

Useful Information

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North West TUC

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NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS NORTHWEST MINERS ASSOCIATION

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THE MacGREGOR LYING LETTER

Reprinted in this publication is a copy of a letter which was sent to the home of every miner during the 1984/85 strike, by then chairman of the National Coal Board, Ian MacGregor. At the time the NUM had claimed that there was a "secret hit-list" of more than 70 pits marked for closure. However, in his letter MacGregor denied this and declared that there was no programme or plans for mass pit closures and that miners had been misled by their leadership.

In regard to the NUM claims he stated:

"If these things were true I would not blame miners for getting angry or for being deeply worried. But these things are absolutely untrue. I state that categorically and solemnly. You have been deliberately misled."

However, recently released cabinet papers from that period have revealed that there was indeed an agreement in government to shut 75 pits over three years, and cut 64,000 jobs. One particular document, relating to a meeting headed by then prime minister Margaret Thatcher, dating from September 1983 and marked "not to be photocopied or circulated outside the private office", noted MacGregor's contribution and states "Mr MacGregor had it in mind over the three years 1983-85 that a further 75 pits would be closed"

Shamefully many Labour party and trade union leaders were only too ready to promote and support the lies that were contained in MacGregor's letter and failed to support the great mass of the British public which gave magnificent help and assistance to the miners and their families throughout the twelve month strike.

30 Years On.

Over the three decades since the strike the National Union of Mineworkers Lancashire Area has continued to provide help and assistance to the mining community, and is still doing so today.

The full effects caused by the mass pit closure programme can be felt today in the price people are having to pay for their energy needs, with gas and electricity prices at an all time high. Moreover, the Government's own figures show that every winter 20,000 people in Britain die of cold related issues, yet the very industry that could provide the heat and warmth needed to sustain life for many of these people has been closed down and the country's energy needs put into the hands of foreign powers with the reliance now on expensive, imported coal and gas from some of the most unstable areas of the world.

The social and economic distress resulting from the attacks on the mining industry underlines the necessity for the continued involvement of the NUM.

Apart from several successful legal struggles to achieve compensation for members for a range of industrial diseases, the union is also assisting in DLA/PiP and other benefit claims to ensure that members and their families obtain their full entitlements.

Also the excellent Justice for Mineworkers Campaign works tirelessly to keep the issue of those miners victimised during and after the strike at the forefront of the labour and trade union movement, and to raise money to alleviate hardship among the families of the victimised. More details of this campaign can be found on their web site at www.justiceformineworkers.org.uk which is well worth visiting.

The past social cohesion achieved by communities with vibrant mining and steel industries has been shattered over this last period by all the plant and pit closures and we are now witnessing whole areas suffering from crime, unemployment and drug problems. However, alongside this deterioration we have witnessed the unprecedented rise of social inequality, with the gap between a rich elite and the rest of the population reaching a frightening level.

Given the harsh reality of life for many people today, the NUM Lancashire Area is determined to continue working in and with the former mining communities to achieve a just and better life for all.

Perry Lomas
General Secretary
N.U.M Lancashire Area

Mineworkers Pension Fund

Once again the Mineworkers Pension scheme, has produced another surplus .

Many are actively campaigning for a share of the pension money generated by the scheme.

The Union policy is that monies in pension schemes should only be used to provide pensions to pensioners and should not provide funds for governments or councils to spend in subsidies to businesses or any other grand schemes.

Join the campaign to ensure Pension Funds are for pensioners and no other purpose.

Remember the outcry when Maxwell robbed his pensioners and don't stand by whilst anyone digs into our pension funds.

