffer all kinds of discrimination in socity — we can be sacked just because of our sexuality; the age of consent is different for gay men than it is for heterosexuals (although lesbians aren't even recognised at all in the law!); lesbian mothers often lose custody of their children.

The police harass us — in pubs and clubs and on the street. And the Police Bill would make the situation even worse. Gay men are often arrested by the 'pretty police' — they proposition you, and if yo respond, arrest you for indecent behaviour.

Lesbian and gay bookshops have been raided by customs and excise because they claim some of the books are obscene. They have even confiscated books by writers like Jean-Paul Sartre.

If the Tories can defeat the miners, and if the police can get away with what they are doing in the coalfields, lesbians and gay men will be an easy, more or less defenceless target.

LGSM has had a lot of success. We've collected about £3,000 now from lesbian and gay clubs and pubs and street collections. And the response from the mining communities has been tremendous.

About 30 of us visited Dulais valley in South Wales — which is where we've been sending most of the money — for a weekend. The reception was tremendous. We were no longer society's outcasts. As one of the people there put it: "In 1926, 1972 and 1974 we learned who our enemies are. In this strike we are learning who our friends are."

They have promised to come to our aid in the future. It is a tremendous achievement — probably the biggest breakthrough in the whole history of the struggle for lesbian and gay rights in Britain. CLIVE, LGSM



LGSM VISIT SOUTH WALES

Statement by the executive of the National Union of Mineworkers to the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and Labour Movement Lesbians fringe meeting at Labour Party conference.

"Support civil liberties and the rights of Lesbians and Gays. We welcome the links made in South Wales and elsewhere. Our struggle is yours, victory to the miners!"

LGSM CAN BE CONTACTED AT
39, CHIPPENHAM RD LONDON W9

BLACK AND WHITE UNITE AND FIGHT

Joe Muhammed from Co'grave, Mick, Bernard and Morris from Warsop and Andy from Hucknall are black miners. They've got themselves together to cover as many black community events as possible so that they can talk, discuss and raise funds for the strike. Lal Chanda and Judith Bonner from Peckham YS spoke first to Joe.

What have you been doing?

Well, we went to the Notting Hill Carnival to show the black people there that there are black miners who are solidly with the strike and intend to carry on and win.

We also had a float and 50,000 stickers printed saying "Black people support the miners". The response was amazingly good and we collected several thousand pounds and a lot of goodwill.

People don't realise there have been black miners for ages. Two I know personally have been miners for 28 years. There have been black miners ever since black people got here. I've been in it for 13 years.





Most people won't support something like your strike unless they can relate to it, perhaps through their own experiences. Don't you think you have a responsibility as black miners to make those links with the black community to draw support for the strike and push the NUM to support black people's struggles?

Yes, it is important to make these common links. There is a lot of racism in the trade unions — the whole trade union movement needs a shake-up.

The strike is a class issue, but they, the Establishment, like t see us divided, fighting ourselves. We need to fight as a class to change things. It is not in the bosses' interest to fight racism. We workers must fight it.

Andy Coupes told us:

In '78 and '79 when the Anti-Nazi League were formed, Hucknall and the whole of the NUM were one of the first trade unions to donate to it. Recently when Botha arrived we reaffirmed our support for the Anti-Apartheid Movement and went on the demonstration.

I realise there are a lot of links between what is happening to striking miners and the experience of black people.

I used to live in a dead-end street in Nottingham — Station Terrace. Two friends came to pick me up to go picketing. When we went to reverse the car out of the street the police stopped us and wouldn't allow us to leave.

You think that sort of thing doesn't happen, but it happens all the time to the black community. I always thought sus was overblown — but it isn't, it happens.

