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conquer or die in the struggle ... they were supported
in this resolution by their wives who were equally
determined'*

—Northumbrian and Durham miners 1844—

A CLASS WAR/HEAVY STUFF PRODUCTION

HEAVY STUFF

s p e c i a l e d i t i o n



DAVE DOUGLASS

*coal
communities
in
conflict*

DEATH OF THE PITS



• 30,000 jobs go • 27 min to close • Day the TUC urges debate • Conservatives demand interven

Scargill calls for strike • Jobs fallout sends Tories reeling

By government's own supporters joined the cry for changes in economic policy as full impact of closures in the mining industry announced on Monday became clear it fears grew of worse to come

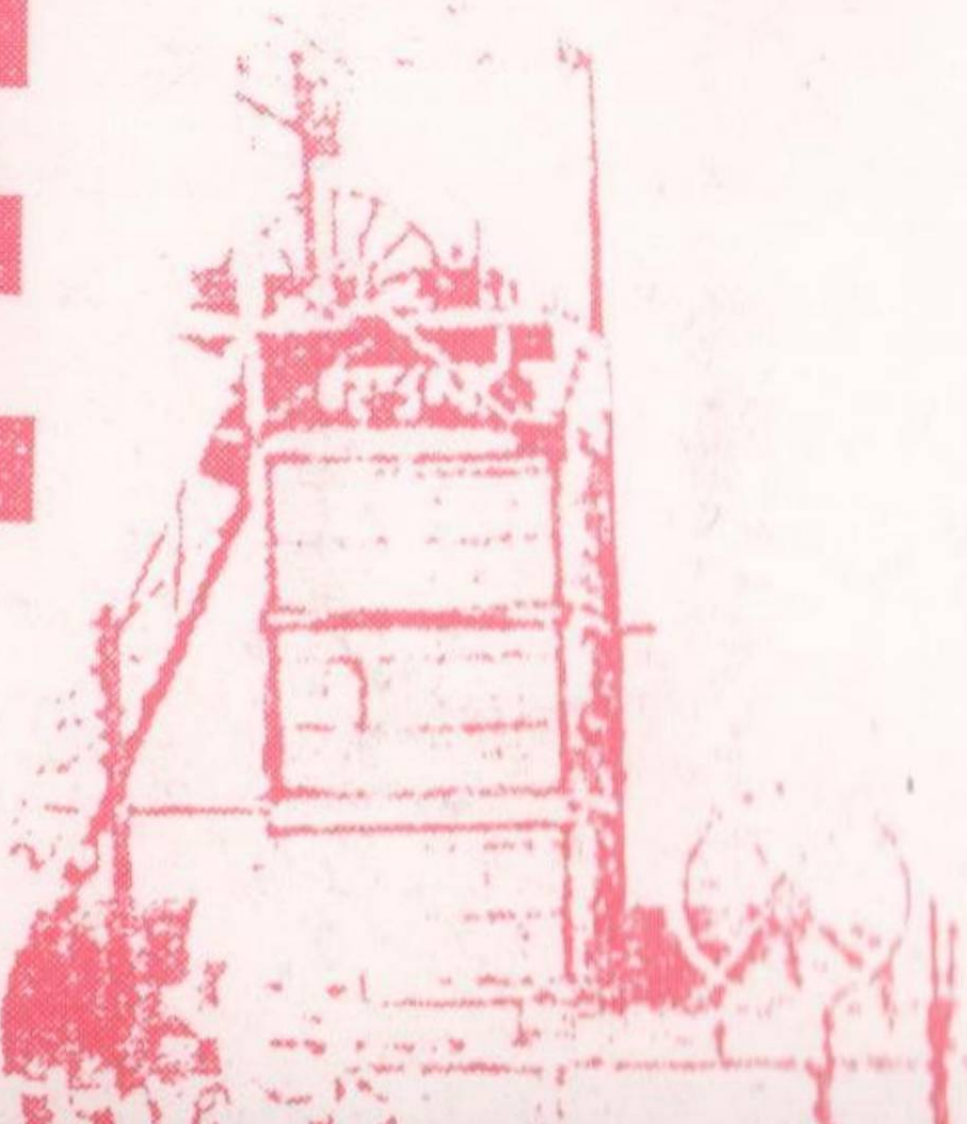
THE government was under mounting pressure last night to change its economic strategy after Conservative MPs rejected the government's plan to axe thousands of jobs in the National Health Service with the closure of several London teaching hospitals. The Times has been told including household names



