

Frank Richards

# The miners' next step



Frank Richards

# **The miners' next step**

junius

**Frank Richards**  
**The miners' next step**  
**1. Politics**  
**1. Title**

**ISBN 0-950 8404-6-7**

**Produced by the**

## **Revolutionary Communist Party**

**First published July 1984**  
**Typeset by Junius Publications Ltd (TU)**  
**Printed by Morning Litho Printers Ltd (TU)**  
**Copyright © Junius Publications**  
**BCM JPLTD**  
**London WC1N 3XX.**

**Cover photograph Joe Boatman**

# Contents

|    |                                  |    |
|----|----------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Introduction . . . . .           | 5  |
| 2. | Phoney war . . . . .             | 7  |
| 3. | Two traditions . . . . .         | 13 |
| 4. | Price of collaboration . . . . . | 19 |
| 5. | Scabs or scapegoats? . . . . .   | 23 |
| 6. | Their coal — our jobs . . . . .  | 31 |
| 7. | Crisis of leadership . . . . .   | 39 |
| 8. | Lessons of the strike . . . . .  | 47 |
| 9. | A fighting alternative . . . . . | 49 |

# 1. Introduction

The miners' strike is the most important industrial dispute in Britain since the 1926 General Strike. The strike is a testimony to the courage and determination of tens of thousands of miners and their families. They have given a lead to millions of other workers. They have shown that even under the adverse conditions of recession there are those who are prepared to fight for their jobs, their dignity and for a better way of life.

The miners' strike is not just another industrial dispute. It has had a major impact on British politics. The historic importance of the strike has been well recognised by the employers and their state. The centrally coordinated activities of the police, the courts and even the social security authorities indicate that the British establishment knows what is at stake. The government is clearly prepared to go to any lengths to inflict a setback on the miners.

The miners' strike is of concern to all sections of the working class. It is an important indication of the emerging patterns of conflict between the classes in modern Britain. The jobs and living standards of millions of workers hang in the balance awaiting the outcome of this power struggle. That is why, even in the midst of the battle, it is essential to examine the issues raised by the strike, look at some of the problems it has thrown up and try to draw out some of its lessons for miners and for the rest of the working class.

## 2. The phoney war

The figures that chart the decline of coalmining in Britain are well known. When the coal industry was nationalised in 1947 there were almost 1000 pits in operation. Today there are less than 200. Since the 1974 strike around 80 pits have been closed. In the 12 months leading up to the 1984 strike, more than 20 000 jobs disappeared, one tenth of the national workforce.

In 1972 and 1974 the miners won higher wages in major battles with the employers and the government. Yet the assault on jobs and living standards continued as soon as the miners returned to work. All that happened was that the employers changed their line of attack. Whereas the Tories sought a direct confrontation with the NUM, the new Labour government elected in the midst of the 1974 strike pursued a more subtle strategy. For the next three years the Labour government kept up a steady barrage of propaganda to push the miners into accepting area incentive schemes.

### Double dealing

The divisive productivity deals were rejected by 62 per cent of the miners in a national ballot in November 1974. But the Labour government did not let up. The driving force behind the schemes — energy minister Tony Benn — promised that the productivity deals would help the miners. He claimed they were 'designed to avoid the evils of past piecework schemes' (*Financial Times*, 26 November 1977). But the miners remained unmoved even by Benn's promises. In a national ballot in November 1977 the proportion against the schemes increased to 66 per cent.

The government and the Coal Board still refused to take no for an answer. They conspired with their stooges on the NUM executive to introduce the incentive schemes by back door methods. They successfully played one area off against another and within three months all the areas had agreed to implement productivity deals.

The strategy pursued by the Coal Board and the government against the miners since 1974 has been remarkably successful. Every national ballot for strike action over the past 10 years has been defeated. In recent ballots the proportion of miners

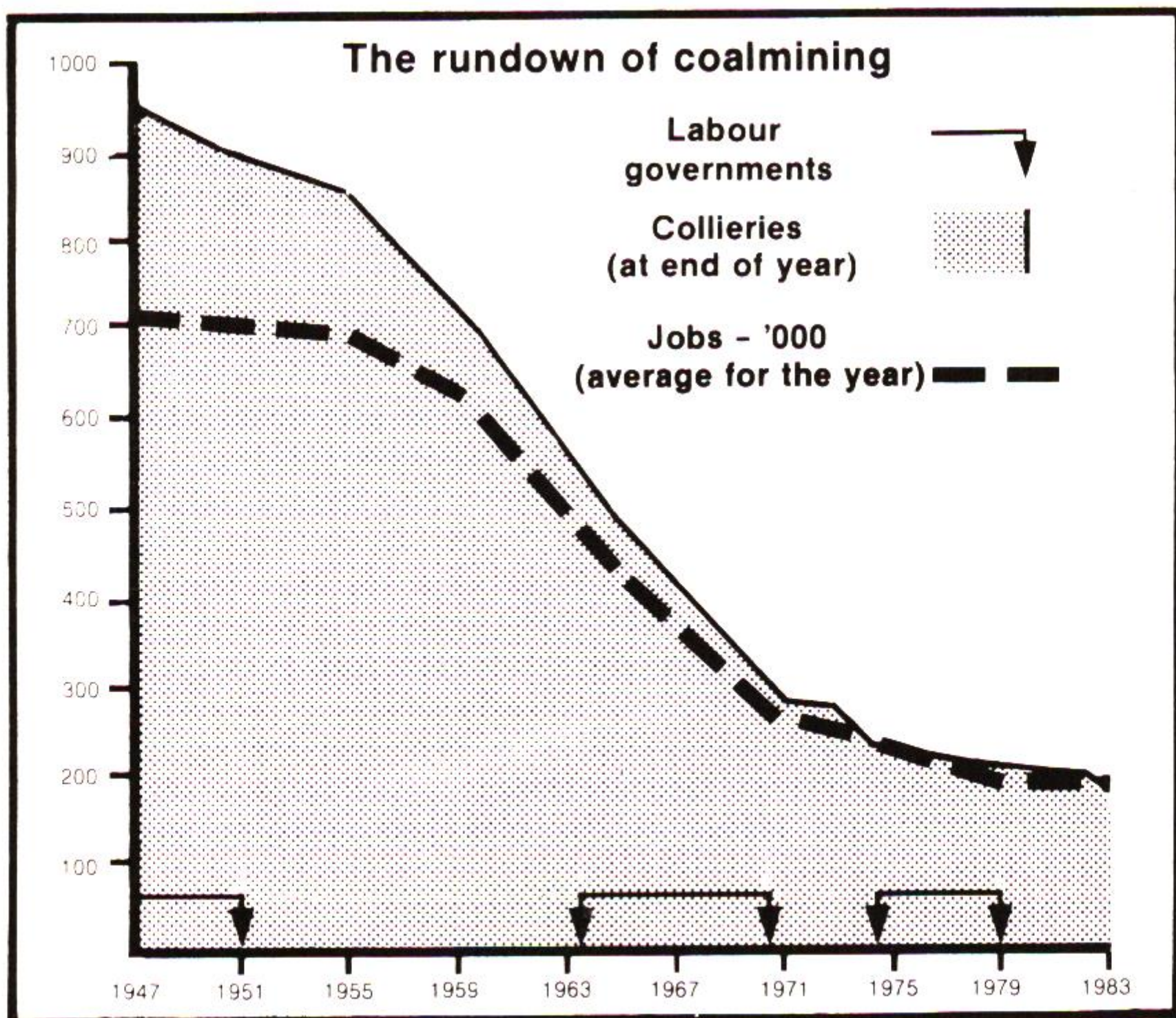
in favour of strike action has declined from just short of 50 per cent in December 1979 to less than 40 per cent in March 1983.

The fact that every attempt to launch national action in defence of jobs and wages since 1974 has failed should not be taken as evidence that the miners have been unprepared to fight to defend their living standards. In February 1981 thousands of miners came out on strike against a threat to close 23 pits. In 1982 and 1983 there were more strikes in coalmining than in any other industry. The problem was that most of these strikes involved only a section of miners — usually those under immediate threat of pit closures.

The weakness of support for nationwide action encouraged the Coal Board to pursue a divide and rule policy. This resulted in a series of disputes in which groups of isolated miners were forced to take on the might of the Coal Board alone.

- at **Kinneil** colliery in Scotland miners organised a sit-in down the pit during Christmas 1982. They sent out flying pickets to bring out the Scottish coalfield in support. However, the Scottish NUM executive opposed their call and criticised the strikers for not going through the official colliery review procedure. Despite the militant action taken by the Kinneil miners the pit was closed in April 1983.

- at **Tynmawr-Lewis-Merthyr** colliery in South Wales miners won the backing of the majority of the Welsh miners in a ballot over strike action against closure early



in 1983. But a national ballot organised in March failed to support the Welsh miners and South Wales was left in the lurch. In the end they were forced to retreat and Tynmawr-Lewis-Merthyr was closed.

● at **Cardowan** colliery in Scotland miners came out on strike immediately closure was announced in May 1983. The Scottish NUM conference, which was in progress at the time, passed a resolution of support for the action. But when the Coal Board started to transfer men from Cardowan to other pits in the area the Scottish NUM executive maintained a diplomatic silence. During July and August miners at Polmaise, Bogside and Polkemmet collieries took action against these transfers. The Scottish NUM leadership discouraged action against transfers and provided no leadership to the men on strike. As a result Cardowan soon joined the list of pit closures.

### STRIKE BALLOTS %

|                 | YES  | NO   |
|-----------------|------|------|
| <b>1970</b>     | 55.5 | 44.5 |
| <b>1971</b>     | 58.8 | 41.2 |
| <b>1972</b>     | 96.5 | 3.5  |
| <b>1973</b>     | 36.6 | 63.4 |
| <b>1974</b>     | 81.0 | 19.0 |
| <b>1979</b>     | 48.8 | 51.2 |
| <b>1982 Jan</b> | 44.7 | 55.3 |
| <b>1982 Oct</b> | 39.5 | 60.6 |
| <b>1983</b>     | 39.2 | 60.8 |

The two successful national strikes in 1972 and 1974 were backed by enormous ballot majorities.

The feebleness of the fightback against pit closures in Scotland and South Wales strengthened the confidence and determination of the Coal Board. When Ian MacGregor took over as chairman in September 1983 the employers launched a campaign of provocation designed to soften up resistance to further closures. In Scotland alone there was a whole series of incidents:

- at **Monktonhall** 300 miners were told they were shortly to be made redundant
- at **Killoch** 30 miners were threatened with the sack unless productivity increased
- at **Polmaise** a whole shift of 130 men was locked out for reporting late after attending a meeting to discuss the threat to Monktonhall
- at **Frances** a union delegate was dismissed (and later reinstated) for taking a collection on behalf of the Monktonhall strikers.

From Scotland the Coal Board extended its offensive into other regions. In

Northumberland the employers warned that Bates colliery was living on borrowed time. In Durham, the bosses announced that two more pits were shortly to close. In South Wales the Board recommended the closure of Wyndham Western pit. In Lancashire Crom Cronton was earmarked for closure. Even in Nottinghamshire four pits were given the death sentence.

