

## AN OPEN CONSPIRACY: CONSERVATIVE POLITICS AND THE MINERS' STRIKE 1984-5

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A convenient starting point for the chronology of the Tory offensive against trade unionism is the publication by the Economist in 1978 of the final report of the **Ridley** committee on the nationalised industries. This report was part of the preparations which the Thatcher shadow cabinet were making in anticipation of a return to a parliamentary majority at Westminster. During the previous years Conservative politicians and businessmen in general had become acutely aware of the strengthening of trade union defences in most areas of industrial life, and in particular the two successful miners' strikes in 1972 and 1974 had exercised a powerful and lasting influence. The mass picket of the **Saltley** Coke Works in February 1972—which closed the gates and effectively determined the outcome of the strike—was never forgotten by the miners, the Conservative Party and the police; and it was followed, two years later, by another miners' strike which persuaded Heath to appeal, unsuccessfully, to the electorate. These events badly scarred Conservative interests in the country, and the development of reactionary ideas, and reactionary organisations, was greatly encouraged; and it was after the fall of the Heath government in 1974 that the extreme Right in the Conservative Party began to develop further organisations and support groups. There were already a number of well-established bodies in the field such as the Economic League, Common Cause, IRIS, with many years of experience, including the services of some right-wing trade unionists, and there were a number of ideological bodies which provided sophisticated materials for what was to become the new Toryism. The most influential of these was probably the Institute of Economic Affairs which went back to the late fifties. The most prominent of the new organisations was the National Association for Freedom (NAFF) an umbrella group for an assortment of Conservative reactionaries. Its initial establishment was a response to the killing of Ross **McWhirter** by the IRA in December 1975, and its original Council was composed of industrialists and politicians including Norman Tebbit, Rhodes **Boyson** and Peregrine Worsthorne. The working brains behind NAFF were Robert Moss and Brian Crozier: Cold War warriors who were fanatical supporters of American foreign policy and specialists in Latin American affairs, including Chile. From the time of its establishment until the Tory victory in the summer of 1979 NAFF was involved in a growing number of **anti-**

trade union actions; and it encouraged or started a series of smaller pressure groups with particular limited aims of their own but all with a specific anti-working class content.'

The central problem for the propertied interests, and their representatives, has always been the trade union movement, the organised power of the working people. The Labour Party has never worried the ruling groups in Britain in the way that has been the case with trade unionism, and during the second half of the nineteen seventies the details of what was needed to be done in order to curb, contain and if possible destroy British trade unionism had been much discussed and generally agreed upon. It was all set down in the **Ridley** Report, leaked to the Economist and published on 27 May 1978. The Economist's headline was 'Appomattox or Civil War', and it suggested in its introduction that it was likely to cause 'a humdinger of a row'. But there was no row; and it became the blue-print for the Thatcher government when it came to office. Almost every detail of its recommendations have been followed in the legislation of the past five years.

The Economist noted that what it was offering to its readers was the final report of the Conservative party's policy group on the nationalised industries. Its summary began by reference to the Conservative commitment that each nationalised industry should achieve a set rate of return on various definitions of capital employed; and it continued with a number of recommendations about management; the scope for privatisation; and a strong argument for the end of statutory monopolies in the public sector. The most significant parts of the Report related to the labour side of nationalised industries. The concept of wage comparability was rejected, and the basis for wage settlements was a combination of the manpower situation in the industry and the vulnerability of society to a strike. Where industries 'have the nation by the jugular vein' the Report said 'the only feasible option is to pay up'. And so the Report, following its own logic, classified industries into three categories of vulnerability. The most vulnerable group were sewerage, water, electricity, gas and the health service. The second, intermediate group were railways, docks, coal and **dustmen**; and the least vulnerable group were other forms of transport, ports, telephones, air transport, and steel. While the ideas and recommendations of the main Report were important, and have indeed served as guidelines for the legislative and industrial policies of the Thatcher government, the real nub came in an annexe prepared by **Ridley** and some of his co-authors. They addressed themselves to central questions: how to counter any 'political threat' from those who could be regarded as 'the enemies of the next Tory government'. They anticipated a major challenge from a trade union over a wage claim or over redundancies, and since it might occur in a 'vulnerable industry'—such as coal, electricity or the **docks**—with 'the full force of communist **disruptors**' it was necessary to be clear

about the strategy to be followed. Accordingly they elaborated a five point scheme which the *Economist* summarised as below:

- Return on capital should be rigged so that an above-average wage claim can be paid to the 'vulnerable' industries.
- The eventual battle should be on ground chosen by the Tories, in a field they think could be won (railways, British Leyland, the civil service or steel).
- Every precaution should be taken against a challenge in electricity or gas. Anyway, redundancies in those industries are unlikely to be required. The group believes that the most likely battleground **will** be the coal industry. They would like a Thatcher government to: (a) build up maximum coal stocks, particularly at the power stations; (b) make contingency plans for the import of coal; (c) encourage the recruitment of non-union lorry drivers by haulage companies to help move coal where necessary; (d) introduce dual **coal/oil** firing in all power stations as quickly as possible.
- The group believes that the greatest deterrent to any strike would be 'to cut off the money supply to strikers, and make the union finance them'. But strikers in nationalised industries should not be treated differently from strikers in other industries.
- There should be a large, mobile squad of police equipped and prepared to uphold the law against violent picketing. 'Good non-union drivers' should be recruited to cross picket lines with police protection.

The **Ridley** plan began to be inserted into the Statute Book within a year of the Thatcher government taking office. The Tories were much **assisted** by the decline of manufacturing and the growth of unemployment, leading to a marked weakening of the bargaining power of labour through the fears of job losses. The appendix to the **Ridley** report had emphasised the deterrence to strike action by 'cutting off the money supply' to the strikers and making the unions finance them. Accordingly on the 15 April **1980**, the Social Services minister, introduced the Social Security (No 2) Bill. Most of the clauses of this Bill were concerned with what Patrick Jenkin called 'reducing the prospective growth of the social security programme'; but Clause 6 was in a different category. Strikers were not entitled to claim benefit but their dependants were. The Tories and their sophisticated expositors like the *Economist* had long argued that social security payments made to the wives and children of men on strike, or the dependants of women on strike, gave strikers an additional ability to resist, extend and prolong a dispute. The amounts involved were, in fact, small in relation to the total expended on benefits<sup>2</sup> but they were far from unimportant in respect of those involved in any one strike. What Clause 6 of this new Bill did was to reduce by amounts between **£12** and **£16** the total of benefit payments made to wives and dependants. In

the miners strike it was almost always £16 that was deducted, and for a couple with no extra resources that meant E6.45 a week to live on with Child Benefit of an extra E2.75 for each child under eleven years of age. Any additional income—from a wife's part-time job—meant a corresponding reduction in benefits or no benefit at all. The reduction was to apply to trade unionists and non-unionists alike, and it also applied to anyone out of work as a result of a trade dispute at his or her place of work; and it applied to lock-outs by employers. Strikers without dependants have always been debarred from social security payments although it was sometimes possible—never very easy—to prove an 'urgent need'. Under the new rules introduced by Clause 6 no payment whatsoever would be given to single strikers, whatever their circumstances, so that, to give an example, a single woman striker living with an elderly mother on supplementary benefit would have to survive on her mother's income.

One of the alleged purposes of Clause 6 was to force trade unions to give strike pay, but even where pay was given, the striker's family would still be worse off under the new regulations in that there would be deductions of at least E4, and in many cases the loss would be higher. But the main reason was clearly defined by the Secretary of State. He accepted that the new regulations would 'save money to a modest extent, but that is not its main concern. The government was elected, amongst other things, to restore a fairer bargaining balance between employers and trade unions. Clause 6 represents one of the steps to that end'.<sup>3</sup>

The establishment of 'a fairer bargaining balance' between Capital and Labour in the open market is at the centre of the industrial relations policies of the Thatcher government. In the nineteenth century the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was the definitive legislation which ensured that for all groups of labourers below the minority of organised skilled workers the 'free' market operated for the whole of the nineteenth century; and the free market simply means that those with the power to hire and fire set the terms on which pay and conditions shall be fixed.<sup>4</sup> In Thatcher's Britain the situation is, of course, very different. For many decades there has been a slow but increasing accumulation of protective legislation of many different kinds; and any attempt to achieve a 'free' market, in which the worker is more or less at the disposal of the employer, which was the nineteenth century situation, is a much more difficult and (inevitably) more protracted exercise. But large rivers have small beginnings, and a number of significant advances have been registered. Clause 6 of the 1980 Social Security Act was to make the daily lives of strikers with families much more difficult. What was next required was legislation to curb trade union activity in general, and to weaken the constraints upon employers in the working conditions they provide. This dismantling of the restrictions upon employers in the matter of wages and working conditions is one important thrust of the Thatcherite legislation since

1980; a second has been to frame legislation in terms that often require interpretation by the courts. The judges and their courts are still widely believed to be impartial in their adjudications; and so they may well be in some areas of the law, but emphatically not in labour legislation. The history of the courts during the past two centuries has shown a consistent political bias against radicals in general and trade unions in particular, and while the majority of the British public appear to accept the neutrality of the judicial system in all its respects—and the public in this important respect has always included the leadership of the British Labour Party—it is not true that the courts show an even hand between Capital and Labour. It is not just that the sanctity of property relationships form the major premises of judicial thinking and decision-making, but the historical record makes it abundantly clear that magistrates and judges, at all levels of the judicial system, share the common prejudices of the middle and upper classes. So it was in the days of Chartism; in the late 1860s; in the decade of the eighteen nineties; in the General Strike; and in our own day in the well-publicised judicial hostility towards the 1984–5 miners' strike.'