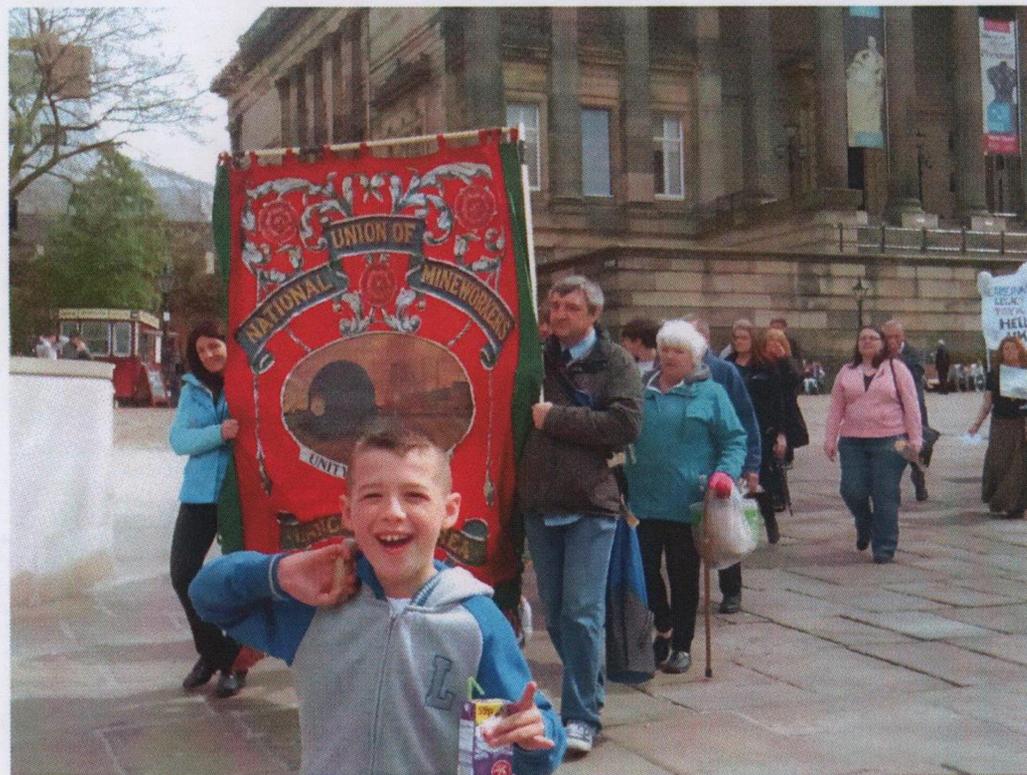
Successive governments have declared war on Welfare handouts but wants one from our pension fund. Write and tell them what you think of pension misusers.



We believe the following should be adopted as a matter of social justice to counter the politically motivated damaged done to our communities:

1. That the status of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme should be reinstated to that which existed prior to changes imposed by the Conservative Government in 1986, i.e., the Scheme should include 50% employers' trustees and 50% NUM trustees:
2. All past and present surpluses generated by the MPS which have been 'taken' by the employer or Government should be repaid to the MPS immediately to be used for the benefit of the beneficiaries:
3. All employees in the coal mining industry including those in the IWMPs should become members of the MPS and the value of their benefits should be equal to the amount it would have been had they continued within or joined the MPS:
4. The surplus which should be repaid by British Coal and the Government should be used to pay all past and present mineworkers a full pension at age 50.

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY PRESTON 2014



Campaign for Recognition of Dupuytren's Disease.

The NUM are campaigning to get vibration related Dupuytren's disease recognised as an industrial disease by the DWP and the union is eager to hear from any former mineworkers who think they may be suffering from this disease.

The typical symptoms of Dupuytren's disease are one or more permanently bent fingers and/or nodules or thickening bands in the palms.

These symptoms could be possibly caused by using vibratory tools while working as a miner.

In the first instance sufferers are requested to contact the NUM Lancashire Area, using the contact details on the back cover, and supply their name, address and phone number. We will then send them a basic questionnaire form which could help us to get the disease recognised.

DWP (DSS) Reassessments

Please note, if claimants have had successful compensation claims through the DWP in the past for various industrial injuries i.e. vibration white finger, osteoarthritis of the knee etc, it is possible to have the claim reassessed if it is felt that the disability has deteriorated.

However, it is important to remember that any reassessment can result in claims being increased or reduced. So please try and ascertain that your disability has deteriorated since your initial claim before requesting a reassessment.

The above only applies to DWP claims and not common law claims.

National Coal Board
Hobart House, Grosvenor Place, London SW1X 7AE

CHAIRMAN
Ian MacGregor

June, 1984

Dear Colleague,

YOUR FUTURE IN DANGER

I am taking the unusual step of writing to you at home because I want every man and woman who has a stake in the coal industry to realise clearly the damage which will be done if this disastrous strike goes on a long time.

The leaders of the NUM have talked of it continuing into the winter. Now that our talks with them have broken down this is a real possibility. It could go on until December or even longer. In which case the consequences for everybody will be very grave. Your President talks continually of keeping the strike going indefinitely until He achieves "victory".

I would like to tell you, not provocatively or as a threat, why that will not happen however long the strike lasts.