## Provocations

The opening salvoes of the MacGregor regime showed that the phoney war was about to come to an end. As MacGregor prepared a major programme of closures a showdown between the Coal Board and the miners' union appeared increasingly inevitable. The first important sign of miners' resistance came in September 1983 in South Yorkshire. When a miner was sacked at Dodworth colliery for hitting a foreman the rest of the miners promptly came out on strike. This unofficial strike served notice to MacGregor that the miners were not going to allow the new boss to walk all over them.

Rank and file anger was beginning to erupt in Scotland and other areas as well as in South Yorkshire. The NUM leadership came under increasing pressure to take action. A special delegate conference rejected MacGregor's insulting 5.5 per cent wage offer in October and the NUM called a national overtime ban to start in November.

The overtime ban was more a declaration of determination than a call to action. It did nothing to stop pit closures. During the overtime ban the Coal Board shut five pits — Rothwell in North Yorkshire, Wyndham Western and Britannia in South Wales and Desford and Snibston in Leicestershire. In February the Scottish



**Looking for a lead:** Scots miners were ready to fight pit closures.

NUM executive rejected a call for an all-out strike to prevent the closure of Polmaise and Bogside collieries. Despite the lack of area leadership strikes broke out at Seafield, Frances, Killoch and Barony collieries.

It was MacGregor who brought the phoney war to an end. On 1 March he announced the closure of Cortonwood colliery in South Yorkshire. Five days later he declared an accelerated programme of pit closures. In the meantime, miners from Cortonwood, the rest of South Yorkshire and Scotland were already mounting pickets and pushing the union leaders to call all-out action. On 9 March the Yorkshire area executive made the local action official, Scotland followed suit and the 1984 miners' strike was in progress.

The 1984 strike was preceded by a decade of indecisive conflict. Miners were ready to fight, but their resistance was often doomed to defeat because they fought in isolation from miners in other coalfields. Divisions among the miners deepened through the seventies and early eighties. In Scotland, one pit after another was closed without any solidarity from the better off collieries in the area. Miners in English coalfields were reluctant to risk strike action to defend jobs in Scotland, Wales — or even in Kent.

## Pointing the finger

The miners themselves have often been blamed for being unwilling to resist closures. At the miners' 1983 conference in Perth Arthur Scargill attributed the weakness of opposition to closures to miners' 'lack of political education'. Yet while he was speaking miners at Cardowan were fighting hard for their jobs and looking to the NUM for a lead. Only a few months earlier Welsh miners had come out on strike against pit closures only to be let down by the other areas.

Others have pointed the finger at miners who work at pits where they earn high bonuses. Yet there is no correlation between militancy and low wage levels. North Yorkshire's highest earners at Kellingley have always supported militant action. However, those at the bottom of the area earnings league at Savile are usually reluctant to get involved in strikes.

It is all too easy to blame miners for their 'lack of political education' or for earning high bonuses. However, the defeat of successive national ballots for strike action suggests another problem. The lack of unity of action over the past decade indicates that there is a lack of policies that could unite the miners. Local and regional loyalties have become stronger during the past decade. Today in the midst of the strike it is easy to make a scapegoat of the working miners of Nottinghamshire. But where were the other regions when they were needed by the miners of South Wales and Scotland?

The 1984 miners' strike did not come about because all the old problems had been overcome. It erupted because the miners had no choice but to fight. It was MacGregor's provocative assault that finally forced the miners into action. The strike began despite the persistence of divisions. The miners have finally been brought together by MacGregor, not because the problems of the past decade have

been solved. But if the strike is to be successful the miners need to know why their militancy has continually been thwarted by disunity and why areas like Nottinghamshire continue to produce coal at the height of the biggest miners' strike for a generation.

### 3. Two traditions

Divisions among miners are nothing new. Regional and sectional rivalries have been prevalent throughout the past century. The first national miners' union — the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, formed in 1889 — was a federation of more or less independent area unions. In the twenties regional animosities ran so deep that breakaway company unions were established in Nottinghamshire and South Wales. The miners' federation remained a loose assembly of area unions until 1944 when its annual conference decided to set up a more centralised union — the modern National Union of Mineworkers.

The formation of the NUM marked an important step towards a unified national body. Yet the NUM has never overcome the federal character of the earlier organisation. Even today each area of the NUM has considerable local autonomy. Each area remains a trade union in its own right. Each has its own officers and offices and collects its own dues, sending only a portion of its funds to the NUM's central office. Area leaders retain considerable local independence.

The weak central control of the NUM reflects the strength of sectionalism among the miners. Although the miners are one of the most militant sections of the British working class, most of their activity takes place on a regional level. Over the past century strikes confined to one area have been the norm — national strikes are exceptional.

Over the past 10 years miners' disputes have tended to become more and more sectional. The failure of Nottinghamshire to join the 1984 strike follows the recent trend of uncoordinated regional action.

It has never been easy to unite British miners. The dispersed nature of the coalfields and the harsh conditions of the industry have always made collective action at national level difficult to organise. However, the decisive factor has always been the prevailing outlook on trade union and political affairs among the miners. We can identify two distinct traditions which have had a formative influence on the policies of the miners and their union.

In the early years of the present century, particularly from the pre-First World War strike wave until the 1926 General Strike, the miners were strongly influenced by ideas of independent rank and file action and anti-capitalist trade unionism.

### **Major strikes in the British coalmining industry**

|             |                                     |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>1902</b> | Various districts                   |
| <b>1909</b> | South Wales                         |
| <b>1910</b> | Durham, Northumberland, South Wales |
| <b>1912</b> | National                            |
| <b>1914</b> | Yorkshire                           |
| <b>1915</b> | South Wales                         |
| <b>1918</b> | South Wales                         |
| <b>1919</b> | Yorkshire (twice)                   |
| <b>1919</b> | Various districts                   |
| <b>1920</b> | National                            |
| <b>1921</b> | National                            |
| <b>1926</b> | National                            |
| <b>1931</b> | South Wales                         |
| <b>1944</b> | South Wales, Yorkshire              |
| <b>1969</b> | Various districts                   |
| <b>1970</b> | Various districts                   |
| <b>1972</b> | National                            |
| <b>1974</b> | National                            |
| <b>1984</b> | Various districts                   |

Both before this period, and even more strongly after it, the main influence on miners was the policy of collaboration with the employers. At first, advocates of this policy among the union leaders pursued a strategy of cooperation with the mineowners. When the mineowners failed to respond positively to the union leaders' advances they sought nationalisation of the industry as a solution.

After nationalisation the supporters of industrial collaboration argued for a joint approach with the Coal Board to the problems of the industry. They pressed for an industry-wide common front in negotiations with whatever government was in power. Let's look first at the tradition of class struggle trade unionism among the miners.

## **The miners' next step**

The miners played a central role in the eruption of class conflict in Britain in the decade around the First World War. Up to this time most of the miners' leaders were affiliated to the Liberal Party and looked upon socialist ideas with contempt. The leadership of the miners' federation was generally conservative in its views and moderate in its dealings with the mineowners. Yet from the 1890s onwards rank and file miners moved towards a more militant and radical outlook. For the first time left-wing ideas began to gain a hearing among miners.

Left-wing miners viewed the established union leaders' policy of industrial collaboration as self-defeating and divisive. Collaboration with the employers tended to exaggerate regional differences as miners in one area developed ties with

their employers rather than linking up with their fellow miners in other areas. The left argued for a strong national union and an end to all local negotiations. In place of collaboration they called for an aggressive defence of the independent interests of the working class.

The emergence of a strong left wing in the miners' federation weakened sectionalism in the union. When the employers insisted on district by district negotiations in 1921 the union fought them all the way. Under pressure from the left the union leaders called for a national settlement of wages and the establishment of a national wages pool. The aim of the national wages pool was to ensure that every district, no matter how profitable the local pits, would share equally. The effect of the pool would be to even out regional differences in wage rates.

Despite the fact that the regions with better geological conditions had little to gain they supported the 1921 strike for a national wages pool. The miners in Nottinghamshire were better paid than any of the other regions and had nothing to gain directly from the strike. Nevertheless, the Notts men fought a bitter struggle from April to July to defend the conditions of miners in other regions.

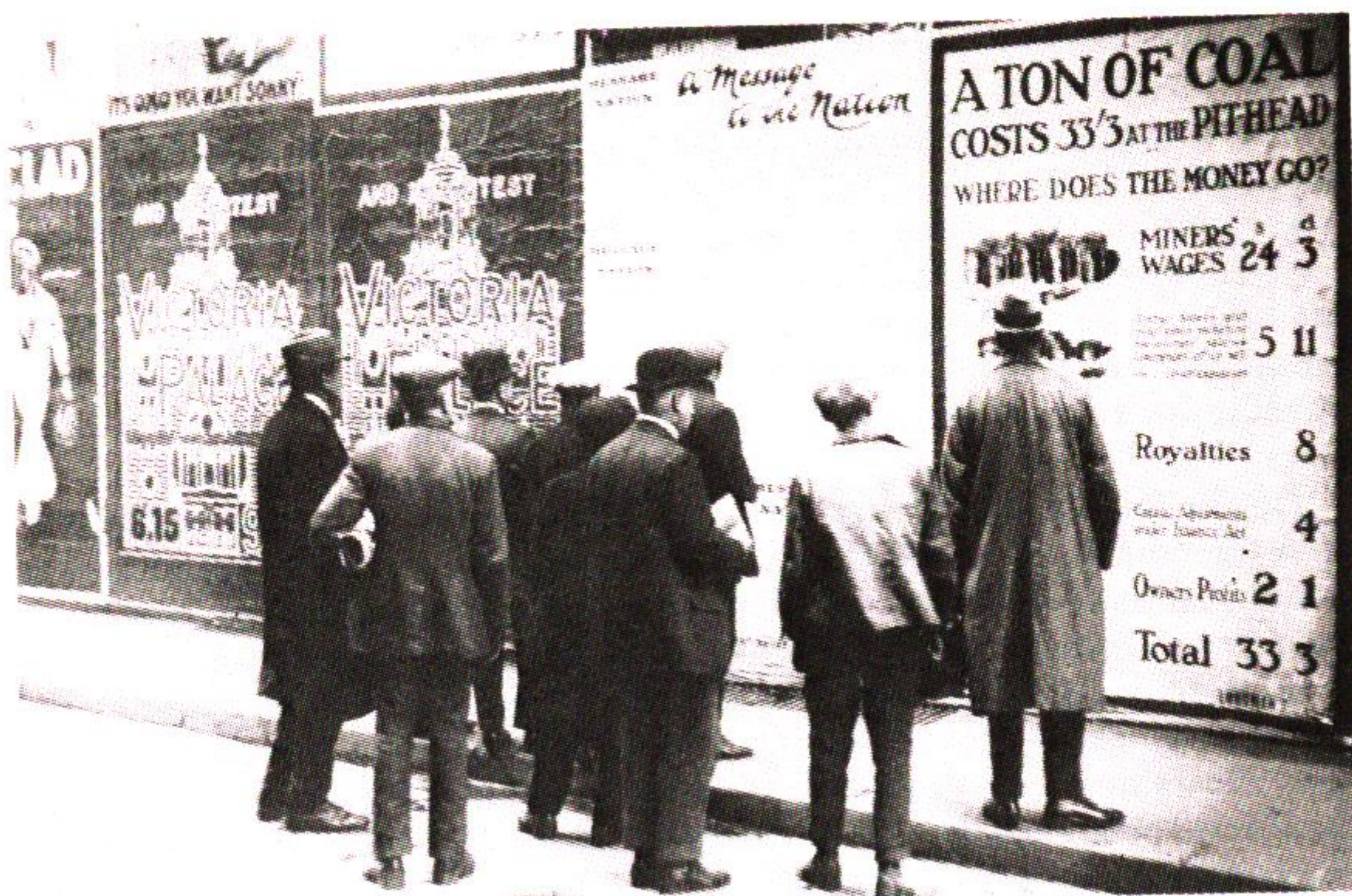
The stand taken by the miners in 1921 was a fine example of working class unity. The miners thwarted the employers' attempts to play off the more prosperous against the poorer regions. Unity was made possible by the erosion of the policy of industrial collaboration. Miners united with other miners and saw that they could only succeed if they put their class interests before parochial concerns about the differing profitability of pits in different areas.