The recommendation of the **Ridley Report**—to cut off 'the money supply' to strikers was now achieved; and the next step was to introduce as much restriction as possible upon trade union activity, including the vulnerability of union funds through court action. These objectives were central to the two Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982. The first Employment Act of 1980 removed legal protection for certain types of sympathetic industrial action, and most forms of 'secondary' industrial action now became unlawful. In these cases the employer can now obtain an injunction against the union, and sue for damages. The Act also made substantial changes in the law of picketing and in the conditions for the closed shop; and it gave the Employment Secretary the right to issue Codes of Practice, and to revise existing codes. Hitherto Codes of Practice had been prepared and issued by the conciliating body, ACAS. The Employment Secretary in 1980, James Prior, issued draft Codes of Practice in early August 1980 on picketing and the closed shop with comments to be received by **10th** October. The TUC refused to make representations. Failure to observe any provision in a Code of Practice would not in itself make anyone or any body liable for prosecution; but the Employment Act itself laid it down that courts of law and industrial tribunals should take into account such provisions that were relevant: an invitation to employers to prosecute. Section 16 of the Employment Act had already drastically restricted the legal immunity for peaceful picketing, and the Code of Practice set out in detail what was involved. The most far-reaching change was the limit placed on the number of pickets. The wording of the draft regulations—adopted unchanged in principle in the final Code—is worth reproducing, since it not only sets out clearly the changes in the nature and character of picketing, but describes the involvement of the

police and the courts in more direct ways than ever before:

30. The number of pickets at an entrance to a workplace should, therefore, be limited to what is reasonably needed to permit the peaceful persuasion of those entering and leaving the premises who are prepared to listen. As a general rule, it will be rare for such a number to exceed six, and frequently a smaller number will be sufficient. While the law does not impose a specific limit on the number of people who may picket at any one workplace, it does give the police considerable discretionary powers to limit the number of pickets in any one place where they have reasonable cause to fear disorder. It is for the police to decide, taking into account all the circumstances, whether the number of pickets in the particular case is likely to lead to a breach of the peace.
31. The police will often discuss with the picket line organiser what constitutes a reasonable number of pickets in any one case. But it should be clear that if a picket does not leave the picket line when asked to do so by the police, he is liable to be arrested for obstruction either of the highway or of a police officer in the execution of his duty if the obstruction is such as to cause, or be likely to cause, a breach of the peace.'

The second part of the Code of Practice considered the closed shop, with provisions which made it very difficult for unions to establish new closed shop agreements, and which encouraged the weakening or the break-up of existing agreements.

There were a large number of clauses in this **1980** Employment Act which further weakened the position of workers in respect of their general conditions of work or in the matter of dismissal. Thus, maternity rights were seriously weakened; burden of proof by workers of unfair dismissal was made much more difficult; and compensation rights for unfair dismissal were severely eroded or abolished. These represented only the first instalment. The second stage came with the Employment Act of **1982**. This put further limits on the right to strike; it made more certain that trade unions and trade unionists would be taken to court by employers, and that individuals would face prison sentences; and it provided means whereby trade union funds could be mulcted for damages for 'unlawful' industrial action, or for contempt of court. Many of the provisions of the Act were phrased in such a way as to allow the Courts to adjudicate and decide on matters crucial to trade union activity. It is necessary again to underline this particular point. While this **1982** Employment Act was specific about a number of changes proposed, all adverse to the unions, many of the new restrictions being imposed were not clearly defined and required interpretation by the Courts. So, for example, an employer could go to the Court asking for an injunction (in Britain) or an interdict (in Scotland) banning a particular industrial action, and the injunction would prevent

action until the Court had pronounced; and that could be months. Failure to obey the Court order could lead to fines or imprisonment for contempt of court, and in the case of a union it could lead to an order for the sequestration of funds.

By **1983**, then, the political and legal framework within which the trade union movement operated had changed dramatically as a result of legislation by the first of the Thatcher administrations. There were restraints upon industrial action that in a number of ways were more severe than any the union movement had experienced since the Trade Union Act of **1906** repealed by the Taff Vale decision; and although this for the Tory government was the beginning, and certainly not its conclusion, much had already been achieved before the electoral victory of the Thatcher administration in the summer of **1983**.



The miners were the obvious target for the Thatcher administration as the **Ridley Report** had emphasised. Although the miners' union was much shrunken in numbers it was cohesive and disciplined and it was in a key sector of the economy. Moreover, the most important development inside the National Union of Miners had been the political shift to the Left during the nineteen seventies, symbolised by the election of **Arthur Scargill** to the presidency of the Yorkshire miners in **1973**, then of **Mick McGahey** as vice-president of the National Union in the same year, and finally, in December **1981**, of **Scargill** as president of the NUM, in succession to **Joe Gormley**, and with a decisive vote of just over seventy per cent.<sup>6</sup>

The NUM from **1974** had operated within a national agreement—the Plan for Coal—agreed and signed between the National Coal Board, the NUM and the government. During the sixties coal had been rapidly displaced by oil, and in theory by nuclear power; but the great rise in oil prices in **1974**, as well as the miners' strike of that year and the return of a Labour government, led to a major reversal of previous policy. Henceforth coal was to be a major component of Energy policy and in particular as the principal source of electrical power generation. The current production of coal in **1974** was **117** million tonnes and the Plan for Coal projected an output of **135** millions by **1985** and **170** millions by the year **2000**.<sup>7</sup>

This programme meant a much increased level of investment. It was assumed that about two million tonnes a year would be lost due to the physical exhaustion of coal seams, and that to reach the new targets **additional** capacity of about four million tonnes a year would have to come on stream. It must be noted that the estimates for future demand were already, in **1974**, above realistic levels; and in **1977**, especially

because of the unexpected and falling demand for energy, the coal targets were revised downwards. There were two main reasons for this decline in demand: one was the vigorous and successful efforts at energy conservation, and the second was the quite sharp decrease in the rates of economic growth in many parts of the world economy.

What the TUC, the Labour Party leadership (at any rate in its public pronouncements) *and* the NUM have never come to terms with is the high politics of energy supply. Reducing dependence on coal was already a firm option before 1974 and the cheapness of oil underpinned all the other factors involved. When there occurred the sensational rise in oil prices in 1974 the politics of energy suddenly became much more intense. On the one hand the level of oil prices made coal the obvious alternative: hence the British *Plan for Coal*. But 1974 was also the second occasion when the NUM had exhibited the industrial muscle it possessed and for the political Establishment—much broader in its membership than the Conservative Party—a further narrowing of energy resources upon coal was greatly to be feared, given the actual and potential militancy of British miners.

The components of the Energy Establishment are at the same time complementary and competitive with each other. They are represented by powerful business interests whose relations with the Departments of Energy and Trade and the Cabinet Office are close and intimate. At the centre of the Energy Establishment in Britain is the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) with enormous assets of nearly forty billion pounds: the largest electricity undertaking in Europe and probably the world. Its present chairman, formerly head of the Atomic Energy Authority (AEA) is Sir Walter Marshall, appointed by Mrs Thatcher, and a single-minded advocate of nuclear power. He is known for his advocacy of the Westinghouse Pressurised Water Reactor, and is also a supporter of the policy of privatisation. Linked with the CEGB are other parts of the public sector such as British Nuclear Fuels who own the Sellafield re-processing plants. The other main component of the nationalised sector is, of course, the National Coal Board whose main consumer is the CEGB and with a chairman, Ian **McGregor**, also appointed by Mrs Thatcher. We now have at the head of the electricity supply monopoly and the coal mining monopoly two men who are in favour of nuclear power, the run-down of the coal industry, and the privatisation of the profitable parts of each industry.

In the private sector of energy there are first the oil companies, immensely powerful and with strong political clout. Obviously it is a central interest of the oil companies to encourage dual capacity—oil and coal—in the electricity generating stations in Britain, and in this important matter they have been successful: as the 1984-5 miners strike demonstrated. But the oil companies have other interests, and in particular the opening of the British market to cheap imported coal. After 1974 the oil

multinationals invested heavily in coal mining and they are now much involved in the international coal trade, including that from South Africa. The other major part of the energy grouping are the engineering and building firms who contract for power stations of all kinds and, for deep sea drilling equipment and platforms. These include a clutch of very large electro-engineering enterprises such as GEC, and civil construction companies of the size of Woodrow Taylor and Wimpeys. All these groups, in both the public and private sectors, have special relationships with particular departments in Whitehall, and these include, beside those of an obvious technical or commercial nature, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office. What is involved, it must be emphasised, are economic interests with assets of billions of pounds. There are, inevitably, many cross-currents within and between the various interests within this large umbrella of energy, and competition is often fierce. The new cross-Channel cables from France which will begin carrying nuclear-generated electricity in the autumn of 1985 are a case in point. When the existing cables are fully operative electricity generation will be the equivalent of a power station of the size of the planned Sizewell plant; and the French are now pressing very hard for further supplies to be taken. This kind of diversification in energy supply will not only reduce dependence upon any one group of workers including the power supply workers; and it will have the specific result of further reducing the British demand for coal, and that means the jobs of British miners.<sup>8</sup>



It will now be appreciated that the basic facts of the energy situation had long been in the making when the Thatcher government took office; but that government came with specific objectives: the attack upon trade unionism being at their head. Anti-union legislation together with rapidly increasing unemployment would take care of the union movement in general; but the miners were a special case, with an industrial power that carried strong political implications as 1974 had so clearly demonstrated. The war with the miners must begin but the ground for battle had to be chosen with care, and if conditions were not propitious then a tactical withdrawal was in order. Thus it came about that in February 1981 the Thatcher government executed a much-publicised retreat from a confrontation with the miners. Early in the month the NUM had met Sir Derek Ezra, the chairman of the Coal Board. There was a complicated discussion, the details of which are still unclear, but the miners' leaders emerged with the news of large scale closures and job losses. Joe Gormley was still president and the NUM executive, with Right and Left in total agreement, passed a unanimous resolution giving the Government seven days before a strike ballot would be organised. Miners all over Britain

began to take unofficial action and it immediately became obvious that a ballot would result in a majority for action. The miners also received what would seem to be firm pledges for sympathetic action from a range of unions including the steelworkers, the railwaymen and the seamen. The Government, which had at the outset taken up its usual attitude of non-interference in industrial disputes, moved quickly. The Energy Secretary, David Howell, brought forward a meeting with the NUM and the Coal Board, and the Government agreed to provide further investment. John Biffen agreed at the time that the Cabinet had given in to 'industrial muscle'; and so did the country. Three and a half years later, towards the end of the miners strike, on the 11th December 1984 and speaking on Channel Four News, David Howell accepted that the retreat in 1981 was 'entirely' a matter of tactics: 'Neither the Government nor I think society as a whole was in a position to get locked into a coal strike. . . In those days stocks weren't so high. I don't think the country was prepared, and the whole NUM and the trade union movement tended to be united on one side.' These were the days, it must be recalled, before **McGregor** ran his scythe through the steel workers; before the stark incompetence of the Labour leadership had been fully revealed during the General Election of 1983; before years of unemployment had eaten into the morale of working people; and before the anti-union legislation had made its serious impact upon union activity.