What this strike is really about is that the NUM leadership is preventing the development of an efficient industry. We have repeatedly explained that we are seeking to create a higher volume, lower cost industry which will be profitable, well able to provide superior levels of earnings while still being able to compete with foreign coal. To achieve this, huge sums of money are being invested in new equipment, last year it was close to £800 million and we expect to continue a similarly high rate of investment in the years ahead. Our proposals mean, short term, cutting out some of the uneconomic pits and looking for about 20,000 voluntary redundancies - the same as last year. The redundancy payments are now more generous than ever before for those who decide not to take alternative jobs offered in the industry.

However long the strike goes on I can assure you that we will end up, through our normal consultative procedures, with about the same production plans as those we discussed with your representatives on 6th March last.

But the second reason why continuing the strike will not bring the NUM "victory" is this: in the end nobody will win. Everybody will lose - and lose disastrously.

Many of you have already lost more than £2,000 in earnings and have seen your savings disappear. If the strike goes on until December it will take many of you years to recover financially and also more jobs may be lost - and all for nothing.

I have been accused of planning to butcher the industry. I have no such intention or desire. I want to build up the industry into one we can all be proud to be part of.

But if we cannot return to reality and get back to work then the industry may well be butchered. But the butchers will not be the Coal Board.

You are all aware that mines which are not constantly maintained and worked deteriorate in terms of safety and workability.

AT THE PRESENT TIME THERE ARE BETWEEN 20 and 30 pits which are viable WHICH WILL BE IN DANGER OF NEVER RE-OPENING IF WE HAVE A LENGTHY STRIKE.

This is a strike which should never have happened. It is based on very serious misrepresentation and distortion of the facts. At great financial cost miners have supported the strike for fourteen weeks because your leaders have told you this.....

That the Coal Board is out to butcher the coal industry.
That "We plan to do away with 70,000 jobs.
That we plan to close down around 86 pits, leaving only 100 working collieries.

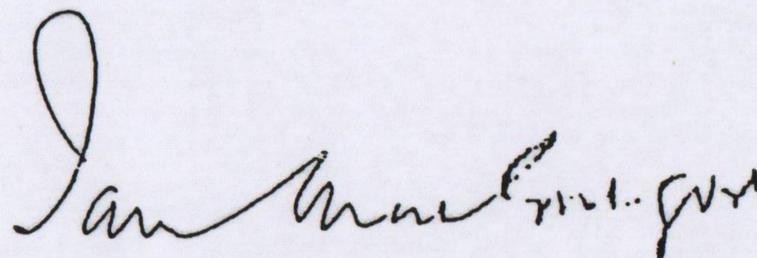
IF THESE THINGS WERE TRUE I WOULD NOT BLAME MINERS FOR GETTING ANGRY OR FOR BEING DEEPLY WORRIED. BUT THESE THINGS ARE ABSOLUTELY UNTRUE. I STATE THAT CATEGORICALLY AND SOLEMNLY. YOU HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY MISLED.

The NUM which called the strike, will end it only when you decide it should be ended.

I would like you to consider carefully, so we can get away from the tragic violence and pressures of the mass pickets, whether this strike is really in your interest.

I ask you to join your associates who have already returned to work so that we can start repairing the damage and building up a good future.