The most militant exponents of the class struggle policy were the supporters of the South Wales Unofficial Reform Committee. Their famous pamphlet *The miners' next step*, published in 1912, summed up the best traditions of the British miners. *The miners' next step* identified collaboration as an evil that destroyed the miners' scope for independent action. The rank and file committee insisted that miners should not care about the economics of mining. That was the affair of the employers who owned the pits. The militants recommended miners to fight for what they needed, not for what the employers said the industry could afford to give them. *The miners' next step* recognised that nationalisation of the industry would provide no solution for the miners. It would merely mean a change from one owner to another. The pamphlet promoted a different approach:

**'Our only concern is to see to it, that those who create the value receive it. And if by the force of a more perfect organisation and more militant policy, we reduce profits, we shall at the same time tend to eliminate the shareholders who own the coalfields. As they feel the increasing pressure we shall be bringing on their profits, they will loudly cry for nationalisation. We shall and must strenuously oppose this in our own interests, and in the interests of our objective.'**

The Unofficial Reform Committee recognised that nationalisation was a capitalist solution 'whose one concern' would be 'to extract as much profit as possible, in order to relieve the taxation of other landlords and capitalists'.

In the view of *The miners' next step* the interests of the miners could not be



**Unconvinced:** in 1921 militant miners demanded better wages — whatever the cost to the bosses

advanced by the action of the British state. They could only rely on the class struggle. In the first sentence of its policy statement *The miners' next step* declared that 'the old policy of identity of interest between employers and ourselves (should) be abolished, and a policy of open hostility installed'.

The policy of the Unofficial Reform Committee never became dominant within the miners' federation. Yet it expressed a sentiment that was widespread among the rank and file. It was an outlook that helped to forge a sense of common purpose which the British miners have not recaptured since the early twenties. This anti-capitalist awareness was a crucial factor in the emergence of the miners as the leading section of the working class. Although the miners were eventually defeated and the independent rank and file movement destroyed, the politics of *The miners' next step* stood as a model of how to fight the capitalist class.

## Collaboration

In contrast to the rank and file militants the leaders of the miners' federation argued that the welfare of the miners depended on the well-being of the mining industry. Union officials took a keen interest in the industry and often spent more time considering the economics of coal production than defending miners' living standards. The union's preoccupation with the viability of coalmining meant that it restricted its aims to what it reckoned the industry could afford.

During the early twenties the scope for industrial collaboration was limited by the leftward shift of the rank and file. After the General Strike it re-emerged with

full force. The 1926 defeat shattered the miners' federation and the union leaders were quick to pin the blame on militancy. Despite widespread demoralisation among the miners the union leaders' policy of collaboration did not make much headway. Victorious and arrogant, the coalowners did not need to collaborate with the union officials. Tens of thousands of miners were unemployed and hundreds of militants had been victimised — the employers could now dictate the terms.

The employers' scorn for collaboration did not inhibit the miners' leaders from pursuing their policy. Instead of looking to the hard-faced coalowners the miners' federation sought the assistance of the state. By the thirties the crisis in the coal industry was so profound that most informed observers appreciated that it was only a matter of time before it was taken out of private hands. The Depression confirmed the view of the miners' leaders that militancy was useless and that the only solution was to get the state to nationalise the industry. At its 1933 conference — held at a time when unemployment in mining was at its peak — the miners' federation formulated a clear policy on nationalisation. Union leaders stated that before they could fight for better wages, they would have to assist the nationalisation of the mining industry.

Miners' leader Ebby Edwards put forward a statement of policy that has influenced the thinking of the union leadership to this day. He began by denouncing the futility of the class struggle approach:

**'It may be said that while coal capitalism exists it should not be any concern of ours as to how it functions; we must demand wage increases and coal capitalism should adjust to meet our demands. . . . It is the policy of continual conflict. . . . I believe it is a policy leading to disaster.'** (cited in R Page Arnot, *The miners in crisis and war*, 1961)

Instead of forcing the coal capitalists to adjust to the demands of the miners, Edwards argued that the miners should adjust their claims to what the capitalists could give:

**'It is organisation of the disposal and sale of coal at an economic price that determines the question of wages. . . . In short, the conduct and policy of this industry precedes and determines the capacity of the industry.'**

Edwards' policy amounted to an appeal to miners to accept that their wages should depend on the performance of their industry. Miners' living standards were no longer to be determined by the capacity of miners to fight the mineowners, but by the 'capacity of the industry'. Instead of fighting for their members the miners' leaders launched a campaign for the nationalisation of the mining industry. It was in the thirties that the union adopted the now familiar approach of defending the coal industry on the grounds of the national interest. The union leaders appointed themselves custodians of the industry with a heartfelt commitment to its reform and expansion. Union policies were presented as advantageous not only for miners but also as being for the benefit of the nation. The more the union leadership talked

about the efficiency of industry and the energy needs of the nation, the less resources it devoted to looking after the welfare of its members. The publication in 1936 of *Coal: the Labour plan*, a joint union and Labour Party document, marked the triumph of collaboration in the miners' federation. Since 1936 virtually every claim made by the miners' union has been justified on the grounds that it was in the best interests of the industry and the nation. The dominant tradition of the post-war miners stretches with little alteration or interruption from *Coal: the Labour plan* of 1936 to the 1974 *Plan for Coal*.

## 4. The price of collaboration

During and after the Second World War the employers and the government changed their tune and eagerly took up the union leaders' offers of collaboration. The badly organised and technologically backward mining industry was in a state of near collapse at a time when efficient fuel supplies to industry were critical for the war effort. The capitalist class had no other option but to nationalise the mines. The government welcomed the cooperative approach of the leadership of the miners' federation. Indeed during the forties the NUM and the capitalist class had a virtually identical policy towards the mining industry.

At the end of the war both the capitalist class and the union agreed that a return to private ownership in coal was out of the question. In 1947 Clement Attlee's Labour government formally ratified the system of public ownership that had been in operation throughout wartime. The government established the system of industrial relations which still prevails in coalmining today.

### Working for Britain

The NUM never flinched in its pursuit of industrial collaboration. It policed its own members to ensure that the nationalised industry ran smoothly. In 1947 the NUM executive voluntarily suspended the five day week so that miners could work longer hours for the nation. The leaders of the NUM, many of them members of the Communist Party, justified these sacrifices on the grounds that nationalisation would benefit the miners and the working class. They claimed too that since the Coal Board was more of a community board than an ordinary employer, the militant methods formerly used against the coalowners were no longer appropriate. Cooperation with the Coal Board became a way of life.

Arthur Horner, the NUM's general secretary and a leading member of the Communist Party, told the union's 1948 conference that miners should stand up for the Coal Board:

**'We can say to the Board — you have done well, but we will continue to help you do much better.'**

Horner kept his promise to the letter. Despite the booming demand for coal in the fifties the NUM moderated its wage demands. Through a system of joint consultation with the Coal Board, the union leaders agreed to hundreds of pit closures as a matter of course. They discouraged militancy and refused to give official backing to strikes. Until the 1972 national dispute all strikes in mining were unofficial. By then nationalisation had cost 700 pits, more than 500 000 jobs and miners' wages had fallen to the bottom of the earnings table.

The Coal Board's working partnership with the NUM certainly helped the state to stabilise the British coal industry. But it had a devastating impact on the mining community. During the fifties and sixties the effects of the jobs holocaust were largely mitigated by the possibility of getting jobs in other industries. But by the end of the sixties the problems facing the miners could no longer be ignored. Pressure for a change of course began to build up among the rank and file. The resentments of 20 years erupted in the major national strikes of the early seventies.

In the 1972 and 1974 strikes the miners got back some of the money they had lost over the previous 20 years. The experience of nationalisation had shown that there was little to choose between a private employer and a public corporation. The experience of striking confirmed that industrial action not public ownership could win the miners higher wages and better conditions. The energy crisis of the early seventies helped to put the miners in a strong bargaining position. Yet without fighting they would have received back little of the wealth that they had created.

The miners' militancy showed that the class struggle was the only guarantee of workers' welfare. The miners' flying pickets expressed the desire of rank and file miners to make their union a fighting organisation rather than a servile junior



**The 1972 strike:** miners' militancy won back lost ground

partner of the Coal Board. Unfortunately, militancy alone could not overcome the pervasive influence of industrial collaboration. In the aftermath of the seventies strikes the left gradually gathered strength in the NUM leadership. The left did not abandon collaboration but put a different emphasis on it. Instead of simply cooperating in the rundown of pits, the left sought to take advantage of the favourable market conditions to use militancy to press the Coal Board to adopt expansionist policies. Meanwhile, to restore peace in the mining industry and foster a new climate of collaboration the British state looked to the Labour Party.

The Labour Party has had a special relationship with the miners ever since the close of the First World War. Whenever the miners have been in trouble the union leaders have argued that the only solution was to elect a Labour government. The links between the union leadership and the Labour Party became even more intimate after nationalisation. Yet Labour governments have done little in practice to help the miners. On the contrary, whenever Labour has been in government miners have been told not to rock the boat and make life difficult. As Prime Minister in the sixties, Harold Wilson took full advantage of the miners' deference to the Labour Party. In 1968 Wilson's government hit an all time record of pit closures in one year — 76. In 12 months more than 57 000 jobs in mining disappeared, a 15 per cent drop in the national workforce.

When Wilson returned to power — on the backs of the miners — in 1974, he returned to the task of rationalising the coalmining industry. In the aftermath of the miners' strike it was no longer possible to use the old methods of mass closures. Wilson's first concern was to re-establish harmony between the union and the Coal Board. The *Plan for Coal*, published in 1974, was the centrepiece of the government's strategy. The *Plan for Coal* was an outline corporate plan for the industry signed by the government, the Coal Board and the NUM. It aimed to create a firm framework for collaboration and to make the NUM indirectly responsible for running the industry. A close partnership between union and management was necessary to make the industry more efficient:

**'The Board recognises that the necessary advances in productivity can be secured only with the full cooperation of the workforce.'**

In return for cooperation *Plan for Coal* promised a programme of investment in the industry.

## Doubletalk

The *Plan for Coal* was a model of doubletalk. To the miners it promised job security and higher wages in an expanding modern industry. To the capitalists it promised efficiency and higher productivity. In whatever way it was interpreted the link between investment and higher productivity was inescapable. No sooner was *Plan for Coal* published than the Labour government made its intentions clear. The *Plan for Coal* was followed by government proposals to replace the negotiation of wages at national level through the 1966 National Power Loading Agreement with area incentive schemes.