In the three years leading up to the coal strike of 1984 the situation changed substantially, and in every way detrimental to the position of the miners. The 1980 Coal Board Act required the NCB to break even by 1983-4, and although the Government made its tactical retreat in early 1981, the pressure for actual and potential closures continued unabated. In January 1981 the Yorkshire Area of the NUM—Scargill was president and Jack Taylor vice-president—had held a ballot asking for a general agreement that action should be taken in order to stop closure of any pit except on the grounds of geological exhaustion. It was a ballot on general principle and not in relation to any one pit closure. The Yorkshire Area campaigned carefully and won an 86 per cent vote; and while it attracted little national attention, no doubt it was a factor that the Government took into account in the subsequent months. But the history of national ballots in the next couple of years was less satisfactory. Gormley announced his retirement in the early autumn of 1981 and Arthur **Scargill** was elected president of the National Union in December 1981. While he was still president-elect there was a dispute over a pay claim. The NCB offered 9.5 per cent, and the executive took the matter to a national ballot. This was in January 1982, and was the occasion when Gormley, still in office, published his opposition to strike action in the **Daily Express**. The membership voted 55.45 per cent against strike action.

Gormley's departure from the NUM more or less coincided with the

retirement of Sir Derek Ezra from the Coal Board. He was replaced with Norman Siddall as caretaker chairman for a year. It was in this period that occurred the second national ballot defeat in October 1982. The main issue was again pay and national conference had already begun an overtime ban. The national ballot, however, linked the pay claim with the question of pit closures. It was obvious in retrospect a tactical mistake to run the two issues together, and the ballot produced 61 per cent against action with 39 per cent in favour. Yorkshire, which in the previous national ballot had voted 66.5 per cent in favour now dropped to 56 per cent in favour. The third lost national ballot came in the following spring. In March 1983 the Tynawr Lewis Merthyr pit (near Pontypridd, South Wales) was scheduled for closure, and the South Wales area voted for strike. The Scottish Area voted to support South Wales, and the Yorkshire Area Council also voted by 73 votes to 2 to back South Wales. Scargill called an emergency meeting of the executive committee and argued that Rule 41 should be invoked whereby individual areas may call strikes if the national Executive committee sanctions them. The Right wing on the EC argued that the question of the closure of Lewis Merthyr was a national issue, and a ballot was accordingly held. When the votes were counted they reproduced the figures of the previous autumn, with 61 per cent against strike action. Even Yorkshire, which continued to vote in favour, showed only 54 per cent, a drop of two per cent on the previous figure. Just over a fortnight after the votes were announced, Mrs Thatcher announced the nomination of Ian McGregor as chairman of the Coal Board. The coal crisis was moving nearer. After her victorious general election of the summer of 1983, when allocating the positions in the government, Mrs Thatcher is reported to have said to Peter Walker: 'I want you to go to Energy. We're going to have a miners strike.'

McGregor took office on 1st September 1983, and almost immediately began to talk about the need to eliminate what he described as uneconomic output. The definition of 'uneconomic' is discussed in detail below. There was a final pay offer for this year at just over five per cent, and an emergency national conference of the NUM imposed an overtime ban which began on October 31st. It was linked with the campaign against pit closures. The previous summer, just before McGregor came to office, the NUM annual conference had unanimously passed a resolution opposing not only 'pit and works closures, but all reductions in manpower', and the EC was given the power to conduct a national ballot on the issue if and when it was deemed appropriate.

The overtime ban caused many local difficulties and disputes, especially in Scotland and Yorkshire. And then on March 1st 1984 the Yorkshire Area of the NCB announced the closure of Cortonwood. Five days later, at a national meeting with the three mining unions—NUM, NACODS and BACM—the NCB gave notice that there was to be a cut in capacity of four

million tonnes and that a third of this was to come out of the North-Eastern area.'

It is necessary to underline the importance of Cortonwood. It was a pit that was understood to have at least a further five years of life, and men had been transferred into it from other pits until two weeks earlier. The decision to close down Cortonwood was therefore quite unexpected, and although the Yorkshire NCB insisted that the matter was not decided in London but was a regional decision taken in the circumstances of the requirement to reduce output, it was certainly fully in accord with national strategy. The appointment of **McGregor** had been an unmistakable signal that a confrontation with the miners was now to be seriously considered: the problems were the matter of timing, and the required provocation. And it is in the context of 'provocation' that Cortonwood is important. Pits were already being closed down in Scotland, South Wales and other peripheral areas. The Scotsman (7 February 1984) noted that the Scottish Area Director of the NCB, Albert Wheeler, had in the previous thirteen months reduced the number of Scottish pits from 15 to 9 with only one new colliery coming on stream in the future; while South Wales had no new pits to set against their closures. The Coal Board could have completely closed down both South Wales and Scotland—as indeed is broadly their intention in the future—without touching the heart of the miners' union in the central mining districts. Yorkshire has 60,000 miners, out of a national total of 180,000; it has a militant leadership; and it was, and in most ways still is, Scargill's home base. With Nottinghamshire it was the powerful centre of the industry. Yorkshire had to be broken. Scotland and South Wales could remain on strike for five years, and the NCB and Whitehall, could and would have forgotten that there were miners still living in those parts; and the shortfall in output would have embarrassed no one. If the Government was to break the power of the National Union of Miners, Yorkshire had to be involved from the beginning.

The NCB timing for the closing down of Cortonwood was, of course, carefully calculated from their side, and it was **right**;<sup>10</sup> but it was certainly not propitious for the miners. No national strike of coal miners will choose to begin at the outset of spring when, with the summer coming along, consumer demand for heat and light will be moving downward to its lowest levels of the year; and coal stocks at this time, following the injunction of the **Ridley** Report and underlined by the events of February 1981, were at a high point. In the 1981 crisis they had been 37 million tonnes; by the spring of 1984 they were 57 million. Moreover, during 1983 oil imports had been quite sharply increasing, and power stations were being prepared for an increasing use of oil firing. This was an issue on which Glyn England, chairman of the CEBG, had shown strong disagreement with the Government, and his contract was not renewed. He was replaced in 1983 by Sir Walter Marshall who began right away to talk

about the excessive dependency upon coal. There were some interesting developments in this area. During the nineteen seventies all the major power stations were made much more self-sufficient than they had been previously, and they also developed a greater flexibility in their use of fuel. **Drax** in South Yorkshire for instance, is listed as a coal-fired power station yet it has one oil turbine; and in the 1970s the Ferrybridge 'C' plant **was** provided with a hydrogen pipe line and with chemical and oil storage facilities.

The timing was also right for the Government when they looked at the internal situation of the NUM. The miners had a president who could not be cajoled or bought off. **Scargill** was incorruptible; he was also inflexible on the issue of pit closures and job losses, and since the government were never going to be interested in serious negotiations, Scargill's obduracy might work in their favour. Now this could not be assumed as anything but one option at the beginning of the strike, for there were many imponderables, above all the range of support that could be forthcoming from other sections of the trade union and labour movement. But at the beginning of 1984 the Government could assess favourably their appreciation of the internal problems the NUM leadership faced. The failure of the national ballots of November 1982 and of March 1983 had deeply worried the NUM leadership. In the March ballot only 19 per cent of Nottinghamshire miners had voted for strike action, with 18 per cent in Leicestershire and 12 per cent in South Derbyshire. There were problems too in the militant areas. South Wales had been severely shaken by the lack of support for what had become a national campaign over the threatened Lewis Merthyr colliery. Welsh miners had travelled all over Britain to argue for support for South Wales. They were well received everywhere, including Nottinghamshire and the Midlands; but their reception stopped short of support in the national ballot. When the strike call was made in March 1984 some Welsh pits had to be picketed out; but once out, and it was a matter only of days, South Wales remained solid until the very last days of the year's strike. But the Midlands were very different, and their poor response to the national ballots meant that no one could predict how the Midland coalfields would react to a call for strike, and if **they** joined the strike, how long they would last. Traditions are very persistent, and 1926 still cast very long shadows. But just as important as these internal problems of the NUM was the stark, bitter fact that large sections of public opinion did not believe the miners had a viable case against closures; and public opinion, in this context, certainly included large numbers of manual workers. The constant re-iteration of the inefficiency of the nationalised industries, to which the labour movement had reacted hardly at all, had shaped 'commonsense' attitudes. In the case of the mining industry the Minister of Energy, **Peter Walker**, was making continuous reference to what he said was a subsidy of **£1,334**

million for the year 19834, or roughly £130 per week for each working miner. The fact that it was a wholly misleading statement was not emphasised by anyone in the year leading up to the strike. There was no serious discussion of the so-called 'uneconomic' arguments. Why therefore should there be any questioning of the Government's arguments condemning the 'subsidy' to an industry that in many parts was 'uneconomic'? Moreover, the miners' union had long co-operated in the closing down of collieries on a large scale, so why should Scargill now adopt a wholly intransigent attitude in the nineteen eighties? The consequences of pit closures upon communities was a fairly new argument, at least at a national level, and that could be understood; but this aspect of the miner's case was greatly overshadowed by the widespread belief that the industry was 'uneconomic' and that contraction had to be accepted. This problem is discussed in some detail below, but let it be said at this point that the failure to analyse these 'uneconomic' arguments was a major weakness of the miners' own position, and a massive indictment of the Labour Party, whose understanding of the issues in energy matters was to be proved notably inadequate. There was, therefore, a great deal of prejudice against the miners before their strike began, and there was never a national effort to explain their case during the strike.