...tell how their dreams have been buried

TURNING COAL TO TURNING DOLE

Axe still hangs over Ellington



FOREWORD

This pamphlet has been brought to life in great haste, but such is the importance of the present struggle that it couldn't wait. Originally written in August of this year as an article for the forthcoming issue 6 of The Heavy Stuff, once the announcement of 31 pit closures was officially made on 13th October, it then became obvious that its prophetic message had to be printed immediately. Hence this special edition of The Heavy Stuff.

Events are changing rapidly, but whatever 'Me Tarzan U-Turns' appear to be announced, pits have been shut already. Death by a thousand cuts, a repeat of the strategy that's been employed since 1985. As Britain's mining communities face what NUM boss, Arthur Scargill calls 'industrial genocide', carved up by our politicians and ruling class as they stumble from one economic cock-up to another - capitalism has never smelt so rotten or looked so twisted and anti-working class. If we don't take the bastards on, head on, the miners, their families and communities and other support industries will end up with isolated devastated communities, in poverty, with an increase in national unemployment well over the poxy national press' estimate of 3 million. As though 3 million wasn't criminal enough in itself.

During the last two great coal strikes, the miners, their families, their communities and all the national networks of support and solidarity showed how well and tightly, fight back could happen. How imaginative we could all be, how our tactics could outwit the cops, the Tories and their boss scum masters.

Now it's time to re-employ these tactics and more. For the year of unbroken strike in 1984—85, the working class owes solidarity to the miners, and it's now time to show our strength. As the best way to fight back emerges, we should show total support to the miners. Obviously idiots like Roy Link sitting eating sarnies at the bottom of a pit will achieve nothing. It's a pity the old scab didn't catch pneumonia.

What we mean is, that with the vast human resources and experience provided by 30,000 facing redundancy, those who've been told 'you're jobs are safe for the time being', their partners, their kids, their mates and communities and any other working class person who'll join the struggle.

There are so many ways all of us can use to turn things right around. In every city, town and village, there are Tory politicians, Councillors

and voters. It's these scum and their ruling class and bosses who have started this. These people are legitimate targets for a good hiding. Their clubs and offices need not be left untouched or untorched.

If strike action is balloted for, all of us need to be right behind it with every ounce of solidarity, support and action we can give. Agitating on the streets and at work, getting other industries to join in, sabotage, secondary picketing, networks of action and information, in short, by all means necessary.

On the two recent demonstrations in London, practically all the parties of the left (the SWP, Militant, the WRP) were screaming for a TUC led general strike. As Davy Douglass writes in his article for Heavy Stuff 5:

'Are they stupid? No, stupidity is their public face. In private they'll tell you they know the TUC will never organise a general strike and if they did they'd only betray it as they did in 1926. So why call for it? Because us dumbchucks, the rank and file pitmen need to be shown that the Trade Union structure is no good.

Get it? Urge us into defeat, we get smashed, then pick up the pieces to build your own outfit by blaming it on the old outfit - nice. Trouble is - we'd been there in 1926. Miner's children are weaned on that betrayal of the miners by the TUC. We grew up knowing the limitations of the TUC and that's why we would never accept that stupid slogan'.

Class War distances itself from those parties who would use the miners as pawns in their own game.

To keep the mining industry, to keep our communities, our identity, pride and solidarity, we need to fight together as equals, following the miner's lead and using a network of anger and imagination.

We have common enemies – the boss, the politicians and the shit capitalist system that put them there. We must do all we can to destroy it, by any means necessary.

This special edition of the Heavy Stuff was edited by Tyneside Class War and produced by members of Edinburgh Class War. The author is a NUM branch delegate at Hatfield Colliery.