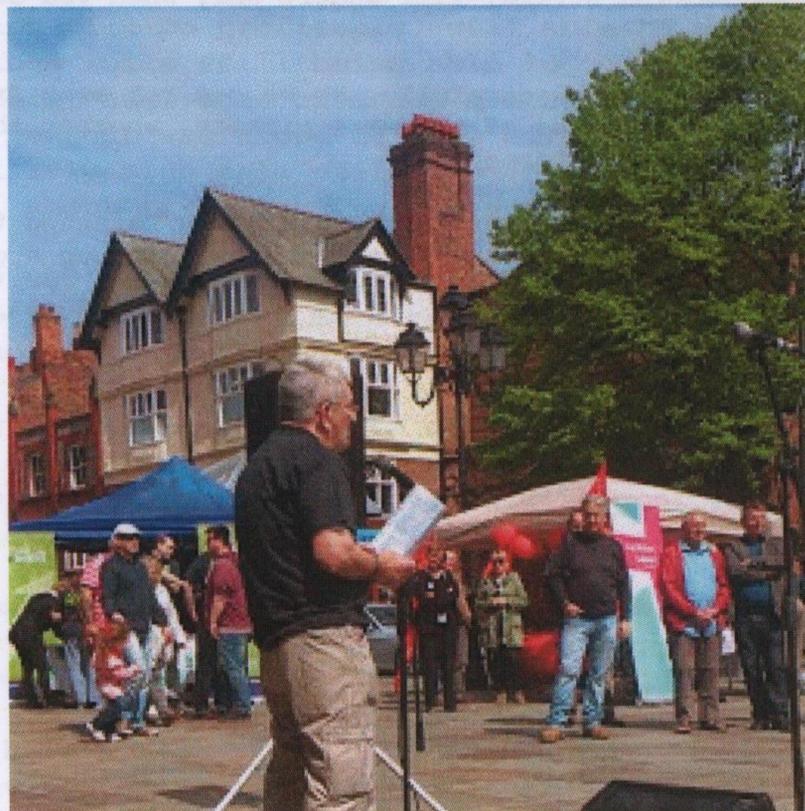
Sincerely,



**MAY DAY
CHESTER 2014**



NORTHWEST MINERS ASSOCIATION STALL



NWMA PRESIDENT RECALLS THE STIKE OF 1984/85



Justice for Mineworkers Campaign



The Justice for Mineworkers Campaign works on behalf of all those miners who were victimised during and after the strike.

966 men were originally sacked for no more than honouring picket lines, defending their jobs and pit communities.

You can help by ensuring that resolutions supporting this campaign, adopted by the TUC and Labour party conferences are kept in the forefront of the Labour movement and by getting your local trade union branch to affiliate to the campaign. Also, especially as there is an election due in 2015, you could help by contacting your local MP requesting that he supports the Justice campaign.

Campaign website: www.justiceformineworkers.org.uk

COAL

"You cannot reopen the coal mines because of the damage to the environment".

This is the argument you will here most often when the subject of reopening the coal mines is posed.

However, by stating this as the reason, you are accepting that the decision to close the mines in the first place was an environmental decision. This is incorrect. The decision to close the mines was a political decision which took no account of the possible energy crisis which would follow, let alone the damage to whole communities that ensued and least of all for any consideration for the environment.

As the NUM continually warned, now that a possible energy crisis has turned into reality we are faced with a decision.

Do we accept that 20,000 people will die of cold each winter in Britain and do we pursue wars around the globe in a scramble for the dwindling oil and gas resources and do we tolerate the fracking process whereby toxic chemicals are pumped into the ground, poisoning the water table and all resources underground for ever?

Or, as we are standing on hundreds of years supply of coal, do we seriously consider reopening the coal mines and developing new ones and investing in clean coal technology?

CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY.

There have been many advances in clean coal technology which are designed to improve the efficiency and environmental performance of coal fired power generation, for instance Supercritical Pulverised Fuel (PF) and Pressurised Fluidised Bed Combustion (PFBC).

Also there is 'Carbon Capture', which is the removal of carbon dioxide from coal-fired power stations.

More details of all these developments are included in the NUM Energy Review which can be found on www.num.org.uk under 'publications'.

Nuclear power, with all its inherent dangers, is 450 per cent more expensive than coal and in 2001, following the pit closure programme, gas prices rocketed from 4 pence a therm to 29 pence a therm, and prices are still increasing at an alarming rate today.

There is now an overwhelming energy and economic case to invest in clean coal technology. The policies currently being pursued by the government, not only mean the acceptance of unnecessary winter deaths in Britain and continuous wars abroad, but the reliance for Britain's energy needs on the world's most unstable regions. This is a recipe for disaster.

Moreover the control of a rejuvenated coal industry cannot be left in the hands of private companies, who are more interested in property development than supplying energy, but must be renationalised to become an essential part of an integrated energy policy that is run for the benefit of the vast majority of the people of Britain.

CASH IN LIEU

We believe that ex-miners should be encouraged to use solid fuel, but at the same time a sympathetic approach should be taken to cash in lieu applications from the elderly and infirm beneficiaries

We urge all concessionaires who are able to do so, to stay with coal.

Before anybody decides to move to cash in lieu they should consider the following

- **You can only claim cash in lieu if you are in receipt of, and are able to burn solid fuel.**
- **The cost of conversion to other fuels can be high, and this will have to be paid for by you.**
- **Your full entitlement of solid fuel is worth more than twice the amount payable as Cash in lieu**
- **If you are on a means tested benefit, cash in lieu is considered to be income by the DWP. You therefore could lose some benefit.**
- **Cash in lieu is considered taxable income.**

**Whatever you do,
SEEK ADVICE FIRST!**