The sequence of events which provided the immediate reasons for the strike began, as noted above, with the announcement by George Hayes, the South Yorkshire NCB director, that Cortonwood was going to close. This was on March 1st. Five days later, on March 6th, at a National Consultative Council meeting the NUM were told that the Coal Board was looking for a four million tonne cut in production in 1984-5 and that this would involve 20,000 jobs. On the 8th March, at an executive committee meeting of the NUM the Yorkshire and Scottish areas asked for official strike agreement under Rule 41. The NUM has two rules under which strike action can be sanctioned. The first is Rule 41 whereby any area can ask the EC for permission to engage in an area strike; and the second is Rule 43 under which a national strike can be sanctioned only after a ballot of the whole membership.<sup>11</sup> At the March 8th meeting there was a motion for a national ballot but it was not in fact voted on—although about a dozen members present had spoken in favour of a national ballot—and only three members voted against action under Rule 41. Scotland and Yorkshire therefore obtained their constitutional sanction, and their strikes began on Monday 12 March. This is what the Left had wanted the previous year, but they had been forced to accept a national ballot. On this present occasion their strategy was based on certain crucial assumptions. The first was that the area strikes would have a domino

effect upon other areas, and that mass picketing would be the means whereby a national strike would come about. The events of 1972 and 1974 were deeply imprinted upon the consciousness of mineworkers, and the great solidarity picket of **Saltley** was never far from their minds. In 1984, it was other miners who had to be picketed, not workers at power stations, or the docks, or transport undertakings, although that would also be necessary. Immediately for Yorkshire miners it was adjacent Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lancashire that were working, and they poured over the county boundaries. This was the first, and necessary, part of a successful strategy: a complete national stoppage. The second was the looked-for solidarity of other groups with the miners: workers on the railways, in the steelworks, and on the docks: those who had offered firm support in 1981, the threat of which had forced a retreat on the Government. And the third part of a strategy that would achieve success, although it was much less emphasised than the industrial action, was the political support the miners could reasonably expect from the labour movement in general, and, no doubt they also hoped, from the political leadership of the Labour Party. But none of these matters turned out the way that was being counted upon, and what is remarkable about the miners' strike is not that it was defeated but that it took a year to achieve that defeat.

The first major problem was the disunity within the NUM, and the twenty per cent of miners who continued working throughout the whole year. There could be no denying the seriousness for the miners' leadership of the fact that important areas continued to work throughout the year's strike. In 1926 most of Nottingham went back by the end of August; now, in 1984-5, in the absence of a national ballot, they continued working from the first day. The question of the national ballot will not be discussed here except to underline the obvious: that it was an albatross round the neck of the NUM leadership, and the refusal to have a ballot was used effectively by all the enemies of the miners. It also confused some sections of their well-wishers.

The second problem was one that might have been more clearly appreciated than it apparently was at the outset. The police had also been seriously disturbed by the events of 1972—which included **Saltley Gate**, the **Shrewsbury** pickets and the **Pentonville Five**—and they began to centralise their activities on a national basis. The constitutional position has been that the police force in England and Wales is divided between 43 areas and their administration controlled by a tri-partite arrangement between the Home Secretary, the Chief Constable and the local Police Authority or Committee. The six metropolitan County Councils, excluding London, constitute Police Authorities, while in the ordinary County Councils there are Police Committees made up of two-thirds local councillors and one third magistrates. Police Committees deal with staffing, including the appointment of Chief Constables, equipment and general

costs, and their remit is 'the maintenance of an adequate and efficient police force'. The Chief Constables are responsible, under the 1964 Police Act, for the direction of the local police force on operational and policy matters. The Home Secretary has a strong central role, with defined powers on certain questions, but in times of crisis, he will have the dominating position. The Home Secretary has always had this ability to act in a centralising way in critical times throughout the modern period of British history, from the 1790s to the present day.<sup>12</sup> In the day to day affairs of the police H.M. Inspectors of Police report direct to the Home Secretary on the efficiency of all authorities.

That is the constitutional position, but the reality is somewhat different. There has been a steady movement especially in the past decade towards increased centralisation and changes in the practice of policing. Northern Ireland has exercised a powerful influence during the last twenty years or so, and the growth of para-military groups within the existing police forces has been a marked feature of this period; developments within the police forces themselves and which are not subject to the lay authorities who theoretically, in the last resort, control these forces. The most important single administrative change has been the establishment of the National Reporting Centre whose existence was hardly known about until a statement was made on 18th March 1984 in connection with its role in the miners' strike.<sup>13</sup> The Centre was first established in 1972 as a response to the **Saltley** picket and other events of that year. It was an organisation which brought together all the Chief Constables of England and Wales, and the Controller is always the current president of the Association of Chief Constables (ACPO). At the beginning of the miners strike in March 1984 this was David Hall, the Chief Constable for Humberside who later stated that at the very beginning of picketing in Nottinghamshire—which began on the first day of the strike—1,000 officers had been mobilised from different police forces in the country. Within the first month, and in consultation with the Home Secretary, 8,000 police had been mobilised from all but two of the Constabularies in the country. Most of the police used came from the Special Patrol Groups whose establishment had been a feature of the 1970s: groups trained in the use of firearms and in the techniques of riot control with appropriate equipment. The work of the National Reporting Centre is not controlled by the lay authorities nor is there any reporting back except to the Home Office. It is in fact a strategic command for a nationally organised riot force which can be directed to any place in the country and which is especially important in industrial disputes. Without the National Reporting Centre's co-ordinating activity the policing of the 1984–5 miners strike would have broken down, and since its control is ultimately that of the Home Secretary, a strike-breaking Government such as the Thatcher administration has now a powerful para-military organisation at its disposal, with no lay control, either from

local authorities or from the House of Commons. Only the Labour front bench at Westminster seemed to be unaware that the fiction of police neutrality could no longer be accepted.

The third problem the miners faced was the single-mindedness of the Thatcher government in its determination to be rid of the troublesome Miners' Union. Grunwick, Eddie Shah at Warrington, the trampling down of the Steelworkers by **MacGregor** had shown the way, and the anti-Trade Union legislation was now on the Statute Book; there was widespread cautiousness if not demoralisation among trade union leaderships; and it was time for what undoubtedly would be a serious physical confrontation with the miners. It was to prove a good deal more difficult than the Government and the Coal Board must have assumed at the outset. **McGregor** himself, with a notorious record of union-busting in the United States, proved under pressure to be weak and **incompetent**;<sup>14</sup> the solidarity of the miners and their families was truly remarkable with the role of the women in the coalfields being outstanding; and although the national support of the TUC and the Labour Party leadership, and especially of the latter, was to be a good deal less than half-hearted, what was impressive was the extent and range of support for the miners from very wide sections of the British people and from the labour movement in particular. But for the Thatcher government, there was only one real problem, namely, that the miners would settle on terms which would represent at least a partial victory, and which would therefore not meet the central aim that the Government had set itself: the destruction of the industrial and political effectiveness of the NUM. So long as the miners refused to settle, and the strike continued, all the Government had to do, in conjunction with General Winter and General Hardship, was to continue to pour money in the conduct and continuation of all the measures which were being taken against the miners, and victory would come in the end. The amount of money expended was irrelevant; public spending could go on and on, and the strike having started must end only in a miners' defeat. The Government came close several times to failing in their objective of total victory. It was this inflexible intransigence of the Thatcher government that was not wholly appreciated by the NUM, and as far as can be judged from their published statements, not at all by the Labour leadership. There was no financial cost too great for the miners to be destroyed, and the Government spent money without restraint: most particularly on the large scale police operations, and on the oil firing of the power stations. The cost was in billions of pounds, but for the Tories it was worth every billion. By comparison, the Falklands episode, so important for the Thatcher electoral victory in 1983, was but froth. The defeat of the miners was seen as an important victory of the capitalist State, and it was rejoiced in by the world of business. No indication of the power of Capital over Labour was better illustrated than this stark confrontation between

the miners and the coercive forces of the British State.

There was a fourth problem that again was not fully appreciated or appreciated at all during the early weeks of the miners strike; and that was the failure of workers in other key industries to support the miners by industrial action. We leave aside the relations between the TUC General Council and the NUM on which there is a good deal to be said on both sides; and there was support from members of ASLEF and the NUR. But there was no movement from power station workers, a large number of whom were organised by Frank Chapple; no help from the steelworkers, with a weak leadership and a membership that was described as 'shell-shocked' from **McGregor's** butchery of the previous three years; and there was no stopping the increasing amounts of imported coal. It came mostly from Poland, West Germany and the United States, with smaller but also growing amounts from South Africa. Belgian and Australian miners and dockers gave practical support to the British miners, but from Scotland southwards, right down the east coast of England and along the south coast, the unregistered ports outside the Dock Labour Scheme were never busier. The coal flooded in, and the local port and transport workers must have earned nearly as much extra pay as the thousands of policemen drafted into the mining areas whose earnings rocketed. The **Ridley** Report had suggested the need to recruit 'good non-union drivers', and the willingness of lorry drivers to go through picket lines remained an unpleasant feature of the whole course of the miners' strike; the Transport Workers Union could do nothing about it. It should be noted that a quite common argument to pickets from transport workers referred to the large numbers of miners who were still working. It was, without question, a hypocritical argument by many, but the twenty per cent of miners who worked throughout created much confusion, and certainly much excuse by strike-breaking workers in other industries.