The area incentive schemes followed directly from the *Plan for Coal*. The aim was to reward high productivity and to eliminate the less efficient pits. In this way investment and efficiency could go together:

**'The majority of investment for boosting production capacity at existing pits will be at general purpose collieries where production costs are significantly lower than average.'**

The incentive schemes were designed not only to raise productivity but to weaken the unity of the miners. The employers' objective in linking bonuses to productivity was to make sure that the more prosperous pits would benefit and hence have little in common with the less efficient pits.

Between 1974 and 1977 the Labour government set about breaking down the resistance of the miners. Labour ministers made all kinds of promises to win acceptance of the incentive schemes. As energy minister Tony Benn used his considerable powers of persuasion to sell the deals. In a letter to every miner he begged for approval for area productivity deals:

**'I hope — and believe — that miners will give the scheme a fair trial.'** (*The Daily Telegraph*, 26 October 1977)

The eventual acceptance of the area incentive schemes was a triumph for the Wilson government. The government had succeeded in restoring collaboration in the industry and containing the threat of militancy. The legacy of the victory of Wilson and Benn still hangs over the miners today. The *Plan for Coal* institutionalised collaboration in the industry while the area incentive scheme destroyed the unity that had been so important in the strikes of 1972 and 1974.

One of the first areas to negotiate an area incentive scheme in 1978 was Nottinghamshire. And in the 1984 dispute the intransigent refusal of the majority of Notts men to join the strike has been a major blow to the unity of the miners and to the effectiveness of the strike. What is so special about the Notts miners?

## 5. Scabs or scapegoats?

Nottinghamshire miners have never been noted for their militancy. They have long had a reputation for moderation and sectionalism. The Nottinghamshire coalfield has traditionally been one of the most prosperous and productive sections of the mining industry. On many occasions the Notts miners have broken ranks with their colleagues in the course of a strike. In 1893, in the middle of the first national strike called by the miners' federation, they returned to work leaving their fellow miners in a vulnerable situation. Again in 1926 the Notts miners returned to work, thus ensuring that the strike would be defeated. Following the defeat Nottinghamshire became the centre of the infamous Spencer union. Led by Labour MP George Spencer, the Notts miners were organised into a breakaway company union.

In recent years these conservative traditions have again come to the fore. In the 1983 General Election many Notts miners voted for the Tories or the SDP/Liberal Alliance. The Labour Party couldn't even win Sherwood — a constituency which contains 13 collieries and little else but mining communities. In the regional strike ballot at the start of the present dispute 73.5 per cent of the Notts miners voted against all-out action.

As the strike has progressed the divisions between the Notts men and miners in other coalfields have become even more pronounced. In early May thousands of working miners confronted thousands of striking miners outside the union's Nottinghamshire headquarters after a 'right to work' march in Mansfield organised by non-strikers. They were kept apart by ranks of police. The Nottinghamshire Working Miners' Committee was set up soon after the Mansfield confrontation. With full backing from the Coal Board and the Tories, it aims to put the maximum pressure on Notts miners who are on strike. Committee members have taken over the functions of left-wing union officials involved in the strike. In a number of pits — Blidworth, Thoresby, Cresswell and Ollerton — the right-wing committee men have taken control of the union. The strike-breakers scored some important successes in the June elections for branch officials and inflicted defeat after defeat on long-serving union representatives.

Everybody has their own opinion on the peculiarities of the Notts miners. Journalists, academics and miners have put forward a now familiar list of reasons

to explain their conservatism. Many of the explanations seem plausible and have received widespread public acceptance during the course of the strike. But do they really make sense? Let's look at the three main arguments.

## 'A different breed of men'

Many miners take the view that there is something intrinsically different about the make-up of the Notts miners. They argue that, unlike miners in Scotland, Wales, Kent or Yorkshire, the Notts miners have no backbone and lack the will to fight.

This opinion, which is widely accepted in the mining communities, is not confirmed by history. It is true that Nottinghamshire lacks the militant traditions of the left-wing South Wales area. But in numerous instances the Notts miners have demonstrated a determination to fight.

During the 1920 strike over wages, Nottinghamshire was more militant than 16 other districts which voted for acceptance of the Lloyd George government's offer. During the 1921 lockout, Yorkshire and Northumberland voted for acceptance of the employers' offer — Nottinghamshire rejected it. The Notts miners stayed firm even though they had less to gain from the strike than other more badly paid districts. The Notts miners fought back in the face of the most intensive police provocation experienced in any coalfield.

More recently, the Notts miners have shown their readiness to take militant action to defend their jobs and living standards. They played a full role in the



**True:** but Notts miners face a bigger battle than militants in other areas

national strike in 1972. And together with Derbyshire in 1973, they took the lead in implementing the overtime ban which eventually resulted in the successful 1974 national strike.

History shows that there is nothing inherently different about the Notts miners that sets them apart from their fellow miners in other parts of the country. In fact, there is no such thing as a 'Notts miner'. Throughout the twentieth century successive waves of migrants have come to make up the workforce of the Notts coalfield. A recent study of the coal mines opened up in the eastern part of the county beneath Sherwood Forest reveals that most of the miners were immigrants from Scotland, Wales, Durham and Yorkshire (Robert J Waller, *The Dukeries transformed*, OUP, 1983). This tradition has continued in the post-war period. In the fifties miners from clapped-out pits in Scotland, the North East and elsewhere packed their bags and moved to Nottinghamshire. In the sixties the Coal Board operated a transfer scheme which assisted the removal of miners from North to South.

Far from being a race apart, most Notts miners are related by blood to those who work in the pits of Scotland, Durham and Wales. It is true that they do not have the long and stable traditions of the mining communities of South Wales. But then neither do the Kent miners — and this has not stopped them going on strike.

### **'It's the money'**

Many militants believe that miners in Nottinghamshire are strike-breaking because they have been bought off by high bonuses. Tales abound of miners in Nottinghamshire earning hundreds of pounds a week in bonuses. Many groups on the left have taken up these tales to explain the conservatism of the Notts miners.

Take-home pay has been higher in Nottinghamshire than in other mining areas. Compared to miners in South Wales, those in Notts are doing quite well. However, the area incentive scheme has not opened a goldmine in Nottinghamshire. Before its introduction, pits in Nottinghamshire were already working at high levels of productivity and have thus experienced difficulties in raising output. In the first few years after the introduction of the productivity scheme, many Notts miners received high bonuses. But during the past five years this has tapered off and regional differentials have narrowed.

| <b>NCB Area</b> | <b>Average bonus on<br/>faces (£)</b> | <b>Colliery bonus average<br/>(£)</b> |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| North Yorkshire | 61                                    | 48                                    |
| Barnsley        | 56                                    | 43                                    |
| North Notts     | 52                                    | 38                                    |
| South Notts     | 42                                    | 31                                    |
| South Wales     | 32                                    | 22                                    |

The table above, taken from the *Incomes Data Services* of May 1984, explodes the myth of the labour aristocrats of Nottinghamshire. The figures — from the last week of April 1983 — reveal major differences in area bonuses. But if the bonus rate is the main factor behind Nottinghamshire's conservatism, why are miners in the better off North Yorkshire and the militant Barnsley areas on strike and worse paid Notts miners still at work? There is no direct correlation between the level of bonus payments and miners' militancy. Moreover, it is not true that the Notts miners can look forward to a secure future. Many Notts pits are about as secure as a row of condemned houses — Sutton, Blidworth, Babbington, Mooregreen, Newstead, Pyc Hill — all are loss-makers under threat of closure.

The high bonus argument is also favoured by the ruling class and the media. For years the ruling class has claimed that young miners with mortgages, cars and videos will not follow the path of militancy. This myth has been shattered by thousands of young miners from Yorkshire, Scotland, Wales and Kent, who have taken on the Coal Board, the police and the courts in a win or lose all battle.

## 'Spencer's men'

The most plausible popular explanation for the anomaly of the Notts miners is the tradition of Spencerism. Academics and journalists have argued that Nottinghamshire's long history of cooperation has encouraged a moderate outlook in the mining communities.

The breakaway Spencer union had considerable influence in Nottinghamshire. But the strength of company unionism wasn't due to the Notts miners' natural proclivity for moderation. The Spencer union derived its strength from the enormous power of the Nottinghamshire mineowners. When the new pits were opened in the twenties, the employers established a form of industrial feudalism. They had complete control over life in the mining villages. Troublemakers were kicked out of work and hounded out of the villages. The employers also used subcontractors — the butties — to pay and supervise the miners. The butty system was a repressive form of labour control which put the miners at the mercy of the subcontractor.

The butties favoured the formation of a union run by the bosses. After 1926 the owners and the butties joined forces to smash independent trade unionism. When the striking miners drifted back to work they were given an ultimatum — give up their union cards or their jobs. **Union militants were not even given the choice** — they were simply sacked. Hundreds of union members were thrown out of work. At Wellbeck colliery all the men were locked out in 1928 and membership of the Spencer union was made a condition of re-employment. In one pit alone — Annesley — 200 miners were sacked for refusing to join the Spencer union in 1929. Spencerism was strongest in the new pits that were opened in the twenties. At Blidworth, Clipstone, Bilsthorpe, Ollerton, Harworth and Thoresby, the employers made sure that the Spencer union could run a virtual closed shop.

Company unionism had little grassroots support. In 1928, at the height of the

Spencer offensive, the TUC organised a ballot to test the views of the Notts miners. The results showed that 32 227 supported the TUC-affiliated Nottingham Miners' Association, and only 2533 voted for Spencer's union. Despite the ballot result, the employers succeeded in keeping the independent union out for the best part of a decade. But this had nothing to do with Notts miners' liking for company unions. It was the outcome of a protracted struggle, in the course of which hundreds of miners were victimised and run out of the county. The miners never accepted Spencerism. In the thirties, after a bitter strike at Harworth colliery, they managed to defeat it.

## Two sorts of politics

If we simply look at Nottinghamshire in isolation we will never discover the real reasons for the region's conservatism. Nottinghamshire has long been one of Britain's most prosperous mining regions. It enjoys geological conditions that are advantageous for coalmining. Yet the county's geology is similar to that of Yorkshire — it tells us little about the specificity of the Notts miners' traditions. And Nottinghamshire is not the only area in which the mineowners were bitterly hostile to trade unions. In itself this does not explain the Notts miners' cautious sectionalism.

In fact Spencerism was only an extreme form of the outlook of industrial collaboration that was common to most of the area leaders within the miners' federation. In 1948 Spencer explained his point of view:

**'I have always made it a cardinal point of policy to show that by a joint effort with the management material benefits will result to the worker.'**

Despite his right-wing views, Spencer was not that much out of line with the mainstream of the National Union of Mineworkers. Like miners in other areas, the Notts miners were influenced by the more militant traditions of the miners' federation. During the First World War radical ideas gained considerable influence among Notts miners. A group of anti-capitalist miners led by Jack Lavin propagated the policies of *The miners' next step* in the Mansfield area. Based at Wellbeck colliery, Lavin established a branch of the Socialist Labour Party, which in 1920 became a branch of the Communist Party. In the early twenties left-wing miners united to form the Mansfield District Committee. This committee had considerable rank and file support in about 10 pits. When the union leaders ordered a return to work in 1926, the rank and file at Wallerton, Wellbeck, Sherwood, Newcastle, and Bentinck collieries passed resolutions condemning them.

The employers' offensive was successful in destroying the influence of the left. For at least a decade the policy of collaboration — in the extreme form of Spencerism — prevailed.