The views expressed by the author do not necessarily represent those of the Class War Federation.

The mining communities over the last two hundred and seventy years or more have been in continual struggle with the ruling class. As generation after generation of miners and their families handed on the torch, so did one set of ruling class bastards and their repressive forces, pass on their senseless repression; aristocrat became a capitalist, capitalist owners gave way to bosses of nationalised mines. Now they seek a return to unrestrained private ownership and the final wave of devastation, the final solution to the 'problem' of the miners, is poised to sweep down upon us. Comrades, I'll make no excuse for drawing attention to the mining communities' centuries of struggle, for without our past, we'll never understand the present and current manic obsessions with decimating the mining villages and valleys.

Our union was born in a period of revolutionary upsurge in the 1840's. It was a time when republicanism was rife among the working class, when radical artisans and toilers of all descriptions identified with Jacobinism and the French revolutionary upsurge. The world's first working class 'party' in the shape of The Chartists was born and cheek by jowl The Miners Association, the world's first industrial union took form. From their inception the paths of each were intrinsically linked, revolutionary vision and radical struggle were to be the birth marks too of the miners' unions. Many of the Chartist leaders were also leaders of the emergent union. Chartism encapsulated radical social reformers, as well as violent revolutionaries, a movement for civil rights having within its ranks the early communist visionaries who saw political reform as inseparably linked to the radical transformation of society in the form of economic justice for working people.

The coal owners were the haughty land-owning aristocrats who made a fortune in the industrial revolution The Empire came to rest on coal and on the point of the collier's pick. Among the most notable coal owners were Lord Longsdale, Lord Londonderry, Earl Fitzwilliam, The Countess of Durham, Lord Joicey, The Marquess of Bute, Lord Lambton, Lord Bradford and the Earl of Balcarres. Such people were outraged that so vital and numerous a body as the miners were being won not only to trade unionism, but to revolutionary ideology as well.

The great Geordie miners' leader Martin Jude was a member of the General Council of the Chartist movement. The North East coalfield was in fact a stronghold of the physical-force wing of the movement. Augustus Beaumont published his 'Northern Liberator' from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, castigating the moderates:

'Those men were fed and therefore relied on moral force, but let them labour for one week and be ill-fed and ill-clothed and it would soon convert their moral force to physical force'.

Julian Harney writing in the winter of 1838—39 found the atmosphere in the pit communities exhilarating:

'In small villages out from Newcastle the exhortation to arms was being taken quite literally... fowling pieces, small cannon, stoneware grenades, pikes and 'craa's feet' or caltrops - four spiked irons which could be strewn in a road to disable cavalry horses - were being turned out in quantities. It was localities like this, which on hearing rumours that troops would be present at the great meeting in Newcastle on Christmas day, sent couriers to find out if they were to bring arms with them'.

We are told by Raymond Challinor in his 'History of The Miners Association' that miners' banners in those days bore inscriptions like 'He that hath no sword, let him sell his shirt and buy one'.

In a strange premonition of the 'armalite and the ballot box' strategy, Julian Harney at the frequent Northumbrian and Durham rallies urged the crowd to 'carry a musket in one hand and a petition in the other'.

At times the petition was abandoned all together and outright rebellion broke out. Challinor says:

'In South Wales, Frost's Newport rebellion of 1839 was supported mainly by miners. Ever since the Merthyr Rebellion of 1831 the strange and secret custom of the 'Scotch cattle' has been prevalent among South Wales colliers. It acquired its name from the red figure of a bull's head, the symbol of a clandestine organisation which blew up furnaces, beat up blacklegs and carried out other acts of violence. In North Staffordshire the period of unrest in 1839 saw miners building barricades, exchanging fire with troops and indulging in fierce hand-to-hand fighting.'

When the national leader of the miners in the 1840's called for an unprecedented general strike of all miners he said:

'We are in favour of a strike, a general and universal one, a general cessation of work in the pits in order that by a universal combination,

the coal hewers may obtain a fair price for their labour. Rely upon it that the time of your emancipation is not much distant, it may be nearer than the most sanguine of us expect'.