The miners did not, therefore, have the support of the working class in an organised sense. There was no possibility that the electricians union, the EEPTU, would offer solidarity with the miners; but a concerted **one**-day stoppage of all the registered docks, the railways, and the steel works would have been a serious warning, and a week's solid strike in sympathy with the miners might have forced the government into a serious bargaining stance. Let it be said that such concerted action was never likely, and in the crisis of the year-long strike the leadership of the unions related to mining and the coal industry, whatever their individual opinions, were unable to bring their members into supportive action. There were exceptions, among them certain regions of the **railways**,<sup>15</sup> and dockers, but it must be recognised, as a reflection of the present state of political consciousness of working people in Britain, that national support in an organised sense was lacking. There was very large-scale support from outside the mining communities, much greater than in 1926; and this was

not only due to a good deal more pronounced material affluence, There was a very considerable groundswell of support throughout the labour movement in Britain, and its support was maintained throughout the years' struggle. In 1926 the largest amount of money for the miners came from Soviet trade unions, whereas in 1984-5 home based support was the most important component of every kind of aid, by a very long way. But the dockers illustrate the point being made here. There were two national dock strikes. The first was called on the 9th July 1984 after coal had been unloaded at Immingham for the British Steel Corporation by non-registered dock labour. The strike was undoubtedly a serious threat to both the NCB and the Government, but it was ended by a compromise formula which conceded a good deal to the union but which in any case had to be accepted because of the growing pressures from dockers in unregistered ports and especially at this time, from Dover. The second dock strike began on 24 August after the British Steel Corporation's decision to unload coal at Hunterston (in Scotland), again using non-registered labour. All twelve dock labour scheme ports in Scotland were on strike, and most in England, but the non-registered ports on the East Coast, and in particular Dover and Felixstowe, continued working (as did all the many small wharves up and down the east coast which were importing coal as fast as they could). At Felixstowe the average wage of 1,532 employees in 1983 was £13,507, and when a strike vote was taken for this second strike only 5 out of 900 voted in favour. The second dock strike ended on 19 September<sup>16</sup> having failed in its basic objectives.



What could have been done? Was there ever a possibility that the miners' strike could have been won, given the determination of the Thatcher government to defeat the miners at any cost, and given also the failure of other trade unions to provide effective solidarity action? There were, as indicated above, several occasions when the NCB in particular looked in a relatively weak position and when the pressures upon the Government appeared to be growing. **McGregor** himself was proving notably incompetent and unconvincing in his presentation of the NCB case, and we now know, from what has later been revealed after the strike was over, that there were at times serious disagreements between him and the Energy Secretary.<sup>17</sup> The last major talks of any weight and import began with a vote by NACODS (National Association of Colliery **O**vermen, **D**eputies and **S**hotfirers) which produced 82.5 per cent in favour of a national strike. NACODS, whose role in the **p**its was crucial, a withdrawal of their labour would mean a complete national stoppage of work, had no tradition of striking and this vote was unprecedented. On the 3rd October NACODS and the NCB went to ACAS (the National Conciliation body), and talks

continued throughout most of October. There were one hundred and thirty-seven hours of talks in all and before a settlement was agreed NACODS insisted that the NUM were included. The latter, however, refused the **new** closure procedure which represented a number of concessions on the part of the NCB, and NACODS alone signed; and withdrew their strike notices. Had the NUM also signed, both sides would without doubt have claimed a victory, in that the NUM would have accepted a closure procedure, and the NCB would have conceded a good deal more than they started with. Most important, of course, the NUM would have remained a powerful force in the industry. It is now generally agreed that the failure of these talks was the last occasion when some sort of settlement which did not involve the defeat of the NUM was practicable. In the month following, much helped by financial bribes from the NCB, some 16,000 men returned to work. At the time, it must be emphasised, the situation did not look clear cut. In an article in *Tribune* on 5 October Colin Sweet, director of the Centre for Energy Studies at the Polytechnic of the South Bank, made a quite favourable assessment of the miner's situation in the strike; and Sweet is a well-informed and sensible commentator. He laid considerable emphasis in this article on the decline in coal stocks and on the difficulties of both importing and using foreign coal supplies. What most observers underestimated was in fact the ability to import coal at dozens of small ports and improvised wharves along the east and south coasts, and the technical ability of those in charge of the power stations, with the willing co-operation of the power workers, to produce record levels of electricity. Without the co-operation of the power workers with management the output of electricity could not possibly have been maintained, and most commentaries on the miners' strike failed to appreciate the crucial contribution to the Government's victory that was being made by the workers in the generating **plants**.<sup>18</sup>

Whether the NUM leadership could have settled even at this late date in the strike—the end of October 1984—is a big, and crucial question. Arthur **Scargill** and his colleagues had evoked enormous sacrifices from their members on the clear understanding that they were fighting for jobs for their communities and against all closures. The issues, as the leadership of the NUM had made abundantly plain from the very beginning of the strike, were straightforward, and uncompromising. But, and it is a major qualification, the assumptions made at the commencement of the strike had not been fulfilled. Twenty per cent of miners had worked throughout; there had been no effective solidarity from other unions; and the Labour Party leadership had publicly and very obviously stood to one side. It would have been very difficult for the NUM leadership, especially Scargill, **McGahey** and Heathfield, to settle on terms that were less than the claims with which the strike had begun; but is that not always the situation in strikes? Is it not rare for workers to win strikes

outright, and not all that common for a settlement to be agreed which includes concessions on both sides? The quarter of a century after **1950** was an unusual period in the history of capitalism. It was a time when unions did improve quite substantially their bargaining position, backed by some statutory legislation. But the boom years had ended in **1973**, and the growing crisis in the seventies had led into the election of a rampant trade-union busting government led by Mrs Thatcher; and everything that had been done by the government since its election in the summer of **1979** had confirmed the spirit and the letter of the **Ridley Report**. It is true that the Labour leadership in Parliament had displayed a quite extraordinary incompetence, and a remarkable lack of urgency in the face of a government bristling with anti-labour and anti-union attitudes that had been translated into anti-union legislation. While therefore it would have been politically difficult for the miners' leaders to have advocated a settlement at the end of October **1984**, had they done so, it would have left the NUM, in the short and medium run at any rate, strengthened and not weakened. The Union would have been in a much stronger position to deal with the special problems of Nottinghamshire and the other smaller areas which continued working during the strike; but above all, it would have demonstrated, for the benefit of the whole labour movement, that the bitter hostility of much of the media, the large scale and persistent harassment by the police forces, and the notorious bias of the judiciary, at all levels, could be met, and overcome. A settlement at this time would have borne witness to the power of industrial workers backed by a remarkable range of support groups within and outside their own communities. It would, further, have been evidence, if additional evidence was needed, of the pusillanimity of the Labour leadership when confronted with the vicious hostility of the conservative Establishment, and of the feebleness of policies dictated by the ups and downs of the opinion polls.

But a settlement was not made, and the miners went on to defeat, an outcome that was not wholly the product of what may be described as the 'high politics' of the mining dispute. The NUM failed dramatically, for example, with the media and this cannot be accounted for entirely by the known bias and political prejudices of much of the national press or the TV companies. The organisation of publicity from the NUM headquarters in Sheffield was nearly as inefficient as that of the national Labour Party from Walworth Road during the **1983** General Election. Planning the day-to-day publicity and propagandist campaigns is not for amateurs; it requires specialist experience of journalism, radio and TV; and the full-time officials of unions should not be expected to act as part-time public-relations experts. The classic example of how a strike should be run took place in **September/October 1919** when the National Union of Railwaymen and other railway unions were on strike for nine days.<sup>19</sup> It was the first

modern industrial dispute in which both sides used the mass media for the presentation of their case. The Union Executives authorised the Labour Research Department to take charge of the publicity for the whole strike; and remarkably successful it was. Lloyd George called the strike an 'anarchist conspiracy'; and all the daily press, with the exception of the Daily Herald, explained to their readers how public opinion was totally against the strikers: 'a little band of conspirators who forced their duped followers into a strike against the whole nation' said the Daily Express. What the Labour Research Department achieved with their nation-wide publicity was first a rapidly growing support among manual workers for the case they presented and then a much wider sympathy among other sections of the population. But—and it is a crucial qualification—the railwaymen in 1919 had a case, and it was presented intelligently and clearly to the whole nation. And what was the case the miners presented throughout the whole year of their strike from March 1984? The answer is that whatever case the miners had, it came across in a confused and wholly inadequate way. Arthur **Scargill** himself played two roles. The first, which he did brilliantly, was the union leader of a strike. His first responsibility was directed to his own members: the encouragement to their commitment, and the upholding of their morale. In this crucial respect Arthur **Scargill** may very properly be compared with Arthur Cook. They both identified with their members in a remarkable and unusual way, and for the extraordinary moral stamina the miners and their families displayed throughout the year of the strike **Scargill** can rightly claim to have been the most important single influence. He was for the English miners on strike what the 'FED' was for South Wales.<sup>20</sup> The role of a charismatic trade union leader, central though it is to the conduct of a strike, cannot however easily be transferred to that of spokesman to the public at large; and what the NUM never assembled was a group of dedicated specialists in public relations who for twenty-four hours each day would be concerning themselves with the presentation of the miners case on radio, in TV programmes, and through the press. A big and complicated business, and how many were there at the NUM headquarters concerned solely with such publicity? But while efficiency in presentation is crucial, the prior question to be asked is the nature of the case to be presented. Here, it must be said, there was a political vacuum which the Labour Party above all failed to occupy, but they were not helped by the inadequacy of the arguments the NUM themselves were marshalling. It was only in the second half of the strike that the economic arguments of the NCB, and the large-scale inadequacy of their accounting procedures, were subject to sustained criticism. It must be said that even when the materials became available the NUM leadership all failed to present adequately what was a very powerful case against the Coal Board and the Government. Only in Scotland, in the last stages of the strike, was there a

serious attempt to put across the economic case against the NCB.