Police Law and the Miner's Strike

Black youth battled against the police in the streets of Southall, Toxteth, Moss Side, Brixton and other places in the summer rebellions of 1981. Young miners battle against the police in the pit villages of Grimethorpe, Dinnington and others in the hot autumn of 1984. Anger and frustration against police intimidation will explode into the streets, when people are pushed to the brink in order to defend themselves and their communities. Paramilitary police squads like the Special Patrol Groups try by mass physical and brutal force to shackle the rights of black communities and the mining communities, in ways similar to paramilitary actions in the shantytowns of Chile and South Africa. Resistance and self-defence is inevitable.

Kinnock should break his silence on state violence: 13 people have been murdered by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland, miners have been killed through violence in this strike, and black people such as Colin Roach have been murdered by racist and police violence. Where is Neil Kinnock's outrage and tears on these occasions?

Neil Kinnock should stop his scabbing on the labour movement. Workers and women got the rights to vote through extra-parliamentary actions and breaking the rotten laws in the struggle of the Chartists and the Suffragettes. He should be supporting the miners and others fighting to defend our organisations in this country.

Atma Singh
CHAIRPERSON COLNE VALLEY LPYS



STUDENTS throughout the country have been involved in basic solidarity work for the miners. Nationally, literally hundreds of thousands of pounds have been collected in colleges. Some individual studnet unions are collecting over £400 a week. Socialist Students in NOLS have been arguing in student miners' support groups for an extension beyond basic financial solidarity. Many support groups have now "twinned" with individual pits — making valuable personal links with miners.

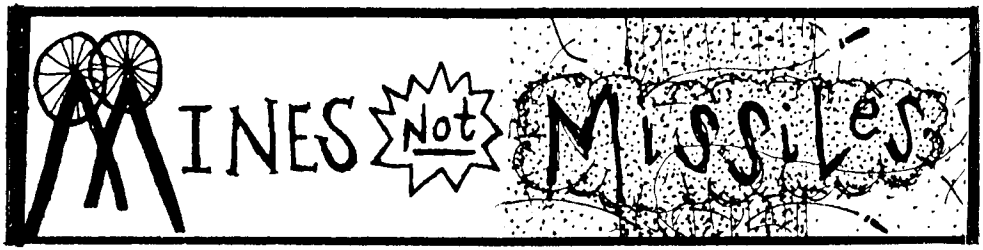
Twinning with pits has facilitated effective "two-way" solidarity. Not only do students regularly visit picket lines, but for their part local NUM branches are identifying themselves with explicitly "student" campaigns. At Manchester University, for example, Parkside NUM have offered full backing and assistance for the campaign against the abolition of the minimum grant and the implementation of tuition fees.

The strike has had its effect on the general level of militancy in the student movement as well. Students are finding it difficult to stay "middle of the road" when they regularly get their heads smashed in by H.M. Police on picket lines. November 1984 has seen the highest level of student direct action for years. Taking the NUM's lead, student unions, in conjunction with Education and local government trade unions, have at last launched a real fightback against the Tories' savaging of the education sector.

United we will win! Victory to the miners!

DAVE BRENNAN
(SSIN National Organiser)

Socialist Students in NOLS (SSIN) is affiliated to Labour Briefing. For more information contact 20a Upper Addison Gardens, London W14.



YOUTH CND SUPPORTS THE MINERS

Activists in Youth CND have long understood the importance of the demand "Jobs not Bombs".

We know the money spent on nuclear weapons (£30 billion on the Trident and Tornado systems alone) could be far better used on hospitals, jobs and schools. We know that nuclear power is dangerous and expensive and is a vital part of the nuclear weapons industry. We know the police aren't neutral, but are used by the Tory government to try and smash all opposition — from the women at Greenham to industrial struggles.

For all these reasons Youth CND has officially supported the miners from the very beginning and has fought for CND to do the same.