One can only guess at the utter shock this challenge must have given the rich and powerful aristocratic coal owners, who were the pillar of bourgeois establishment here in the 1840's.

Fynes, a mining historian of the period, tells us of the Northumbrian and Durham miners of 1844:

'The men seemed to have made up their minds to conquer or die in the struggle and they were supported in this resolution by their wives who were equally determined'.

140 years later Mr Fynes might have observed the same two facets of the struggle. We are told a company of the 37th Regiment and two troops of the 8th Hussars were in readiness, while the Newcastle Courant reported: *'The women assumed as offensive a position as that taken by their husbands and indeed more reckless of the consequences.'*

In Lancashire, during the national strike-wave of 1844, Welsh colliers were brought in from the valleys to scab. The Manchester Guardian reported that they were met by a force of 1,000 strikers *'who assailed them with stones, brickbats and other missiles, severely hurting some of the police'*.

They never learn do they.

1848 was the year of revolutions throughout Europe, in Britain the miners were the force most likely to give us our own.

An enormous meeting of Scottish miners in Airdrie, soon after the revolution in France, addressed by a local revolutionary miner called Lees, declared the evils befalling the working class were due to political inequalities and warned the capitalists and aristocracy to beware the impending workers insurrection.

Five years later the striking Lancashire colliers seized Wigan after eight weeks of rioting, Ray Challinor says:

'The police discreetly barricaded themselves in the police station, they were only released when a troop of cavalry rode from Preston and with the use of what was called 'severe repression' restored law and order'.

The mining communities were in continual struggle on local and occasionally national levels from the 1870's to the 1890's. The years in between 1900 and 1912 were years of growing dominance for Industrial Unionism, the ideas of the IWW and Dan De Leon, although not widely

embraced, were heavily influential among rank and file miners. This revolutionary tradition, pre-dating Leninist doctrines and the birth of the British Communist Party, has been much ignored by Stalinist and bourgeois labour historians. The struggle revolved around the growing demand for a minimum wage. Disturbances at Tonypanday and other places, following the introduction of blacklegs, led to great clashes between the community, police, and subsequently the intervention of the military. By 2nd March 1912 over a million miners were on strike largely as the result of persistent bitter internal agitation within the union against dominant, moderate full-timers. The Chesterfield parish church heard the Bishop of Southwell declare:

'I want you to carry away this thought. There are forces at work today which may oust your leaders and introduce a system of new leaders; a system which I dare proclaim is wicked, cruel and criminal. I mean the system which goes by the name of Syndicalism, the men used as pawns in the game of war'.

After a little over a week the effects of the strike started to be felt. The railways started to close down. Engineering works ground to a halt.

Parliament sought to curtail the action by introducing the Minimum Wages Act, a measure which split Labour MP's along 'trade union' and 'socialist' lines. Actually, a division between those following the strong Miners Federation lobby and those who saw the Minimum Wages Act as a general social reform to be seized while it was on offer. Whilst the miners felt they were being out manoeuvred on the central issue of their claim Kier Hardy is said to have 'jumped with joy at the result'. 'The Derbyshire Miners', by J. E. Williams.

The NEC of the Miners Federation of Great Britain then met to decide on a re-ballot of the members on whether to stay out or take what was on offer in the Act. They could not, however, agree on whether to recommend staying out or going back, so the issue went to ballot without recommendation. Of course a grand alliance of coal owners, right wing union leaders, the Press and the priests all agreed that parliament had satisfactorily settled in the best interest of the miners and the strike should end. The ballot proved otherwise; For Resumption 201,013, Against 244,011.

Of those voting to return were: Midland Federation, South Wales, Bristol, Somerset, Cleveland, North Wales and South Derby.

For stopping-out: Lancashire and Cheshire, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Cumberland, Durham, Northumberland, Scotland

and Leicester.

Notwithstanding the vote, the NEC decided to call off the strike on the basis that it took a two thirds majority vote to call a strike, so it must require a two thirds majority to maintain a strike; although the rules did not in fact mention requirements for maintaining a strike. The rank and file were furious.