Analysis of the misrepresentations of the economic position of the coal mines of Britain, and of the consequences of closure, was undertaken by academics outside the NUM and the Labour Party. It began with Andrew Glyn, of the University of Oxford, whose work was published by the NUM in the autumn of **1984** but whose arguments were hardly ever used by Arthur **Scargill** and other spokesmen for the miners. Then came the analysis of Scottish mining by George Kerevan and Richard Saville around Christmas **1984**, and there was later a study by a group at **Aberystwyth** of some aspects of the South Wales position. In January **1985**, the journal *Accountancy*, published a devastating critique of the accounting methods of the National Coal Board by five academic accounting specialists, including David Cooper, Price Waterhouse Professor of Accounting and Finance at UMIST and Tony **Lowe**, Professor of Accounting and Financial Management at the University of **Sheffield**.<sup>11</sup> What all these studies added up to was a total reversal of the Coal Board's position on the so-called 'uneconomic' pits, and a complete rejection of the general arguments used by the Government in their claim that there were sound economic reasons for the closing of pits.

These are three parts of the problem overall that have been selected for comment, although what is given below is no more than a summary of detailed economic and accounting analyses that are in the public domain, and, it should be added, are comprehensible to the lay reader. The first relates to what is sometimes called the social audit of the industry—the social and economic costs of closing a pit or pits compared with the costs of keeping the pit or pits working. All the data used in the various analyses were taken either from the published accounts of the National Coal Board or from the Report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the National Coal Board which was published in June **1983** (Cmnd **8920**). The point was made by Glyn and the Accounting specialists that some of the NCB data could only be considered approximate, although the basic generalisation and conclusions were not affected; but it is worth noting that one must assume that since some of the financial details were not defined as would be expected of a commercial organisation, the Coal Board themselves were basing their judgments on data that were not as precise as would normally be required in commercial decision-making. Glyn took the **NCB's** data for the **103** pits for which the NCB showed what they described as 'operating losses' and set against these 'losses' the economic costs of closure. These latter included redundancy pay for the miners who left the industry, and the revenue therefore also lost in tax; the cost of unemployment pay and social security for those 'new' miners who would have been taken on in place of the older men if the pits had not closed; and the unemployment pay and social benefits that would be paid, as well as the tax that would be lost, of those outside the pits

who lost their jobs as a result of pit closures. Glyn estimated that for every 100 jobs lost in the mines there would be about 87 lost elsewhere—around 25 in the NCB and the remainder in the supplying industries. If all these economic costs of closure are added up then for the 29 weeks of 1983/4 before the overtime ban 'while 103 pits are shown as reporting losses over the period in not one case would closure have benefitted Government

The second part of the problem, however, is that the definition of the so-called 'operating losses' by individual pits are themselves a product of faulty, incorrect and indefensible accounting procedures by the NCB. The most convenient analysis is in the article in *Accountancy*. Here Professor Cooper and his colleagues examined in close detail the colliery profit and loss account—the F 23—upon which the NCB base their decision-making for investment, their estimate of future profit and loss, and their public statements about closure. The F 23, the authors said bluntly, was 'fundamentally flawed' in terms of the purposes for which it was used *viz* to justify pit closure decisions; and they then proceeded to explain why the F 23 'does not provide a sensible basis for debate on pit closures'. Their analysis may be conveniently illustrated by the case of the pit whose threatened closure was the immediate cause of the strike: Cortonwood. Briefly, what they showed was that the NCB arrived at a figure of loss by setting operating costs against net proceeds, a reasonable method it would seem until it was appreciated that within the figure of operating costs the NCB included items which by no stretch of any commercial imagination could be included in current operating costs. Thus, compensation for surface damage and subsidence was included: costs which it should be noted would continue whether the pit was kept open or closed. Similarly, the cost of redundancies and early retirements were included within current operating costs although again these costs would remain if the pit was closed. The conclusion arrived at about Cortonwood was that whereas in 1981/2 the NCB F 23 showed a loss per tonne of E6.20 the true figures were that the pit would have contributed a positive income of somewhere between E2.49 and E5.45 per tonne. And the authors imply—they are cautious in their statements—that the analysis for 1983--4 would show results in the same way. This is what Glyn had already shown in his earlier pamphlet: that if the items are removed from the debit side that cannot seriously be allocated to operating costs then the NCB in fact made an operating profit in the year prior to the strike.<sup>23</sup>

A few months after the strike ended another accountant published his analysis in the *Guardian*. This was Emile Woolf and the interesting thing is that Mr Woolf did not appear to be familiar with the literature mentioned above. His data were worked out independently from the NCB accounts and are presented below. It was clear from his article that Mr Woolf was

shocked at what he discovered in the NCB accounts. They were, he wrote, 'a supreme masterpiece in the art of obfuscation. Even if Sherlock Holmes had held a Masters degree in Accounting he would have found his powers of sleuthery stretched to the utmost in finding his way through this particular maze of artfully presented decoys'.<sup>24</sup>

Woolf began by referring to Peter Walker's repeated statement that the taxpayer had subsidised the coal industry by £1,334 million during 1983-4 or roughly £130 per week. What everyone naturally assumed from these figures was that the Coal industry was making losses of this order. When Woolf analysed the figures he found that £459 million represented the costs of the contraction already imposed on the industry—including redundancy payments and increased pensions to those who had left the industry more than 10 years earlier—and in no rational calculation could these costs be included under the heading of 'operating costs' which should refer only to current costs of mining. As Woolf noted hundreds of millions of pounds which related to the costs of contraction in the past were being included in the figures to justify contraction in the future: 'surely one of the most blatant instances of the proverbial self-fulfilling prophecy ever uttered from an ostensibly authoritative source'.

Woolf then continued to analyse the remaining £875 million of the original £1.3 billion. 'This represents the deficit grant paid by the Government to the NCB to cover its reported losses for the year. Surely that is bad enough, some might say.' But of this £875 million deficit no less than £467 million represented interest charges, almost all of which were paid by the Coal Board to the Government and were largely the result of the closure programme imposed upon the industry by the Government. So the Government created, in Woolf's words, 'a mountain of debt for the industry' in respect of its contraction and then blamed the industry for not being able to meet the interest charges. There were other items analysed by Woolf including the payments for subsidence compensation, the costs of which nearly doubled in 1983-4 over the previous year and also including further 'social costs' of past closures. Again these payments have nothing to do with operating costs. Here is Emile Woolf in conclusion:

**If the Secretary of State is really interested in the cause of the £1.3 billion burden on the taxpayer quoted at the beginning of this article the answer is simple. It is made up of the closure, redundancy and early retirement payments already sub-totalled at £634 million; subsidence claims of £245 million; and interest paid to the government £402 million. By any objective measures the coal industry, based on its audited accounts (as adjusted for distortions) appears to be operationally viable.**

And Woolf ended in obvious surprise that the NUM had not used this material and this sort of analysis during the strike: 'Who was advising the Miners?' he asked.

There is a third part of the problem: a matter that is so simple and at the same time so crucial for the economics of the coal industry: the price at which coal is sold in Britain to the Central Electricity Generating Board. Just over 70 per cent of coal mined in Britain is sold to the CEGB. The price is determined by complex negotiations which obviously have a major impact on the published accounts of the coal industry, since the level of prices will affect the apparent profitability or apparent loss-making of the NCB. Professor Cooper and his colleagues noted that current prices to the CEGB were above the international spot price at Rotterdam but the economics of imported coal are complex and obviously depend, among other factors, on exchange rates which have shown to be wildly fluctuating in the most recent years. But what is firm is the fact that coal is sold to the CEGB at something like 40 per cent below the cost of oil with equivalent heat output; that the CEGB have been instructed by the Government to raise their own prices to consumers at well above the inflation rate and have therefore made very large profits; and that if the NCB charged the CEGB at 20 per cent below the cost of oil—instead of about 40 per cent—the additional revenue for the NCB on 1983–4 would have been more than £1,500 million;<sup>25</sup> and Peter Walker's mythical taxpayer would have been in credit without any other adjustments being required to the NCB's balance sheets. And since it is now appreciated that the NCB's balance sheets are shot through with accounting mistakes—all biased against the mines and above all against the miners—the removal of Government restraints on pricing would show a coal industry which was wholly viable.

Throughout the year's strike the presentation of these basic truths—the lies and distortions of the case against the Coal industry by the Government and the NCB—was almost wholly absent; and the British public were left in ignorance concerning the facts of one of their basic industries. While there is no doubt that the NUM ought to have appreciated very much more clearly the devastating arguments that could be used in support of their claim of no pit closures—a demand that was wholly justified—the major responsibility for the failure to instruct and educate public opinion, and to expose the constant misrepresentations of Government spokesmen, and above all the Prime Minister, was upon the Labour leadership at Westminster. There was however a political vacuum around the coal strike, as there was in 1926. In part, as with the NUM, it must be presumed to be ignorance. The research facilities organised directly by the NUM are few, and apparently it never occurred to them to put the matter out of contract either with left-wing academic specialists or with capable organisations such as the Labour Research Department; or with both. And the same appears to have been true of the Labour Party. Its front-bench spokesmen were quite inadequately briefed, and offered none of the serious critique that was being made outside Westminster during the

closing months of the strike. Nowhere in *Hansard* is there to be found a sustained analysis of the economic and accounting practices of the Coal Board, and of their massive misrepresentations. And this is scandalous and indefensible. Here we have the Labour Party in Parliament, trying desperately to offer a coherent position and platform to the country, yet without anything approaching a comprehensive policy for energy, and allowing the Tories to get away with economic mayhem against the mining industry. This is not just a matter of sustained prejudice against Arthur Scargill, although that played its part; but it raises very serious questions about the absence of sophisticated research available to the Labour leadership. We have on evidence an article on the economics of the miners' strike by the Shadow Chancellor, Roy Hattersley, published in the *Observer* on 21 October 1984. Mr Hattersley is not one of the lightweight in Labour's Shadow Cabinet; his speeches in the Commons are well prepared and are usually more solid and interesting than those of his Leader. But this *Observer* article showed that Hattersley had only half of the answer, and the absence of the other half meant that his case against the Government was muted and lacked any real biting edge to the argument. 'We must assume' he writes 'that Cortonwood is a classic uneconomic pit. . .' But as the analysis above has shown we must assume nothing of the sort. At the time Hattersley was writing his article Professor Cooper and his colleagues must have been working on theirs, or likely **enough**, they had **already** finished it because it was originally planned to publish in the December issue of *Accountancy* and only the intervention of the NCB held up its publication until the following month.<sup>16</sup> Hattersley got his social audit figures right, but his understanding and analysis of the NCB's accounts was only half of the complete answer; so, for example, he assumed that even when interest payments and compensation for subsidence were taken out of the deficit side of the balance sheet for Cortonwood it still left a loss of **£5.5** per tonne; while Professor Cooper shows that there was in fact a positive contribution from Cortonwood to the operating profits of the NCB.<sup>17</sup>