Tarsam Singh, Birmingham YCND

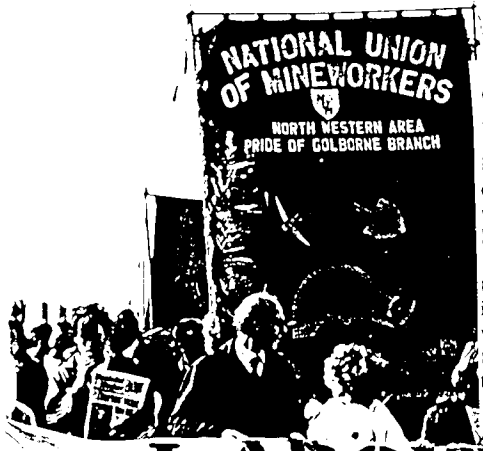
All over the country YCND groups have been helping with collections of food and money. In April the 3-day South Wales YCND Jobs not Bombs march was diverted to join an NUM demonstration. In August we held a two week long 'Bases Tour' which had miners and miner's children on it. We stopped at a picket line, sent a delegation of young women on the August 11th Women Against Pit Closures demo and collected money for the NUM. Miners spoke at all the public meetings along the way including a brilliant meeting in Southall with a black striking Notts miner and local community leaders as well as a speaker from Southall CND. The march was met in London by a Jobs not Bombs carnival with NUM speakers.

In Birmingham the LPYS and YCND organised a joint demo calling for No Trident, Jobs not Bombs, Coal not Dole!

The way we see it, if the miners can be beaten by the Tories then CND's got no chance. We want to help win this strike and we want to see more events like the Aylesham Mines not Missiles festival.

The links that are being built between activists in CND and the miners' strike are very important. For us its far more than a slogan when we say "your fight is our fight and our fight is your fight!" We know it's true and together we will win!

VICTORY TO THE MINERS.







MINES NOT MISSILES IN YORK

Helen Collinson York LPYS

"Mines not Missiles" was the demand of a national women's march in York on Nov 3rd. The aim of the march was to bring together women in the peace movement with Women Against Pit Closures in a united demonstration of anger against the Tories.

Despite 'nuclear winter' weather conditions, a coachload of Barnsley Women Against Pit Closures took part as well as women from the Selby coalfield support groups — Durham, Hull and Nottingham and Greenham peace camp.

After a rainswept march through the centre of York the women spent the afternoon in a local community centre drying out! and exchanging political experiences in informal workshops. Despite obvious differences, many were struck by the similarities between the struggle of women in the mining communities and of those in the peace movement.

Be it at Greenham common or outside a factory collecting money for the miners, both groups of women are in the front line of the struggles for a future. Both are protesting against a Tory government which spends millions of pounds of our taxes on nuclear weapons and lethal nuclear power stations, but closes mines and refuses to invest in coal, a fuel which is safer and cheaper than nuclear power.

Finally, these women are challenging stereotypes which have prevented women from playing any meaningful political role byond that of making or baking cakes for fundraising events. As a result they are sending strong tremors through the male-dominated foundation of the labour movement. The combined strength of these women, together with women in the Labour Party, LPYS and trade unions will have an even greater impact.



INTERnational SOLIDarity...

The government's attempts to break the miners' strike has meant millions of tons of scab coal coming from outside Britain. So International solidarity is vital in winning the strike. Over 50 countries have already sent donations to the miners' strike fund.

In Europe the miners' fight for jobs follows on from moves in West Germany, Denmark and Belgium for a 35 hour week. Denmark in particular has witnessed a broad movement of solidarity that has raised £50,000 and stopped coal leaving Danish ports. the CGT the Communist Party dominated union confederation in France, collected 400 tons of food and 700,000 French Francs (£60,000) in only two weeks.

Most scab coal at the moment comes from the 'Socialist' countries of Eastern Europe. Poland has sent millions of tons, however several statements in support of the British miners have been published in the journals of Solidarnosc. Below is an open letter to Arthur Scargill from three groups of Solidarnosc members in the Warsaw region, first printed in Robotnik, July 23 1984.