Outside Nottinghamshire, the miners' union too was becoming increasingly conservative. The leadership of the national union felt threatened by Spencerism and moderated its policies to meet the approval of the mineowners. This



**Notts miners for the strike:** no less militant, but from an area more strongly influenced by the moderate traditions of the NUM

conservative approach had a major impact in Nottinghamshire. When Notts miners rebelled against Spencer and fought to build the miners' federation in their region the miners' leaders were pleased. But instead of helping the Notts miners to get rid of Spencerism once and for all, the union leaders advised them to unite with Spencer's company union. The result was that in September 1937, the two groups united to form the Nottinghamshire and District Miners' Federated Union. The President of this new affiliate to the miners' federation was none other than George Spencer!

Sectionalism developed stronger roots in Nottinghamshire than in most other regions because there was more scope for collaboration. The profitability of the Nottinghamshire coalfield meant that employment was stable, overtime opportunities were plentiful and wages relatively high. Most issues of conflict were easily smoothed over by local union leaders eager to establish good relations with the employers. The Notts union leaders were far from being Tories. When Spencer and his colleague Coleman retired in 1945, their places as full-time officials were taken by Dai Ley and Harry Straw — both members of the Communist Party.

The Communist Party was influential on the NUM executive. But Communist leaders were bureaucrats first and Communist Party members second. At the 1966 special NUM conference, only the Notts leaders spoke out against the proposal to move away from district to national wage negotiations. Notts miners' representative Joe Whelan put the divisive case against national agreements.

Joe Whelan, who was a prominent figure in the Communist Party and leader of the Notts miners in the seventies and early eighties, sums up the peculiarities of the region he represented. Nottinghamshire miners are no different from miners elsewhere. But industrial collaboration has different effects in different regions. Class collaboration exacerbates divisions and strengthens sectionalism. This

sectionalism overrides party ties and union loyalties. This narrow outlook influences all the mining regions. That's why at the outset of the current strike, miners at some of the 'super pits' were reluctant to strike.

Joe Whelan belonged to the same political party as Scottish miners' leader Mick McGahey. On most subjects they were in agreement — what divided them was not ideology but sectional interests. Given the unstable industrial climate in Scotland, sectionalism is consistent with outbreaks of militancy. In Nottinghamshire industrial stability has strengthened the network of collaboration — sectionalism in the region takes the form of moderation. In Nottinghamshire many miners look for solutions through cooperation with the Coal Board. In Scotland miners have learned that their future depends on fighting the Coal Board. Unfortunately, both wings of the movement are politically tied to the Coal Board. The 1974 *Plan for Coal*, which the miners' executive accepts as its statement of principle, is based on industrial collaboration. Left-wing miners' President Arthur Scargill and the rest of the NUM executive never tire of repeating that they are not just fighting for their members' jobs, but also for the future of the British mining industry. The Notts miners refuse to fight on the same grounds. The Notts miners believe that the future of the mining industry can be better safeguarded through industrial peace rather than through strikes.

The only difference between Nottinghamshire and the other regions is that as a result of its peculiar experience, collaboration and sectionalism are more entrenched than elsewhere. But the problem lies not so much with the Notts miners as with the leadership of the NUM, which perpetuates the policy of industrial collaboration.

## 6. Their coal — our jobs

In 1984 every miner on strike is in no doubt about the disastrous consequences of the area incentive scheme. Yet many who reject the area incentive scheme still fully support the *Plan for Coal*. Arthur Scargill has consistently recommended the *Plan for Coal* as the basis for a settlement of the dispute.

The popularity of the *Plan for Coal* is based on the widely held belief that this plan represents a commitment by the Coal Board and the government to an expanding industry. This has no foundation in reality. The NUM executive's *Submission on colliery closures* to a House of Commons select committee in December 1982 recognised that the *Plan for Coal's* dreams of expansion were dashed almost as soon as it was written:

**'It must be emphasised that the *Plan for Coal* was a plan for the expansion of the industry. While it recognised that there would be some exhaustion of recoverable reserves, it was a plan for steady expansion of deep-mined capacity to 120 million tonnes by 1985. While output increased from 98.7 tonnes in 1973-74 to 116.9 tonnes in 1974-75, since 1975 there has been a decline in output.'** (*Submission on colliery closures*, NUM, December 1982)

The NUM has itself charted the decline in coal output since its endorsement of the *Plan for Coal* (see graph, page 32).

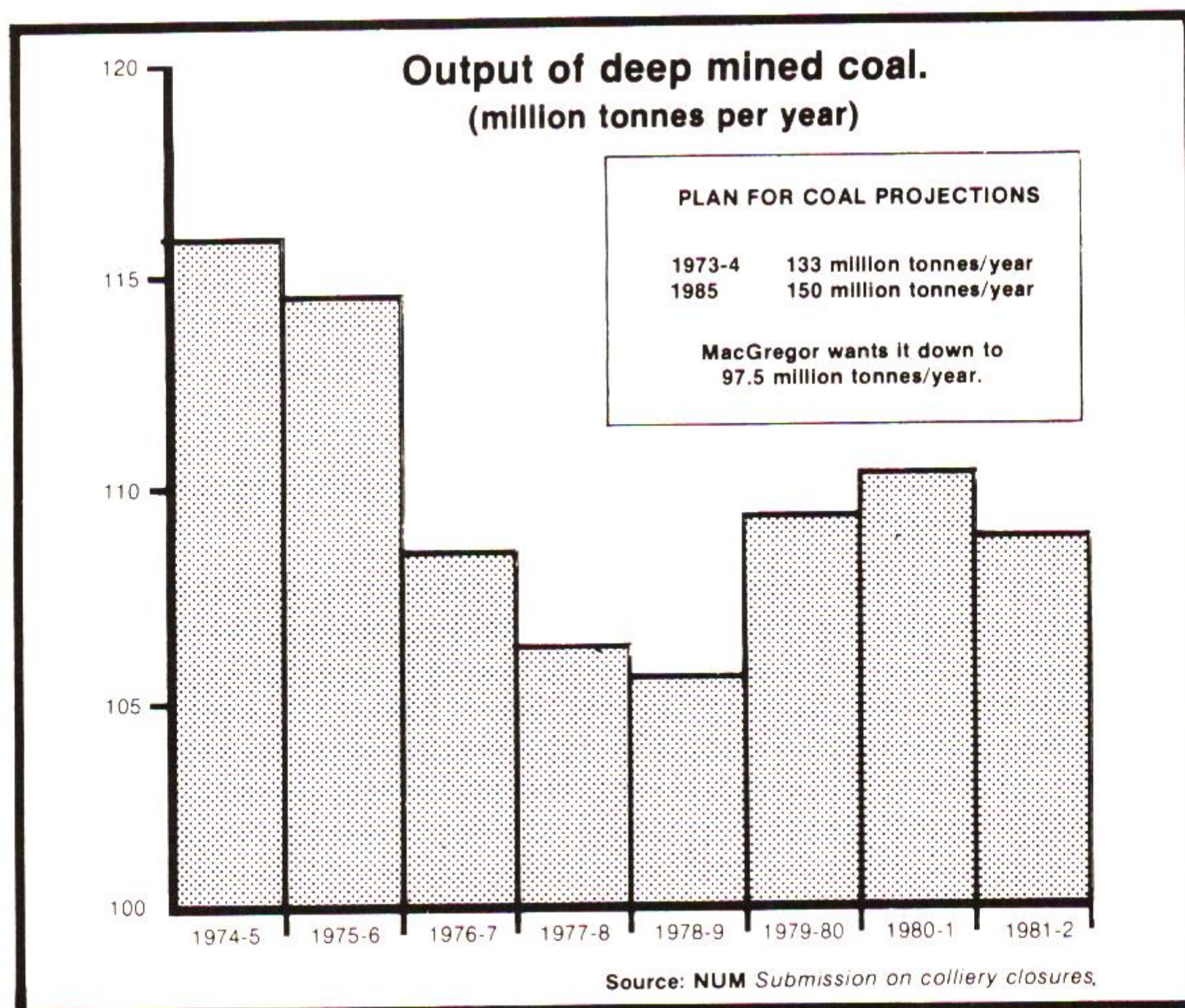
While output has been falling, productivity has been rising. Insofar as it was a plan for expansion, the *Plan for Coal* expanded the exploitation of the miners. The graph on page 33 shows the rise in output per manshift under the area incentive scheme. Despite the past decade of pit closures and productivity deals the NUM executive continues to declare its faith in a plan that has paved the way to tens of thousands of redundancies, deeper divisions and more intense exploitation. At first sight the NUM's attitude appears irrational — the executive itself admitted that the *Plan for Coal's* targets had already been abandoned in 1975. In fact Scargill's advocacy of the *Plan for Coal* is consistent with the recent traditions of the NUM. For the NUM leadership, making the coal industry more efficient — rather than pursuing the class struggle more aggressively — is the only way to defend miners'

jobs and livelihoods. Scargill sees the implementation of the *Plan for Coal* as a means of achieving both an expanding industry and higher living standards for his members.

## It doesn't pay

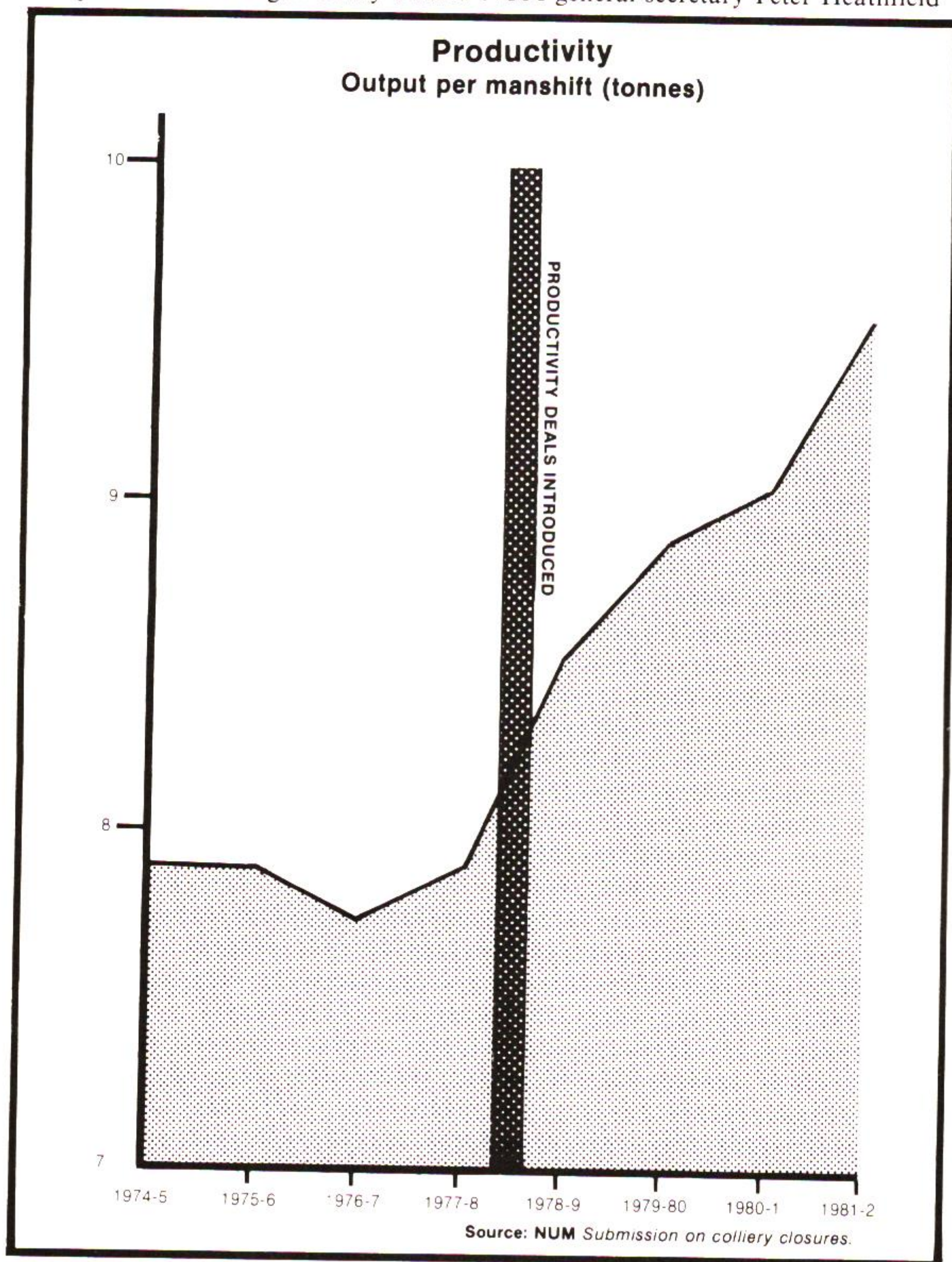
Every section of the NUM leadership, left and right, is committed to defending the coalmining industry. In 1981 the NUM leadership reacted to Thatcher's announcement of a pit closure programme by linking arms with Coal Board chairman Derek Ezra to demand more investment in the industry. The collaborative efforts of employers and union leaders forced Thatcher to back down, at least temporarily. *The Economist*, the house journal of British business, commented ironically on the government's action:

**'The government has bowed down in front of the coal industry lobby. Sir Derek Ezra, chairman of the National Coal Board, is just as much a victor as Mr Mick McGahey. . .or militant Mr Arthur Scargill from Yorkshire.'** (21 February 1981)



Ezra was well rewarded. Under the joint colliery review procedure most pit closures in the next two years went through without any real opposition from the NUM leaders.

The habit of collaboration has become so deeply ingrained that a few days before the present strike began newly elected NUM general secretary Peter Heathfield



pleaded with MacGregor to maintain the methods of collaboration:

'I urge the Board to join us publicly in putting pressure on the government to secure coal's vital place as the essential energy bedrock of our nation's industrial hopes.' (*The Miner*, February 1984)

Even when the strike had erupted the NUM executive could not bring itself to break off its links with the Coal Board. At an angry meeting on 6 March Scargill denounced MacGregor's 'butchery' of the pits and broke off routine consultation procedures at national level. Yet he agreed to work out a joint agenda with the Coal Board to take to the government on coal conversion schemes, research and related matters (*Financial Times*, 7 March 1984).

Experience shows that collaboration does not pay. For the exploited it does not make sense to collaborate with the exploiters because it can only mean cooperating over the terms on which exploitation takes place. It is now more than 70 years since the supporters of *The miners' next step* put the case against collaboration. It is high time their arguments were restated.

The sole purpose of the coalmining industry, like that of any other industry in capitalist society, is to increase the profits of the capitalist class by forcing miners to create the maximum possible wealth. The Coal Board is in business to make profits, not to provide miners with a livelihood. The term 'efficiency' is a measure of how successful the industry is in screwing profits out of its workers. As in any other industry, new sectors are opened up if they promise higher returns, and older sectors are closed down if they no longer make a profit.

The capitalist class is not sentimental about coalmining. When Coal Board managers make a decision about where to invest in new pits and where to close old ones, questions about the effect on miners' jobs and their communities do not enter into their considerations. They justify every decision on one simple criterion — does it make a profit or not? The fact that coalmining is a nationalised industry does not make it an exception to this rule. A nationalised industry may be allowed to make a temporary loss. But sooner or later the government steps in either to make the industry profitable (as, for example, at British Airways) or to close large sections down (as at British Steel).

It can only be self-defeating for trade unionists to link their livelihoods to the state of their industry. This means allowing the laws of the market and the account books of the employers to determine our living standards. But the capitalists don't make their decisions according to the consequences for workers — so why should we care about them? Whether any industry is prosperous or in decline is irrelevant to the needs of workers. All workers need the basics of life — food, housing, clothing — regardless of their employers' profit ratings. The NUM should frame its demands according to what miners need, not according to the state of the British coal industry.

The welfare of the working class is not in essence a question of economics. From the point of view of the working class what matters is not the viability of any



Chris Black (reflex)

**Coal or steel:** profitability costs livelihoods

particular industry, but the productive potential of society as a whole. Workers in particular industries should not have to adjust their living standards according to the size of their bosses' pockets because society has long shown that it can produce more than enough to guarantee everybody a decent life. We need more hospitals, not because the health service can afford to build them, but because we need proper medical treatment.

Trade union concern about 'our industry' can only benefit the employers. What impresses the bosses is not logical arguments about how they could run their industry more efficiently but how hard workers fight to make them pay decent wages. Only the class struggle can force the employers to give back some of the wealth to those who create it. If miners wait until British coalmining is efficient before demanding a better standard of living they will be waiting for a long time. For as long as miners base their case on the economics of coal production, they are putting their lives in the hands of their exploiters.

Miners have nothing to gain from collaborating with the Coal Board. In fact, collaboration limits their capacity to take action in defence of jobs and living standards.

## Cheap for whom?

The NUM executive argues its case against pit closures on the grounds that closures do not make economic sense. In every speech Scargill insists that 'Britain produces the cheapest deep-mined coal in the world'. The NUM's *Submission on colliery closures* in 1982 summed up the union's economic arguments:

**'It is a central theme in the case put forward by the NUM that even if considerations of energy policy and the need for self-sufficiency in fuel resources are ignored, the cost to the government and to the country of undertaking massive manpower reductions in the coal industry is greater than the cost of providing financial support to the National Coal Board on a scale which would transform the finances of so-called uneconomic pits.'**

The NUM's 'central theme' is not the welfare of miners but the savings that the government can make through keeping pits open. This is not an argument that can convince hard-nosed capitalist accountants. Their first concern is to make nationalised industries profitable — irrespective of the burden on social security payments. If they find these costs becoming too high they will cut the dole — not invest in loss-making coal.

The consequence of the NUM's approach is that miners' living standards become a secondary issue. But it is disastrous for miners to make their livelihoods and the future of their communities dependent on what makes economic sense for the government and the Coal Board. What if it could be proved that concentrating mining in a handful of superpits and closing down the rest was a sound economic proposition? Should miners sit back and say 'yes, this looks like a good way of raising efficiency and saving money, carry on'?

The union leaders devote all their energies to trying to prove that keeping pits open makes economic sense, or that it is in the national interest. They have forgotten that they are supposed to be fighting to safeguard miners' living standards. The best case against pit closures is that miners, like all workers, have a right to work and to have a decent standard of living. Whether or not maintaining pits and jobs helps either the Coal Board or the government to balance their books is irrelevant to miners' need to preserve their livelihoods. Confusion on this vital principle leads to compromise and ultimately to the betrayal of miners' interests.

There are no rational economic arguments against pit closures. Economic arguments are by definition arguments that are consistent with capitalist economics. In today's recession anything that benefits the capitalist economy can only be to workers' disadvantage. The simple rule that what is a gain for the employers is a loss for the workers is as true in mining as in any other industry. Scargill continually emphasises the cheapness of British coal. But putting cheap coal on the market is not a mere technical matter. Coal is cheap for capitalists only if miners sell their labour-power cheaply. If we look at coalmining in South Africa this relationship is very clear. The secret of low priced South African coal can easily be discovered among the impoverished black miners who work in conditions not far removed from slavery. Instead of trying to give the employers new ideas about cheap energy, the NUM leadership would do better to take decisive measures before the industrial relations methods of South Africa are transferred to the British coalfields.

Once miners accept that the market performance of the British coal industry is their responsibility they assume an identity of interest between worker and employer. Even militant miners who are prepared to fight the Coal Board often insist that they are fighting to safeguard their industry. Often this is the result of a

natural desire to make an inefficient and wasteful industry run in a more rational manner. But the more miners come to see the industry as their own the less they will be unable to resist the redundancies and productivity increases necessary to make mining profitable. When workers identify with their employers their potential for uniting with their fellow workers is diminished.

## Divisions, divisions

The 1984 miners' strike has forcefully exposed the divisive consequences of collaboration. Miners fighting for 'their' coal industry have been shunned by steelworkers committed to the survival of 'their' steel industry. The leaders of the steelworkers have told the miners 'we are prepared to support you, but not in any way that might jeopardise our industry'. Instead of seeing the miners' struggle as an opportunity to come out and strike a blow against the bosses in both industries, the steelworkers have teamed up with the Steel Corporation to break the miners' blockade on supplies to the big steel plants.

Most workers are sympathetic to the plight of the miners. But sympathy has not been translated into effective solidarity because workers in steel, transport and other industries are too concerned about the state of their particular industries to fight for the miners. Workers' attachment to their own industries erodes class solidarity. The cancer of sectionalism unites workers with their own bosses and divides them from other groups of workers. The consequences are that the miners are forced to fight on their own and waste precious energy in bitter recrimination. Sectionalism divides miner from miner as well as splitting the miners and the steelworkers. As a result of area by area and even pit by pit variations in working conditions, wage levels and future prospects, miners experience their work in widely differing ways. Appeals for loyalty to the national union in the course of the strike have come too late. The NUM executive has talked so long and so loud about investment and efficiency that many miners have never thought of themselves as workers with interests in conflict with the British coal industry. It is not surprising that miners in areas where collaboration is most entrenched have failed to respond to the call for strike action.

Sectionalism is not something that is fixed in the mentality of miners. History shows that on many occasions miners have been prepared to sacrifice their immediate material interests to achieve wider class objectives. But unity did not drop from the skies — it had to be forged in struggle. It required tireless agitation in all the coalfields and systematic campaigning to show miners that they had not even a passing short-term interest in common with their employers. It required above all an assertion of the necessity for independent policies and activity.

Collaboration puts short-term gains ahead of miners' long-term interests. The policy of class struggle is the antithesis of collaboration. Regardless of whether they are on high or low bonuses, whether their jobs are secure or they face redundancy, all miners are part of the same body of workers. If one part of the body is sick then all the miners suffer.

The pursuit of these elementary principles of class unity from the beginning of the strike could have changed its whole course. But this approach went against the

grain of the tradition of collaboration. Instead of promoting an independent stand, every NUM leader was giving detailed speeches on different aspects of the economics of coalmining. The principle that miners had the right to work was added as an afterthought, if at all. Rank and file miners are not to blame for the problems of the miners' strike. The fault lies with the traditions of collaboration and their continuation by the existing leadership of the NUM. With every passing week the 1984 miners' strike confirmed the urgency of replacing collaboration with the fighting traditions of *The miners' next step*.