'The criticism of the miners leaders continued after the men had gone back to work. When Martin and Kenyon tried to address a meeting at Staveley they were greeted with cries of 'traitors' and 'we have been sold-out'. 'We have got something now' declared Martin. 'And that's nowt,' interjected a miner, amidst gales of laughter. Barnett Kenyon was repeatedly booed and could only make himself heard with difficulty'. The Derbyshire miners, by J. E. Williams.

Williams tells us further:

'Much of this ferment must be attributed to Syndicalism which by now had its active exponents in Derbyshire. On 7th November at the Newcastle assizes, John Wilson, the Durham miners' leader, brought a successful libel action against George Harvey, a Chesterfield miner, who had written a pamphlet 'Does John Wilson MP, Serve The Working Class?' and was described by the plaintiff's counsel as 'belonging to the Syndicalists'. The jury assessed the damages at £200'.

Williams gives the source of this story as 'The Derbyshire Times', 9th November, 1912, but it is inaccurate in a number of ways. Undoubtedly the wave of unrest sweeping the coalfields was due to the high tide of Industrial Unionist, De Leonist, Marxist and Anarcho-Syndicalist ideas gaining ground among the miners more than anywhere else. However, these have all been covered with the term 'Syndicalist' as far as one can tell, meaning, anyone who believed in the direct action of the working class as an industrial force, rather than through Parliamentary action. The term used in this way is very confusing and undoubtedly is used to blur the political distinctions between say, the Marxist supporters of Industrial Unionism, like Dan De Leon, as against the Anarcho-Syndicalists for example. The term was, and is persistently used by Communist Party theorists, and bourgeois historians in this inaccurate fashion. Arthur Scargill is frequently referred to as a 'Syndicalist' despite his loyalty to and membership of, the British Labour Party, presumably because he believes in direct industrial action to win improvements, as well as parliamentary action.

In fact, George Harvey was a famous member of the Socialist

Labour Party and wrote the offending article in its paper 'The Socialist'. He was actually Lodge Secretary of my first pit lodge, Follinsby (Wardley) on Tyneside, when my dad and grandad worked there. He was not a Chesterfield miner but what was described by one of his (Southern) contemporaries as 'a most archetypal Geordie'. Still, the political essence of the story is true and illustrates the command of revolutionary politics among the miners' ranks in this period. It is worthy of note that the state believed the revolutionaries strong enough, after all, the miners and their families constituted fully one tenth of the whole British population. Their violent history and inclination to radical politics made them a very volatile force. The day Parliament affirmed the principle of the Minimum Wage Bill, Tom Mann was arrested along with the printer and publisher of 'The Syndicalist' for the 'Don't Shoot' leaflet, drafted in anticipation of widespread use of the army against the miners - the prosecutions were under the Incitement to Mutiny Act 1797!

During the course of discussing the bill, a number of progressive Labour MPs got up to protest at Mann's treatment and in the process repeated what Mann had said, thereby having it drafted into Hansard, presumably to test the inconsistency of treatment vis-a-vis themselves and Mann. Kier Hardy rose to say:

'What has happened at this moment? One prominent Labour leader is in goal, and from every part of the industrial field come resolutions of protest demanding a general strike until he is released, calling upon Labour Members to stop the proceedings of this house until something is done. That is what your prosecutions are leading to ... tonight we are discussing the prosecution of men for no other offence whatever, than that of having gone to the soldiers and said, 'Comrades, when your brothers are fighting for better conditions - conditions for you yourselves when you return to work - do not shoot them down, even if your officers command you to do so. Take the consequences of refusal to shoot them down, but do not murder your brother and your comrade who is fighting your cause as well as his own'. Quoted in A History of the Scottish Miners, by P. Arnot.