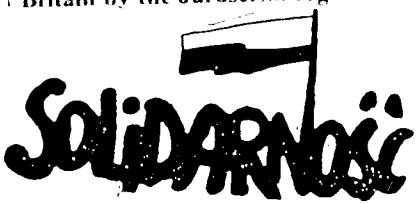
Dear Mr Scargill,

For months ourselves and thousands of our fellow trade unionists have anxiously followed your struggle for the right to work. We know that at the present time your struggle is taking on a new importance and that it is in fact a struggle for the survival of the British trade union movement.

We have already condemned, and we repeat vigorously our condemnation, of the export of coal to Britain by the Jaruselski regime.

Given that Thatcher gets on so well with Jaruzelski we think that it is time to draw some lessons. We hope that in the name of workers solidarity you will change your negative attitude to our movement. We ask you to make known to the British miners, and to all the trade unionists of Britain, our solidarity and our support.

Political group *Robotnik* (The Worker)
Editorial board of *Robotnik*, journal of the MRKS (Inter-factory Workers Committee of Solidarnosc)
Emmanuel Goldstein group



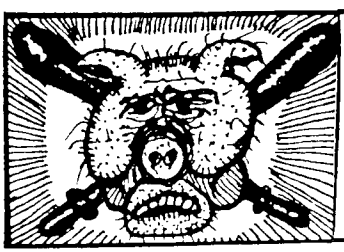
While on a European level the miners' strike is the biggest class battle, on a world scale US intervention in Nicaragua is one of the biggest issues facing the working class. Below we reprint a letter of support for the miners from the leader of Juventud Sandinista de Julio 19, the organisation of Nicaraguan youth.

Dear Companéro

A revolutionary Sandinista greeting from the youth of Nicaragua.

Our youth organisation would like to assure you of our solidarity with the struggle you are waging in your country to win Trade union democracy and to sustain your struggle without your rights being suppressed. Our organisation will like to tell you not to lose heart. Your struggle against the reactionary structures of capitalism is an example to future generations, a struggle which will be long, cruel and full of sacrifices. But we say to all, 'The struggle continues, victory is certain. Free country or death'.

Evelyn Pinto
Juventud Sandinista 19 de Julio
Managua



FROM BELFAST TO BARNSLEY.

Interview with MICK CONWAY, Acton Hall colliery, Yorks. Member of Fitzwilliam LPYS

Q: When did you go over to Ireland?
A: We went over for the August anti-internment demonstration in Belfast. The one where Sean Downes was shot. There was about 5,000 on the march, everybody walked up the Falls Road and then up Andersonstown Road. There was a massive RUC and Army presence, they were down all the side streets, at the front of the march there were three armoured cars and there were three behind as well. There were soldiers and RUC armed up o teeth and people waking photographes of the demonstrators, both sides of the road. There was a lot of tension. When we got to the SINN FEIN headquarters the RUC moved in armoured cars and stopped the demonstration — stopped poeple from marching. Some youths were standing on the roof of a derelict building. The RUC immediately started blasting them with plastic bullets after a few stones had been chucked in their direction. Everybody started panicking and running — disappearing over hedges and that. Then Gerry Adams got on the microphone and told the kids to get down off the roof and stop throwing things. Things wennt calm again after that. Everybody sat down in the road to listen to the rally. It was during this time that they shot Sean Downes. One of the Sunday papers had a picture — *a drawing* of Sean Downes running towards the RUC with a stick, making it look like he was part of some riot! There were plenty of photos taken of the rally and TV cameras which saw the whole thing. But the paper had to have a drawing. It just shows how the media in Britain lies about what is going on in the Six Counties, the same as they lie about the NUM and the strike.