# 7. The crisis of leadership

The 1984 strike has been haunted by the legacy of collaboration. The failure of solidarity in Nottinghamshire is the most glaring example of the disunity that results from the policies of the NUM leadership. The limits to the success of the strike are essentially political. Rank and file miners have shown that they are ready to fight and fight hard. They have stood up to the most intense police intimidation seen in Britain in living memory. They have carried on the struggle without strike pay or even in many cases basic social security payments. They have faced an incessant barrage of media hostility. The miners' will to fight is beyond question. What they lack is a coherent strategy to unite them and pull other sections of the working class around them.

Leading from behind has been the consistent style of the NUM leadership through the 1984 strike. For at least 12 months before the strike broke out it was obvious that more pit closures were imminent. Scargill himself regularly predicted a renewed offensive on jobs. The provocative actions of the Coal Board from summer 1983 onwards showed that the bosses were spoiling for a fight. Yet instead of preparing for strike action the NUM leadership responded with an ineffective overtime ban. This passed the initiative into the employers' hands and allowed them to stir up divisions among different areas and different sections of the union. While the Coal Board prepared for a strike the union leaders did nothing to alert and rally their forces. When rank and file militants went into action in March and spread the strike rapidly through the coalfields, the NUM executive still refused to take central control. Instead it gave its support to area strikes under Rule 41 of the NUM constitution. The strike was six weeks old before a special delegate conference in Sheffield in April decided that the national executive should take over the conduct of the strike from the area leaders.

## Confidence

The hesitancy of the NUM leadership was the result of a lack of confidence in its ability to give a lead. Scargill was acutely aware of the record of failure in recent national strike ballots. His failure to win support in the past led him to avoid

altogether the problem of winning the active commitment of miners for strike action. Scargill decided to rely on the strategy of picketing out one area at a time and to reject the option of calling a national ballot of miners. The effect of this decision was to restrict drastically the potential impact of the strike. It ensured that divisions among miners would be perpetuated and become even more entrenched.

Scargill's strength is the sectional militancy of the miners in Yorkshire, Scotland, South Wales and Kent. At the head of a demonstration of miners from these areas he seems all powerful. Yet he is impotent when he comes up against the sectional interests of another group of workers, whether these are miners in Notts or steelworkers at Ravenscraig. Scargill's calls for class unity sound hollow when in the next breath he declares the same commitment to the British coal industry that miners' leaders have espoused for decades. For all his rhetorical skill, Scargill cannot fight for the independent interests of the miners without rejecting everything for which he has stood over the past 10 years. The political tradition that Scargill champions in the *Plan for Coal* is responsible for the divisions in the coalfields. Scargill never seriously considered organising a political campaign to convince the miners in the moderate areas of the necessity for all-out strike action. He could not do this because he has never broken with the tradition of industrial collaboration.

Scargill wants the strike to succeed. The problem is that he is a part of a bureaucracy whose whole existence has been shaped by collaboration. The position of the union bureaucracy depends on the procedures of conciliation and negotiation. Even the most left-wing union leaders have been drawn into these institutions of collaboration. Left-wing miners' leaders have actively participated in the colliery review procedure. In the Coal Board's view the procedure is 'designed to involve the unions more closely in the day to day management of industry'. As a result the NUM leadership lacks the political independence to give a lead to the rank and file.

## Stalemate

A ballot is a technical device for registering support for alternative candidates or policies. It can be used for all sorts of different purposes. In the 1984 strike the NUM leaders' rejection of a national ballot expressed their refusal to campaign to win the arguments for strike action among the miners. Instead of confronting the fears and sectional prejudices among the miners Scargill and his allies simply hoped that if they ignored the problems they would go away. Their refusal to campaign to win a ballot was in reality an admission of defeat before the strike really got underway. It revealed the NUM leaders' recognition that they did not have the policies and the arguments to win majority support for a shutdown of all the coalfields. The NUM leaders sought technical rather than political solutions to the problems of the strike. To avoid having to go out and argue for support they first endorsed area by area strike action. They even changed the rules at the April special delegate conference and lowered the majority required for national strike action



Joe Boatman (reflex)

**Yorkshire solid:** the absence of any campaign for all-out national strike action rendered the pickets in the militant areas ineffectual

from 55 to 50 per cent. The more they fiddled around with the rule book the more they exposed their inability to mobilise the political support of the rank and file.

The miners' strike has revealed the short-sighted and self-defeating nature of the bureaucrats' militancy. Instead of launching an all-out drive to win workers' solidarity, the NUM executive conducted behind the scenes negotiations with the leaders of other unions. In these talks promises of support come cheap. At various times the leaders of the transport, rail and steel unions have all pledged full support. Yet in almost every case these promises have not been fulfilled in action. The union leaders cannot deliver the practical support of their members. This is not surprising because the workers in these industries have generally not been consulted. Behind the scenes negotiations are much favoured by bureaucrats who fear that they might lose control if miners approached other groups of workers directly.

The strike has also been undermined by the bureaucratic control of picketing. The picketing of steel plants has turned into a circus. On one day miners are despatched to picket a steel plant. On the following day they are told to stay away because an agreement has been reached in talks between local leaders of the miners and the steelworkers. A week later the agreement breaks down and another round of picketing begins. Meanwhile supplies of coal and other raw materials pour into the plants through miners' picket lines, either by rail or in lorry convoys.

Many militants have been critical of the day to day conduct of the dispute. Many miners feel that they have been shabbily treated as picketing fodder. These problems are often put down to mismanagement by the area leadership. But these weaknesses are not isolated mistakes but the organisational consequences of the policies of the bureaucracy. Scargill can no more allow the rank and file to take

control of picketing than he could organise a campaign against the sectionalism of the Notts miners. The only way that the NUM can exercise leadership is by evading a ballot and by exercising a bureaucratic grip over the picketing.

By the middle of May it had become clear that the strike had reached a standstill. The NUM leadership had achieved none of its objectives. Coal was still being produced in Nottinghamshire and effective solidarity was not forthcoming from other groups of workers. Yet the miners were far from beaten. Rank and file miners were fiercely determined and they had succeeded in closing down some 80 per cent of coal output. But without a different strategy the strike could not advance much further. The strike had lost its momentum and although the militants were fighting on they were having only a marginal impact on the economy.

The NUM leadership appeared oblivious to these problems. Since the end of April the NUM executive has adopted a strategy of 'wait and see'. Scargill's threat to stick it out until winter is not so much a strategy as an admission that the strike has reached an impasse. The NUM leaders have more or less given up the goal of victory. Instead of trying to hit the economy where it hurts, the NUM leadership has concentrated its efforts on soft targets such as the moribund steel industry or on symbolic pickets, such as the protests at the Orgreave coke depot near Sheffield. The leaders also favour ineffectual 'days of action' on which they make fiery speeches, other union leaders declare undying solidarity and nothing changes. Scargill has accepted this stalemate. His tactics are designed to hold the strikers together and prevent a drift back to work by the passive majority.

The leaders of the other big unions share the blame for the ineffectiveness of the miners' strike. The much vaunted Triple Alliance of steel, railway and mining unions has been exposed for the sick joke that it is. The left in the transport workers' union has been preoccupied making sure that its hero Ron Todd was elected as the union's general secretary. When Kent miners in the South East requested support from the transport workers they found that left-wing officials were reluctant to jeopardise Todd's electoral chances by too close an association with striking miners. What about the TUC? Len Murray and the rest have for the most part kept an uneasy silence, hoping and no doubt praying that the strike would soon come to an end.

The lack of active support for the miners reveals the dilemma of the union bureaucracy. The union leaders do not want the miners to lose because they know that a defeat for the miners would have serious consequences for the trade union movement as a whole. At the same time, each union leader is intimately involved in his own particular sector of the economy. The longstanding unity of unions and employers in different industries has made it an uphill struggle for union leaders to bring their members out on strike.

## Parasites

The Labour Party has played a bigger role in the miners' strike as the TUC has retreated. It now plays a central part in pushing for negotiations and compromise.

Although individual party members have fully supported the miners, the Labour Party has been careful to distance itself from the more unpopular aspects of the strike. Leading Labour politicians have regularly condemned miners for fighting back against police brutality on the picket lines, bleating that violence can never be condoned.

Labour politicians are nothing more than parasites on the miners' strike. They are using their links with the miners to show the electorate that they are better placed than any other party to achieve a compromise. The party has established a convenient division of labour. At local level activists have been busy organising support committees and building up links with militants — and also with their wives and families. This work has been invaluable for the Labour leadership which can now use the party's connections to boost its role as a mediator. Unlike the NUM, the Labour Party is isolated from the immediate pressure of rank and file miners, yet it is identified with the cause of the strikers. This places Neil Kinnock and his acolytes in a good position to preside over a sell-out.

Negotiation and compromise are the last things that the miners need. Any compromise formula drawn up through negotiations can only be on terms dictated by the employers behind closed doors. This is inevitable because as the strike stands the miners would be negotiating from a position of weakness.

The most positive feature of the miners' strike is the fighting courage of the miners. Week after week tens of thousands of miners have shown workers the power they have as a class. Through their actions the miners have exposed the police and the courts as nothing but the instruments of the bosses. Hundreds of thousands of workers have been inspired by the miners' strike and have come to understand that in 1984 nothing can be gained without a bitter struggle. The militancy demonstrated by the miners provides a glimpse of the power that could transform society.

## Hearts and minds

The miners' strike brought together workers young and old in an intense period of action and discussion. The miners involved in the strike fell into two broad categories. There were the older workers, often veterans of 1972 and 1974, who generally identified closely with the NUM and its militant President. And there were the younger miners, who often had little experience of industrial action and little past involvement with the union or its traditions. Yet in March 1984 the young miners recognised a direct threat to their livelihoods. They were angry and ready to fight anybody — the Coal Board, the government, the police — to safeguard their future. Their militancy had no political direction at the beginning of the strike. The course it took was decided by the balance of influences among the miners in the early weeks of the strike.

The most powerful influence on the outlook of the young miners was undoubtedly the politics of the NUM leadership. The young militants were constantly exposed to the union leaders' views through rally speeches, Scargill's

television appearances and union broadsheets. These views were constantly reinforced by the more experienced activists on picket lines and in the miners' welfare clubs. But what did the British left have to say to influence the developing awareness of the young miners in the course of this crucial struggle?

The bulk of the left fully supported Scargill's bureaucratic approach to the strike. In the early stages of the dispute the left-wing newspapers virtually all endorsed the picketing out strategy as the solution to the strike. But whilst flying pickets could play an important role in spreading the strike, they were clearly not enough to bring out all the miners. They could not substitute for a political campaign to unite the miners around a common objective. Yet the various left groups were as hostile as Scargill to calls for a campaign to win a national ballot for all-out action. They invented all kinds of reasons why a national ballot was undemocratic and reactionary. They did not have the courage to admit that what they really feared was that they could not confront the sectionalism of the miners in Nottinghamshire and elsewhere — or take a different line from the NUM President.

Only the Revolutionary Communist Party attempted to challenge the NUM's policy of collaboration and its bureaucratic conduct of the strike. Through *the next step*, regular strike bulletins and a series of meetings around the coalfields, and hundreds of picket line discussions, supporters of the RCP put forward a different strategy for the strike. From the outset we called for an increased scale of picketing and for the active involvement of strikers — and women in the mining communities — in running the dispute. We proposed a campaign to take the arguments for all-out strike action to secure miners' jobs — not British coalmining — around the coalfields. The object would be to win a popular mandate for a national strike in a ballot. We recommended spreading the action and winning wider sympathetic action through direct contacts among the rank and file workers instead of relying on official channels. Indeed, some of the first encounters between miners from Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and other areas took place at RCP meetings at Bolsover, Sheffield and Nottingham in March and April.

