

## Miller Bends To Agent Blackmail;

# No Coal Settlement In Sight

Negotiators for the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) walked out of bargaining talks last week, accusing United Mineworkers President Arnold Miller of backing off from tentative agreements to curb wildcat strikes, agreements which could have provided the basis for a settlement of the strike.

Miller's policy reversal is generally viewed as a capitulation to the "wildcat strike" networks infesting the UMW and linked to the Institute for Policy Studies who have threatened to wreck the projected labor stability settlement. As a result the talks are permanently recessed with the negotiations stalemated. Even if the highly unstable Miller changes his mind again, a settlement will be impossible before the end of the month at the earliest.

The "wildcat networks" are using violence and sabotage against non-union coal operations to disrupt moves toward settlement. Caravans of UMW pickets under the leadership of IPS agents invaded the Kentucky coal fields out of Ohio for the first time in several weeks. Several

trucks were forced to dump huge loads onto highways. Violent clashes erupted with local police who were in several cases overwhelmed by pickets.

Simultaneously, pickets from the IPS dominated Harlan County area invaded the Tennessee coalfields and adjacent areas in West Virginia, where similar incidents occurred.

Miller feared that the UMW Bargaining Council which contains a number of IPS-linked union officials, might reject the tentative labor stability package before it was placed before the membership for ratification. Ac-

ording to the Wall Street Journal, Jack Perry, the President of UMW District 17, has led the opposition to Miller on the Bargaining Council. Perry and Cecil Roberts, the Vice-President of District 17, were actively backing the wildcat strike wave last summer and have been calling for Miller's resignation ever since.

Actually, the overwhelming majority of UMW members are in support of the labor stability package which refinances the bankrupt Health and Welfare funds. A survey of numerous UMW local officials and county news reporters in the West Virginia coalfields indicates that the miners favor an early settlement on this basis. Miller could have approval for the proposed contract had he stuck to his guns.

### *Effects*

The Federal Energy Administration issued its first report on the strike last week predicting that the nation would survive the winter without serious coal shortages unless "something happened to stockpiles." The report says that 66 percent of domestic coal production has been closed down due to the strike of which 52 percent involves UMW mines and the remaining 14 percent non-union mines closed due to pickets or sympathy strikes.

Potomac power, based in Western Maryland, is planning to ask industrial customers to curtail power usage if the strike lasts for another two weeks, according to the *Baltimore Sun*. This is the first reported shortage in stockpiles since the strike began. Although most utilities still have long term stockpiles, the strike will affect scattered locations in early February.