Q: Why did you go over to Ireland?
A: I wanted to go and see for myself what things are like in Northern Ireland. There are connections between the way the people over there have been treated by the Army and the RUC and what's happened over here during the strike. I think that the police have perfected their tactics in the Six Counties over the last 15 years and we're now facing what the Irish people have been facing all that time. It's plain as day, it's so clear, I don't know why other people don't see it. There should be a campaign by the LPYS, the Labour Party and the trade unions to get Britain out of Ireland. I think that they have turned their backs on the Irish up to now, to be quite honest. One thing I found out while I was over there: two of the most hated politicians are Don Concannon and Roy Mason — both Labour M.P.s. That speaks for itself as far as I'm concerned. I think that there is now a lot of sympathy for the Irish people among the miners and in the community. They don't take the media view — they treat it with the contempt it deserves. People are asking questions about what is going on in the Six counties and drawing the links. The snatch squads that they are using against the pickets - that's been developed and perfected in Northern Ireland.

Q: What attitude do you think that British socialists should have to the Irish struggle?
A: I'm a front line picket! No one is going to tell me how to conduct myself on a picket line - especially not the likes of Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis. I don't think its up to people in Britain to tell the Irish how to conduct their struggle. On the demo everyone was wearing NUM badges and stickers — Coal not Dole — there is massive support for the miners among the people over there. They know that when we win and beat Thatcher it will be a victory for them as well. So its about time people in the labour movement over here realised that a victory for the Irish people is a victory for us. You'll never get anywhere near socialism over here while the British army is oppressing workers in other countries. I support all oppressed people where-ever they are.

Our communities, our future – WOMEN UNITED AGAINST PIT CLOSURES

One of the biggest strengths in this strike has been the determination of Women to defend their communities. Vicki Smailes of the Rhodesia Women's Action Group in Notts explains:

We're now in our eighth month of strike action. It hasn't been easy — far from it. We've suffered intimidation on the picket line from a uniformed army of fascist thugs, who have the cheek to call themselves policemen. We've had to put up with miners facing all sorts of trumped up charges and with the media putting around their brainwashing lies.

They're all dancing to Maggie Thatcher's tune. It's like Franco and his fascist dictatorship in Spain. He shot the opposition, it was the only way he could keep power and make no mistake it could happen here if something is not done. The police here have been issued with plastic bullets. They haven't used them yet but once they do plastic bullets will be here to stay.

So now you're not fighting for the right to work, you're fighting for your very existence, for democracy, a free society and the right to belong to a trade union. And let the other unions take heed because if the government wins against the miners their heads will be on the chopping block next.

This government are working for, and are backed up by, millionaires who are lining their pockets at the expense of the working class. We can't and won't give up the fight.

The only way we can get socialism is to become members of the Labour movement — not armchair, but an active one. This way we can tell people what's wrong with our society and make them see what socialism could do for the working class people, like getting people off the dole into full employment, a free National Health Service — not one like the one we've got now, one for the rich and one for the poor; free prescriptions, not like it is now when you can't get well because you can't afford the charges, and, above all else, we've got to be active members of the Labour Party so we can get rid of all those MPs up and down the country who do nothing to serve socialism, and who take it for granted that they are going to be reselected year after year.

We'll be able to select our own candidates and get rid of these Labour shams and put men and women in who will do their best for our communities.

In conclusion I'd like to mention the women's role in this dispute, but not too deeply because we're not in it for glory. We're in it to fight for our futures as well as the men's. We know that if they lose, we lose. After all this time they know that the women will stand for nothing short of total victory.

During the last few months we have suffered terrible hardships and it has been the women's job to make ends meet. They know that if we lose we will be living on Sup Ben and state hand-outs for the rest of our lives.

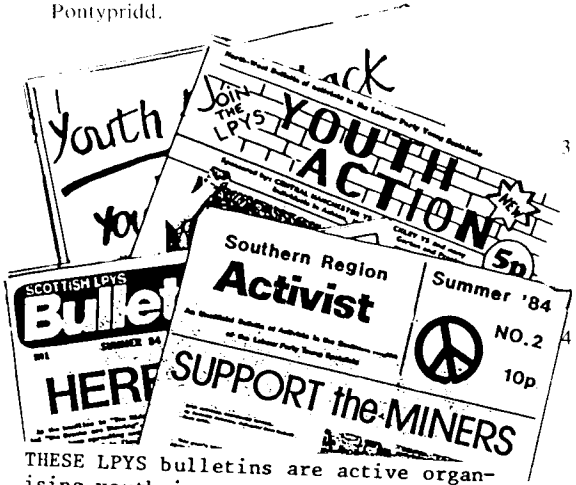
At the end of the day, when we've won this dispute, we can't just drift back to the old ways — that's why it is important to stick together and keep fighting for the future as we have over the last seven months. I'd like to pay tribute to my own women's action group who have gone picketing, done the fundraising, run the soup kitchen and on top of all this still find time to run the home. I think we should be proud.