If the Labour Party at the top cannot organise when in Opposition access to independent research which can take apart the obfuscation, lies and misrepresentations that are encapsulated in so many official documents and statements, what chance have **they** in office of understanding what the British Establishment is about, let alone of bringing them to account? There is, however, another dimension to the politics of Labour which the miners' strike also demonstrated: the dimension of courage. During the strike Thatcher and her colleagues played the issues of the ballot, and especially of the violence on the picket line, to their fullest extent; and the Labour front bench were unwilling to meet the Government head-on. There was a major failure of nerve on the part of Kinnock and his colleagues. As the *Guardian* remarked towards the end of the strike the

historian of the future will not go to the pages of *Hansard* for a detailed commentary on the strike because it was not in fact a matter of serious concern for the House of Commons: measuring concern by the number of columns relating to the strike in *Hansard*. This was not quite fair to the Labour backbenchers, some of whom showed considerable tenacity in their attempts to bring the strike before the House of Commons; but it most emphatically does apply to the Labour front bench. During the first ten weeks of the strike, after which the **House** was on holiday for a fortnight, there was no debate on the strike initiated by the front-bench Labour Opposition. David Owen, the leader of the SDP, who expressly stated that he wanted the miners to lose and who throughout exhibited his conservative attitudes in general, said on May 17 that

once again we should be going on holiday without having had a debate on the miners dispute. In view of the fact that the Opposition, who control totally the opportunities for debate, have not seen fit to allow a debate, will the Leader of the House give a promise to those of us, on both sides of the House I think, who feel that there should be a debate that he will initiate a debate in Government time immediately after the holiday if the Leader of the Opposition has not plucked up enough courage to have a **debate**?<sup>28</sup>

Earlier in the same day Kinnock had asked for debates on the effect of the abolition of the GLC on the Arts; on the European Community; and on the New Ireland Forum: all important subjects but none as central for British politics as the miners' strike. It was, as noted earlier, the fears about the issues of violence and the national ballot that paralysed the Labour leadership. They believed that these were significant vote-gatherers for the Tories and that the way to remain in a reasonable position in the public opinion polls was to 'ignore the issues as far as that was possible, and to take up a traditional law-and-order attitude when these matters could not be side-stepped. Kinnock very early in the strike, made a statement that clearly exhibited his political nervousness:

Will the Prime Minister understand once and for all that I condemn, and always have condemned, violence in **pursuit** of industrial disputes, even when it occurs among people who feel impotent in the face of the destruction of their jobs, their industry and their communities?

That was on March 13th 1984. ~~On~~ the 5th April Kinnock replied to a statement by **Eldon** Griffiths, spokesman for the Police Federation, and one of the large band of thorough-going reactionaries in this Parliament, in respect not of the miners' strike but concerning a different matter: 'The honourable gentleman' Kinnock said 'stated that I made an attack upon the police. That has never been true, is not true, and never will be true. . .<sup>29</sup> When a debate was initiated on policing and civil liberties in

the miners strike it came from a Labour back bencher who obtained it under Standing Order No 10, the usual way backbenchers attempt to get a discussion of urgent matters. The debate opened with Allen **McKay**, the **Barnsley** West MP, making a moderate speech which was largely an attack on policing methods. The Home Secretary replied, concentrating mainly on picket violence, and he was followed by Gerald Kaufman, the shadow Home Secretary who supported the right of people to work during a strike and who agreed that they were entitled to police protection: 'We know that in Nottinghamshire in recent weeks the presence of the police has often been welcomed by local residents. This is my response to the Right Honourable and learned Gentleman's challenge to me. Will he join me in condemning any excesses by the police?' Neil Kinnock was not present at this debate.<sup>30</sup>

31 July 1984 was Opposition Day in the House of Commons: when the Opposition chose the subject of the main debate. The miners' strike had now lasted twenty-one weeks: it filled the newspapers and the TV screens and since Parliament was to adjourn the next day for over two and a half months—to reassemble on Monday 22 October—it might have been thought it would be politically appropriate for the Opposition to lead a debate on the miners' strike in general, or on civil liberties and the strike—a matter which was causing much public concern—or on the need for a comprehensive energy policy and the place of coal in that policy. Instead, Kinnock avoided what the Labour leadership still regarded as potentially very damaging to their political image, as reflected in the opinion polls, and settled for a long resolution condemning the general economic, industrial and employment policies of the Thatcher government; and in his opening speech Kinnock made only a brief reference to the miners' strike towards the end of what he said. It was a poor speech by the not very high standards of this Parliament, and it was followed by Thatcher who taunted Kinnock with his silence on the issues of the ballot and mass picketing and who talked at some length about 'uneconomic' pits. The rest of the Labour members who spoke—including Michael Foot and **Benn**—concentrated entirely upon the miners' strike, as did most of the few Tories who intervened. But no Labour speaker discussed the misleading accounts of the NCB and it was Enoch Powell who referred to the 'crucial failure of management in the industry that set the train of events on foot'.<sup>31</sup> Hattersley summed up for Labour in a speech that inevitably had to relate to the general terms of the resolution. He began with a well-constructed attack on Thatcher, and certainly made a better speech than Kinnock; but once more the crucial issues of the strike were not debated. The Chancellor of the Exchequer concluded for the Government, and on the next day the House went on holiday for nearly three months.

It was violence on the picket lines that most inhibited the Labour leadership and determined that the strike should not be central to their Parliamentary strategy and performances. There was a great deal written about the violence in the miners' strike throughout the whole year and there was a good deal of discussion, and evidence, of police provocation. But just as the Labour leaders could not understand the gross distortions in the NCB accounts, with the result that they had no substantial answer to the 'uneconomic pits' argument, so they took the violence on the pickets as the media presented it. The Labour movement outside Westminster, or many parts of it, were acutely aware of police provocation, and police violence, and there were many protests, in the Labour and Liberal press, and from the back-benchers in the Commons.<sup>33</sup> But without the authority, and the persistent statement of that authority, coming from the Labour Front bench the impact upon public opinion at large was noticeably marginal. In the months that have followed the ending of the strike the evidence of police action has accumulated, and in no incident has there been more revealing detail made public than in the case of the supposed riot at Orgreave: a day of violence which probably more than any other single incident convinced large sections of British opinion that the miners were guilty of mindless violence. It is now (mid August 1985) known to be quite untrue, and a fabrication of the police supported by the mendacious media.

Towards the end of May 1984 convoys of coke from Orgreave—a coking plant—began to move to the steel works at Scunthorpe. On the 29 May there was a mass picket of some 7,000 and a large number of arrests. On the next day Arthur Scargill was arrested on the early morning picket. The pickets continued and then, on the 18 June there occurred one of the classic police 'riots' in modern British history. It was, as already noted, not seen as such at the time, and Orgreave became a synonym for violence on the picket line.

The trial of most of those arrested at Orgreave began in mid-May 1985; by the end of June the prosecution case was crumbling fast. What really happened at Orgreave was revealed in great detail during the 48 days of the trial and summarised in an impressive article in the Guardian on August 12th 1985 by Gareth Peirce, a solicitor who acted for a group of the defendants. The day began with men arriving from 6 a.m. on for the picket. They were escorted by the police to an open field. They stood around in the sun 'talking and laughing. And when the coke lorries arrive, you see a brief, good humoured, and expected push against the police lines; it lasts for 38 seconds only'.

These words were written by Gareth Peirce and she was describing incidents in the key exhibit in the trial: video film made by the police themselves and shot from behind the police lines. The film was not put in as evidence by the prosecution; it was a demand from the defence. The

police had surrounded the pickets in the large field. There were battalions of police in riot uniform, some with short shields, some with long. Further away were large numbers of mounted police and in another place, police with dogs. Then the police riot began. The long shield groups opened their ranks and the mounted police galloped through. There were repeated cavalry charges followed by attacks from the riot police on foot. It lasted for three hours. As the senior police officer at **Orgreave** had stated before June 18th, if there was to be a battle, he wanted it 'on my own ground and on my own terms'. And this is what he achieved. Some missiles were thrown at the police, after the police had attacked, and about noon on that day defensive barriers began to be erected against further police onslaughts:

You hear on the soundtrack 'bodies not heads' shouted by one senior officer, and then see junior officers rush out and hit heads as well as bodies. . .

One senior officer, who said that it was the **first** time he had seen horsemen riding at people with batons drawn, was asked at the trial whether people might throw missiles out of terror to repel attacks by mounted officers, he said, 'No, that never occurred to me'. Another officer conceded that the purpose of the horses and the short-shield officers was to terrify; if miners did not disperse when they were run at by the police, then they were eligible for arrest. This was the view of the law expressed by the last junior officer to give evidence before the riot trial was finally jettisoned by the prosecution.

But this was not how events of this day were seen on TV screens that same night. The TV news—which Channel was not specified by Gareth Peirce—'reversed the order of the footage available to show men throwing missiles and then police charging. . . ' and this was the line pursued by the police witnesses at the trial, completely contrary to the clear evidence of their own film. Orgreave, let it be said again, has remained in public memory as an especially violent example of the miners' violence on the picket line.

