

STRIKE BACK

Newsletter of the Notts. Campaign Against Pit Closures.

Issue 2. 9th November 1992.

One Miners' Union.

by D. Trimble. Ex-Cotgrave miner.

Even with the British public's massive indignation, the Tory back-bench rebellion failed to materialise. The Government hoodwinked its backbenchers, some of the public and the media that it had climbed down. When all that happened was that 'Tarzan's' cynical 'Shut the Pits Now' policy changed. His new, as cynical, policy is to close 10 pits after the 90 day review procedure, and pick off the other 21, one by one, over a slightly longer period. The policy is still there.

It's therefore essential that the mining unions unite in order to force the government into a real climbdown. It must, however, be pointed out that the NUM's policy of accepting back rank and file UDM members, but not the UDM leadership, is entirely correct.

The UDM leadership has failed to represent their members. Link and his bunch of merry men feted government ministers and British Coal bosses at their conferences. They thought they had the ear of government and the bosses, and they were kicked into touch as soon as the honeymoon was over.

The UDM often claim their existence is due to the NUM not balloting prior to the 1984/5 strike. I spoke to a great many working miners during that period, they said: "I would have gone on strike, but it was the wrong time of the year"; "I would have gone on strike, but I didn't like the (media image) of Scargill" - although they now say he was right; and "I would have gone on strike but we didn't have a ballot". They didn't have a ballot in Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Lancashire, Kent, Scotland and Wales. Who was right, and who was wrong? The truth of the matter is, after all this, they would still have found an excuse. They would have said, "I would have gone on strike, but it shouldn't have started on a Tuesday!"

The UDM also claim victimisation of working miners. If you really want to know about victimisation during and after the strike, ask any striking miner. In Notts.

Miners March Against Pit Closures.

A group of Scottish Miners are walking from Glasgow to London to raise support for the campaign. They will arrive in London on Saturday 19th December, at 8 pm.

At that time church bells will be pealed across the land, and we ask you to turn off your lights for five minutes. (Put a candle in your window to show your support).

The group arrived in Nottingham on Sunday 6th, with other miners picked up along the way. They were entertained at the Marcus Garvey centre at a benefit organised by supporters in Nottingham. Prior to that a reception was organised by the County Council where the miners were welcomed by the Council Chairman. We assume that he will extend similar hospitality to local government workers, whose jobs are now under threat.

we were the minority. In my own experience, I was subjected to a Kangaroo court 2,000 feet underground for supporting the Cortonwood miners! A petition went round the canteen asking the pit manager to sack me. There were continual threats that no-one would work with me after the strike ended. I was downgraded to the lowest paid job after the strike. The UDM insisted that the jobs with the highest bonuses were the preserve of their members.

After the strike, the UDM took over the NUM office at the pit and all of our equipment. They stood by when the management refused to recognise the NUM officials for disciplinary hearings. A UDM member caught sleeping was told he would have been sacked had he been in the NUM! The UDM saw all this as a plus for their recruitment campaign. They also had the audacity to steal our banners, with the 'NUM' emblazoned across them.

It was the UDM leaders that walked out of the NUM conference and led a breakaway union, not affiliated to the TUC or Labour Party. Leopards don't change their spots over night. The only thing that Roy Link ever changed on a regular basis was his mind. First, he was standing in the UDM election and then he wasn't, and then he was up for election again.

It's time the UDM membership voted him out*. Better still, it's time they joined the only union that has continuously fought pit closures. It's time they joined the NUM.

* Link lost the recent UDM leadership election.

s o l i d a r i t y i n a c t i o n

Facts, Figures and Lies!!

LIE

British coal is too expensive compared with other European countries.

Importing coal from "cheap" non-European countries is "fair" competition.

Coal won't last much longer anyway.

We have plenty of other, cheaper energy sources.

Coal causes pollution; other fuels are safer and cleaner.

FACT

- * Tonne for tonne British coal is the cheapest to produce.
- * 3 of the 10 pits marked for immediate closure (the "most unviable") produce coal cheaper than imported.
- * It is only due to massive subsidies that other countries can sell cheaply. France gives £10.99 per tonne, Spain and Germany £39, and Belgium £55! USA and Australia give 150% tax rebate on research and development.

- * Indonesian miners are paid a dollar a day.
- * Columbia uses child labour in its mines.
- * South African black miners are paid one fifth of the white wage.

- * There is 45,000 million tonnes of recoverable coal in Britain. Enough for 300 years.

- * Oil receives a £6,000 million subsidy. Proven UK reserves are expected to run out within 6 years.
- * One estimate says that gas reserves could be exhausted in 20 years; another that all gas for energy generation might have to be imported within 10 years.
- * Powergen has conceded that coal is cheaper than gas to produce electricity.
- * Nuclear power has a subsidy of £1,300 million; British Coal can produce electricity at 1/4 the price. If British Coal had the same subsidy it could give its coal away free and still make an annual profit of over £400 million!

- * Oil is dirty and dangerous (remember Piper Alpha).
- * In the most efficient gas-fired power stations half the gas burned goes into the atmosphere and contributes to global warming.
- * The technology is available to burn coal cleanly.
- * Windscale? 3 Mile Island? Chernobyl?

FACT: It will cost £2,100 million immediately to close the pits. If the pits remained open and that money were used as a subsidy we could sell an extra 25 million tonnes in the European Community for the next 6 years.

FACT: If the 31 pits close with the loss of over 30,000 mining jobs, 17 coal-fired power stations will close (7,000 jobs) and 5,000 rail jobs will be lost; thousands more will go in the communities and industries around them.

FACT: The Henley report estimates that the result of closing the pits, with the lost resources and cost of unemployment, will be an extra £1,302 million on the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement for 1993, and £1,670 million in 1994.

FACT The above facts and figures cannot portray the cost in human suffering and misery of thousands of families thrown out of work and their communities destroyed.

FACT WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.

NOTTS. CAMPAIGN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES, Box 5, 118 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.