Anyway, forward to victory. Let's put some rust on the so-called Iron Lady.

Y.S. AND THE Miners Strike

FORWARD TO VICTORY

The LPYS from the beginning of the strike has been mobilising in support of the miners. Meetings have been organised with miners and Women against Pit Closures, to present the miners' case and rally support. Many YS members have taken part in food and money collections, and sent delegations down to the picket lines. When South Wales miners' funds were sequestered 200 young people joined a demonstration in support of the miners in Pontypridd.



THESE LPYS bulletins are active organising youth in support of the miners, Greenham women, troops out of Ireland etc. Support your regional bulletin,

read it, sell it ... and if there isn't one, set it up ! Contact:
*Scottish LPYS Bulletin c/o 7 Hardie Street, Alexandria, Dumbartonshire.
*Youth Action (North West) 27 Landos Court, Butler Street, Manchester.

*Youth Fightback c/o Claire Nangle, 52 Hay Green Lane, Bourneville, Tel 459 3690
*Southern Region Activist, c/o 75 Millars Road, Brighton.

What should the LPYS be doing?

1 Taking part in the miners support groups which have been set up all around the country to co-ordinate activity. In particular the YS should aim solidarity at young people, by organising benefit gigs and film shows etc.

2 YS members should link up with campaigns they are already involved in to win support for the miners. YS members in Youth CND have been successful in linking the fight against the missiles with the fight for jobs. West Midlands Youth CND organised a 2,000 strong 'Jobs not Bombs' march in Birmingham with the YS in October.

3 Meetings should be organised in schools and colleges. At many schools debates have successfully encouraged people into activity around the miners. For many FE students the chances of a job at the end of a course of YTS scheme is unlikely — so the YS can point out that the miners fight for jobs is a fight for us all.

4 LPYS branches and regions should organise dayschools or festivals on the issues raised by the strike; fightback against the Tories; real jobs instead of YTS; the role of the police in the strike; women against pit closures; lesbians and gays support the miners; the support of black communities; jobs not bombs.

5 The LPYS should organise a national festival with other youth organisations and the NUS (National Union of Students) to show the support for the miners amongst young people.

6 We have to build the LPYS as a fighting, campaigning youth organisation that supports the miners, but also supports those who have struggled alongside the miners, such as women, lesbians and gays and the black and Asian youth.



Copies of Labour Briefing and details of your local Briefing Group are available from Jane Stockton 31 Cranwich Rd London N16





Information on the youth commission and the work being done by Briefing supporters in the LPYS is available from Bernie Wilde, 82 Eastwood Rd Balsall Heath, Birmingham tel: 021 440 4049





Labour Briefing and its Youth Commission are producing a pamphlet called 'It's our future — youth and the miners strike', with articles from young miners, women from the mining communities and young people who through the LPYS, YCND, LGYs and so on have been active in building solidarity with the miners. The strike has brought many political lessons home to youth, and the pamphlet seeks to build on this radicalisation and draw together the links that have been made during the strike. We want to see youth united in support of the miners and against the Tories and LPYS activists should raise the demand for a 'Youth Support the Miners' national event called by the LPYS.

Copies of the Pamphlet can be obtained by contacting Martin Huseyin c/o 18 Terminus St, Brighton, E.Sussex: Tel Brighton 698111 (day) or 25295 (evening).

COST 20p EACH

(PROFITS TO THE NUM)