The account of **Orgreave** by Gareth Peirce has begun to be documented from other sources: a year after it happened. The evening of the day that the Guardian published Ms Peirce's article Gerald Kaufman, the Shadow Home Secretary, asked Leon Brittan to make available the police **film** of Orgreave. But why did the Opposition spokesman on these matters have to wait for Gareth Peirce to publish her article? Kaufman said he was deeply disturbed by the revelations in her article, but why was he not disturbed very much earlier? Or are his sources of information so meagre that this was the first time he had learned of the provocation and brutality at Orgreave? Either way, whether he knew or whether he was in ignorance, it reflects very sadly on the Labour leadership, and confirms their miserable record on policing and civil liberties. \* \* \*

The conduct of the Parliamentary Labour Party during the miners strike can only be described as unprincipled, and lacking, not only in integrity, but in plain commonsense. The strike was a provocation; that was widely said in the Commons by speakers from the Labour side; and it lasted a year. The Labour Party in Parliament were given the opportunity to begin a serious educational campaign to explain the politics of Thatcherism in the context of the miners' strike. Of course to do this they needed a comprehensive energy policy, which they had not got; they would be required to understand how the NCB and the Government were falsifying the annual accounts of the coal industry, and this was not appreciated because someone or some group within the Labour Party apparatus had not recognised the problem; and third, it would have required political courage to withstand the lying propaganda of most of the media, and the Labour leadership were regrettably short of courage. But it could have been done, as the GLC leadership showed for most of their period of office. A major opportunity has been lost, both in the matter of the viability of a nationalised industry and in the difficult questions of policing and civil liberties. This last is especially important, for the course of the miners' strike witnessed a steady accumulation of arbitrary powers by the police. Much has been learned from the experience of Northern Ireland; the training manual prepared by the Chief Constables and entitled *Public Order, Tactical Options* is a guideline for para-military operations;<sup>33</sup> and during the year's strike the police were in effect allowed by the courts to re-write the law. 'If' says Gareth Peirce 'they encounter a situation in which they wish to disregard the law, they no longer feel inhibited from doing so'. The Labour Party allowed these things to happen without effective protest on their part; and to bring the police once again under popular control in the future is therefore made much more difficult. Moreover, it is a mistake in our kind of society, with our traditions, to categorise bodies such as the police as a single reactionary mass; and by failing to sustain a continuous criticism of police actions, the Labour leadership signally failed to support the liberal or less reactionary minorities within the police forces themselves. The momentum therefore remains with the hard-line reactionaries, of whom there are many.

The courts during the miners' strike followed the general line of Government policy, and they invented new sets of rules which caused a remarkable extension of the civil common law—that is, law made by the judges and not by Parliament.<sup>34</sup> The new interpretations, and the judgments handed down, were always against the miners and their unions; and the courts thereby continued their long tradition of hostility to the popular organisations of ordinary people. In times of social peace the issues do not arise, but in crisis—an upsurge of trade union activity on a large scale, as in the 1890s, or the run-up to the General Strike of 1926 and the Strike itself, or the 1984–5 miners' strike, the Courts can always be expected to do

their duty to the propertied interests the preservation of which provide the inarticulate major premiss in their judicial analysis and thinking. We live in a period when the world system of capitalism is **experiencing** serious difficulties; when even in affluent societies such as Britain the social and political conflicts between classes are sharpening; and when the most **reactionary** British government in the 20th century has set in train a swingeing attack upon welfare facilities, civil rights and trade union organisation. The problem for the Labour leaders is that they were brought **up** to believe that consensus was for ever, and they are not well **equipped**, or not equipped at all, for the harsher times that lie before us. If their attitudes during the miners' strike are repeated in the future, then political democracy, and democratic rights and procedures, are in serious danger.

## NOTES

1. *A State of Siege* (eds. J. Coulter, S. Miller and M. Walker, Canary Press, 1984), pp. 4–15.
2. C. Jones and T. Novak, 'Welfare Against the Workers. Benefits as a Political Weapon', in H. Beynon (ed.), *Digging Deeper. Issues in the Miners Strike* (Verso, 1984), pp. 87–100. See also the comments by Stan Orme, *Hansard*, 5th Ser. Vol. 982, Cols. 1064–1069 (15 April 1980).
3. Patrick Jenkin in *ibid.*, Col. 1053.
4. The recent discussions on the labour process have shown how certain groups of workers have manipulated their **working** conditions somewhat to their advantage. For an example of the recent writing on these matters, Frank Wilkinson (ed.), *The Dynamics of Labour Market Segmentation* (Academic Press, 1981). The detailed history of judicial prejudice has not yet been written. For recent writings on the subject, J.A.G. Griffith, *The Politics of the Judiciary* (Fontana, 1981); P. Hain, *Political Trials in Britain* (Penguin, 1984). Most of the details of Scargill's career, and the internal history of the NUM in the 1970s, are taken from M. Crick, *Scargill and the Miners* (Penguin, 2nd ed., 1985).
7. The most useful compendium on the background to the miners' strike is H. Beynon (ed.), *Digging Deeper* (1984).
8. For details of the Energy Establishment, C. Sweet, 'Why Coal is Under Attack: Nuclear Powers in the Energy Establishment' in H. Beynon (ed.), *Digging Deeper*, pp. 201–216.
9. M. Crick, *Scargill and the Miners*, Ch. 6.
10. Cf. the *Sunday Times*, 20 May 1984: 'There are good reasons for thinking that the timing of the dispute, and the choice of battleground on which it has been fought, was deliberately engineered by the Government so that it could take place on the Government's terms.'
11. Rules 41 and 43 are printed in full in an Appendix to M. Crick, *Scargill and the Miners*, pp. 161–2.
12. Before the establishment of modern police forces, in the 1830s, the Home Secretary always co-ordinated and controlled the military who were regularly used in riotous situations; and in critical domestic situations the Home Secretary has continued to act in a co-ordinating capacity until the present day.
13. The most useful account of the National Reporting Centre is in an article of that title by Martin Kettle, in *Policing the Miners' Strike* (eds. B. Fine and

- R. Millar, Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), pp. 23–33.
14. For **McGregor's** record as a **union-buster** in the United States, D. Reed and **O. Adamson**, *Miners Against the Strike 1984–1985. People versus State* (Larkin Publications, 1985), pp. 100–106; *Morning Star*, 7 February 1985.
  15. It would be politically very important to have a complete record of the **NUR's** actions during the strike, as well as those of other unions. There were some areas of the NUR who adhered to the traditions of solidarity. Cf. the statement by Roy **Butlin**, secretary of the Coalville (Leicestershire) NUR branch, quoted in A. Callinicos and M. Simmons, *The Great Strike. The Miners Strike of 1984–5 and Its Lessons* (Socialist Worker, 1985), p. 121: 'My members at Coalville have not moved any coal by rail in the Leicestershire coalfield for 35 weeks. There were times in the long summer months when we seemed to be the only trade unionists doing anything. We're in the middle of a working coalfield, but we've been holding back half the production from Leicestershire. Virtually every pub and Club [in Coalville] has barred us. Of the 19 Labour councillors, 13 are scabs and two are the wives of scabs'. Butlin was speaking in **December 1984**.
  16. Reed and **Adamson**, *Miners Strike 1984–1985*, pp. 44–5, 53–4.
  17. The matter was widely discussed in the press during the years' strike, and after. See for an example, *Guardian*, 29 July 1985.
  18. There were exceptions, but the generalisation as a whole was, unfortunately, to stand.
  19. P.S. **Bagwell**, *The Railwaymen* (Allen and Unwin, 1963), pp. 392–5.
  20. H. Francis and D. Smith, *The Fed: a history of the South Wales Miners in the twentieth century* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), esp. Ch. 1.
  21. The article was due to be published in the December 1984 issue of *Accountancy*, but the NCB intervened: *Guardian*, 28 November 1984.
  22. Andrew Glyn, *The Economic Case Against Pit Closures* (NUM, Sheffield, 1984), 25p; p. 6.
  23. The conclusion must be that the Government cannot be said to be subsidising the production of coal. Sales of coal, even in the present depressed conditions, are practically enough to pay the miners and for the other inputs actually used to produce the coal including a proper level of depreciation. The general state of the industry's **finances** cannot be used to justify in any way the **NCB's** pit closures programme'. Glyn, *Economic Case*, p. 3.
  24. Emile Woolf, 'Digging holes in the **NCB's** accounts', *Guardian*, 10 July 1985.
  25. A. Glyn, *Economic Aspects of the Coal Dispute*, quoted in G. Kerevan and R. **Saville**, *The Economic Case for Deep-Mined Coal in Scotland* (NUM, Scotland, 1985), p. 23.
  26. See note 21 above.
  27. 'That mine [Cortonwood] would, at least in 198112, have contributed between £2.49 and £5.45 per tonne to NCB operating performance (on 1984 assumptions)': T. Berry, T. Capps, D. Cooper, T. Hopper and T. **Lowe**, 'NCB Accounts —a mine of **misinformation?**' *Accountancy*, January 1985, pp. 10–12.
  28. **Hansard**, 5th Ser. Vol. 982, Col. 507 (17 May).
  29. *Ibid.*, Col. 1109 (5 April).
  30. *Ibid.*
  31. *Ibid.*, Cols. 287–9 (31 July).
  32. The *Guardian* throughout the miners strike published numerous letters alleging police violence; as did the left wing press. There are many references to police harassment and violence in the various chapters in Fine and Milar, *Policing the Miners' Strike*.
  33. The manual is discussed in the *Guardian* article by Gareth Peirce; and will undoubtedly feature prominently in the future debates in the Commons. Some

extracts are given in the *Observer*, 21 July 1985.

34. See the articles by Nick Blake and Louise Christian in Fine and Walker, *Policing the Miners' Strike*.

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