Most miners remained unconvinced by our approach. They feared that it would not be possible to overcome the Notts miners' resistance to strike action through argument. They preferred to go it alone in the militant areas rather than risk trying to win a majority for a proper national strike. The dead weight of the traditions of collaboration and sectionalism have left their marks. And everyone, from the NUM leadership to the British left like a chorus chanted 'picketing will solve everything'.

The result has been that the outlook of the NUM leadership has gone virtually unchallenged by the rank and file throughout the dispute. After a few weeks' involvement in the strike the young miners became less volatile in their views as they moved into line with their elders. Loyalty to Scargill and the union now became indistinguishable from a commitment to the stale old formulas of the *Plan for Coal*. The success of the NUM leadership in winning the support of the activists for its perspective has allowed the bureaucrats to control and direct rank and file militancy. They channel the energies of the militants into stage-managed activities

which do no more than save face for the leadership. They can get away with this cynical manipulation of the rank and file because the militants lack independent politics and organisation.

The left's message boiled down to telling the miners to fight harder and asking other groups of workers to give their support. These simple-minded solutions underestimated the political problems facing both the miners and other groups of workers. Everybody would like to see more widespread and more effective action. But if appeals for more action were sufficient there would have been more action long ago. Appeals to spread the strike remain mere rhetoric as long as the political obstacles that stand in the way are ignored. Before the strike can become effective its political approach has to be transformed. Not even the most developed forms of militancy can make up for the lack of an independent line.

## 8. The lessons of the strike

Tactical mistakes can be made in any strike. But there is little purpose in emphasising the practical problems that have emerged in the course of the strike because the major problems of the strike are political. The main lesson of the strike is that the policies of the NUM leadership are themselves a barrier to the successful resolution of the dispute. These policies cannot overcome divisions within the miners' ranks because they are responsible for these divisions in the first place. The struggle for the unity of miners is inseparable from the fight against the policies of the NUM leadership.

The strike has shown that no amount of self-sacrifice and militancy can compensate for the policies of the NUM leadership. This is why the picketing out strategy failed to close down all the pits and why numerous appeals have not succeeded in getting the passive majority of miners involved in the strike. The NUM leadership has been forced to resort to bureaucratic measures — evading a national ballot, changing the rule book, organising token pickets, relying on paper solidarity resolutions — because it has become too much a part of the coal industry establishment to lead all-out action against it.

The fact that the strike has been fought so hard and so long is a testimony to the resilience of rank and file miners. But there is a serious danger that the fighting spirit of the rank and file will be dissipated by Scargill's 'wait and see' strategy. A war of attrition never favours the working class. The employers have all the resources of the system on their side. Unlike the miners they can really afford to wait and see.

The miners' strike has shown that the existing organisations of the labour movement are irrelevant to the present day needs of the working class. The policies of the union leadership have paralysed the trade unions. The Triple Alliance and the TUC are empty shells — they can no longer even go through the motions of running a national strike. The Labour Party has been even worse. It has stood on the sidelines and offered its services as a message-carrier between the miners and the Coal Board. But the miners need effective solidarity, not offers of mediation.

To go forward the miners need to revive the tradition embodied in *The miners' next step*. Whatever the limits of that tradition, *The miners' next step* recognised the

danger of collaboration and saw in the class struggle the only means for furthering miners' interests. There is much ground to make up. In the 1984 strike it is the employers who are consciously waging a class war. By contrast the NUM is running a routine trade union dispute.

At every stage of the strike the employers have widened the scope of the dispute. They have involved the full force of the state apparatus to ensure their success. From the beginning the government has made clear that this is a conflict between workers and bosses and not an isolated strike in the mining industry. The question at issue for the capitalist class has been 'who rules?'. In contrast, the NUM leaders have fudged the issue of class power. Instead of relying on the class struggle the NUM leadership has put its faith in an expanding coal industry.

The dream of an expanding coal industry is a dangerous fantasy. It diverts attention from the necessity of fighting for all jobs regardless of the state of the industry. The goal of an expanding coal industry cannot forge class unity — it can only strengthen collaboration with the Coal Board.

While the bosses project a clear conception of their class interest, Scargill blurs the issues. Throughout the strike Scargill has reiterated the virtues of the *Plan for Coal*. Ironically MacGregor and Thatcher have also stated that they stand by this plan. It is irrelevant that they mean something different by the plan. As long as the debate is conducted around rival interpretations of the *Plan for Coal* the miners remain within a framework set up by the employers. As long as workers play according to rules drawn up by the employers, defeat is the only possible outcome.

The only interests worth fighting for are those of the working class. Miners do not need a plan for coal but a plan of action that can unite them with miners and other workers against the capitalist class. Whatever the outcome of the strike the war will continue. It will continue because in our society the interests of workers cannot be enforced through negotiation, agreements or economic plans. Every concession won comes through fighting. Every gain must be defended time and time again.

Much time has been lost in the course of the miners' strike and much energy has been misspent. To speak plainly and warn of the dangers of defeat is not to be defeatist, but to take vital steps to alert our forces and to ensure that we go into battle with open eyes. It is essential to learn the lessons from the early stages of the dispute and to formulate new tactics. A strike cannot be assessed on the basis of its immediate outcome. Through strike action workers declare that they are not prepared to lie down and accept the fate meted out to them by the capitalist class. The miners have shown that workers have their self-respect and are not a class to be trifled with. The long-term effects of such a drawn-out dispute will depend on the extent to which miners learn to reject their existing political traditions and come to adopt an outlook relevant to the struggles of the eighties.

## 9. A fighting alternative

Before they can take a single step forward, either in the current dispute or beyond it, the miners have to begin to make some fundamental changes in the strategy and organisation of their union.

### Breaking with the past

- **throw out the *Plan for Coal***

Both Scargill and MacGregor swear by this bible of collaboration. Scargill clings to it in the forlorn hope of a return to good relations with management in an expanding and modernising industry. MacGregor sees it as a weapon against the miners. He aims to take advantage of miners' commitment to the industry to undermine resistance to his closure programme. Miners need it like a hole in the head.

- **boycott colliery review procedures**

The pit review procedures involve prolonged consultations about problems of geology, productivity and profitability that pave the way to closures and redundancies. To fight the bosses we need an independent union with no ties to the employers or the state.

### A programme of demands

This must begin from resistance to MacGregor's closure plan. It should include the demand for a decent wage for miners — which despite the five month overtime ban remains an outstanding issue.

- **no pit closures, no redundancies**

With four million already on the dole we need to preserve every job. In cases of exhaustion we must insist on the redeployment of all jobs. We should also make sure that every worker who retires early is replaced by a young worker.

- **a nationally agreed basic living wage**

No miner should have to work overtime or rely on bonuses to make a living wage. We need to get rid of divisive area agreements and productivity bonuses. We must

make sure that every miner gets a living wage, whatever the geological conditions. Miners disabled through work should be guaranteed the same basic wage for life.

Fighting for these demands requires the maximum mobilisation of miners, of women in the mining communities and other workers. This means:

- **mass meetings**

Open meetings, full discussion and democratic decision making are essential to ensure the involvement of the largest possible number of workers in the strike. Regular mass meetings ensure that the rank and file is fully in control, and that the leadership is fully accountable.

- **strike committees**

Committees which involve the most active militants in the strike as well as the official branch leadership are vital to give direction to the strike. Committees should include not only miners but also women and workers engaged in sympathetic action.

## **The union we need**

We need to reorganise the NUM from pit level upwards to make it into a fighting organisation which is accountable to the rank and file. We need to demand:

- **regular elections for all officials**

Leaders must be answerable for their actions. This can be guaranteed through frequent meetings, elections every year or two years. The rank and file should have the right to recall their leaders to give an account of their behaviour at any time — and to dismiss them if the majority wishes it.

- **an end to craft divisions**

We need one united union for all workers in the British coal industry. The present separate sections for clerical and craft workers divide and weaken our ranks.

- **a representative executive**

The present NUM national executive is unrepresentative of the miners. Yorkshire with 55 000 members has three members, Cumberland and craft sections with a few hundred members have one each. We need to ensure that mineworkers in each area are represented in proportion to their numbers.

- **an independent NUM**

At present NUM leaders sit on numerous standing committees and quangos with Coal Board officials and civil servants. These close links with the employers and the state undermine the effectiveness of our union as an independent voice of the miners' interests. We should insist on the withdrawal of our union from all links with the bosses.

- **one union for energy workers**

When the Electricity Generating Board is the Coal Board's biggest customer and the bulk of the nation's electricity comes from burning coal it makes no sense from the workers' point of view having two separate unions. When the government tries to play off workers in the oil industry and in nuclear power against miners, the advantages for us of having one industrial union for energy workers are obvious.

# A handbook for trade unionists

# **TAKING CONTROL**

Mike Freeman

The 1984 miners' strike shows up the problems facing trade unionists who take strike action to defend jobs and living standards. The miners' resistance to pit closures and redundancies has met unprecedented police repression. Yet militant miners have also faced unprecedented difficulties in winning 100 per cent support from their fellow miners and effective sympathetic action from other unions.

● **Taking Control** is a manual for active trade unionists. It aims to provide militants with the arguments and the strategies they need to overcome their isolation and to make industrial action effective.

● **Taking Control** includes sections on:

● **Jobs** - redundancies and how to fight them

● **Workplace organisation** - how we lost control and how we can rebuild

● **Wages** - how much we get, how much we need and how to get it

● **Strikes** - barriers to winning and how to overcome them

● **The unions** - the organisations we have and the organisations we need

● **Taking control** - the TUC, the Tories and trade union politics

● **Taking Control** is a guide to action. Take it!

Mike Freeman is the editor of **the next step**.

**junius**, July 1984, paperback, illustrations, 280pp, £2.95 plus 85 pence p&p from:  
BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX

Cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd: five or more copies post free.

# the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

## CONTROL

'The miners need to take control of the dispute out of the hands of their area and national officials. They need to put an end to all the bureaucratic manipulations. Mass meetings at pit level are vital to involve the mass of the miners in a dispute that promises to be long and hard.' (April)

## CONSULTATION

'The Revolutionary Communist Party is in favour of a national ballot because it can become a focus for stepping up the strike action. Campaigning for support for an all-out national stoppage can go hand in hand with extending picketing and sympathetic action. A campaign around a national ballot is the only way to ensure rank and file control over the dispute.' (April strike special)

## CONFLICT

'Scargill's arguments just do not make sense to most people. Anybody can see there is a basic conflict between miners' desire to save jobs and the bosses' desire to make the coal industry competitive.' (May)

### *the next step*

The paper that puts it straight

Take it!

12 issues £5

All cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd.

Send to BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX

# The miners' next step

The miners' strike is the most important industrial dispute since the 1926 General Strike. The courage and determination of the miners are an inspiration to workers everywhere.

This pamphlet looks at different aspects of the miners' battle for jobs:

- the build-up to the strike
- the traditions of the miners' union
- the strange case of the Notts miners
- Arthur Scargill's strike strategy

The pamphlet aims to revive the traditions of the 1912 rank and file pamphlet, the original *The miners' next step*, whose motto was that 'the old policy of identity of interest between employers and ourselves should be abolished and a policy of open hostility installed'.

junius

50p

ISBN 0-950 8404-6-7

---