The strike was of such monumental importance that V. I. Lenin closely watched the struggle from across the Channel in Paris, and wrote in Pravda nine months later:

'The most outstanding event in the past year has been the miners' strike. If the railway strike in 1911 displayed 'the new spirit' of the British workers, the miners' strike certainly marks a new epoch. In spite

of all the preparations of the ruling classes for 'war', in spite of the strenuous effort of the bourgeois to crush resistance of the disobedient slaves of capital, the strike was a success. The state of organisation of the miners was exemplary. There was not a trace of blacklegging. Coalmining by soldiers, or inexperienced labourers was out of the question. After six weeks struggle, the bourgeois government of Britain realised, that the country's entire industrial life was coming to a standstill and that the words of the workers' song, 'All wheels cease to whirr when thy hand wills it', were coming true ... since the coal strike the British Labour movement is no longer the same. The workers have learned to fight. They have discovered the path that will lead them to victory'. Quoted in South Wales Miners 1898—1914, by P. Arnot.

Despite his later bemoaning of the state of the political parties of the working class and that '*opportunist conduct of the MPs ... is giving rise, as is always, to Syndicalist tendencies among the workers*', Lenin seems by implication to actually agree that the class can mobilise itself. And certainly in 1912 did not seem to know that, '*the one true shining light of the Soviet Bolshevik party was needed for such a spectacular victory*'. In fact, when Lenin returned in the sealed train to a civil war torn Russia in February 1917, Stalin and his comrades accused him of having become a Syndicalist! What is certainly true, is that De Leon and the IWW's ideas of all power resting on the Workers' Industrial Unions, became translated in Russian terms to 'All power to the Soviets'. Whether Lenin sincerely believed this vision and was only distracted from it by the international imperialist invasion of the USSR; or whether he always had designs on an autocratic party structure standing over the working class is a matter of some dispute and constant rehashing of history and faded tracts.

The actual initial success of the Soviet revolution, and the achievement of what seemed to be workers' power, drew many former IWW leaders all over the world to turn to 'Bolshevism' as a means of achieving world wide working class power over capitalism. Parties like the SLP, split in the arguments over whether or not to forge a united Communist Party, and what its programme should be. George Harvey remained with the SLP, refusing to join the CPGB but continued to describe himself as a *Bolshevik industrial unionist*.

In 1926, a year in which the ruling class trembled before what they thought was a Bolshevik inspired, miners led, general strike. They need not have worried at least so far as the TUC General Council was

concerned. When the general strike began, Stanley Baldwin sent for the leaders of the TUC and asked them, were they ready to form a revolutionary government? He explained to them (because it obviously had not occurred to them) that a general strike was unconstitutional and posed a challenge to the legitimately elected government. If they won, they had better be ready to take over the government. They capitulated in eight days, though the miners fought on alone for eight months or more. Tanks and armoured cars roamed the streets, scabs were under military protection, thousands of people were arrested, including the central committee of the Communist Party and the Communist MP for Battersy, Mr Satlevela. The Chopwell miners did not seize Newcastle, but they seized the City Hall and flew the red flag off the flag pole. Mind, they did derail the Flying Scotsman by way of compensation.

During the 2nd world war, it was shoulders to the wheel. One national effort against the Germans; strikes were banned as treason, labour parades were banned. The miners were at the very pivot of war production, boy did the country need the miners. Then, we are told, they had privileges and extra rations.

Lady Astor said we were pampered. While others marched off behind the Union Jack, the miners stayed home and carried on with their banners and socialist and communist sentiments. Because of the strong bargaining position the union was able to wring concessions from the state and this caused the press to generate the notion the miners were molly coddled. They say during the war, an evangelist standing preaching to a crowd in Hyde Park demanded '*And I say prostitution should be driven underground*', and the crowd responded, '*looking after the miners again*'.

Emergency Powers Act or not, the number of strikes in the coal industry during World War II steadily mounted:

1938	41%
1939	34%
1940	41.3%
1941	37.6%
1942	40.2%
1943	47.2%
1944	57.1%
1945	56.7%
1946	60.3%

In 1942 between March and August, 685,000 manshifts were lost. Robert Clive, secretary of the South Yorkshire Coal Owners Association, wrote to Major Lloyd George, Minister of Fuel and Power on 18 June 1942:

'I am requested by the South Yorkshire Coalowners Association to draw your attention to the large number of sporadic strikes which have occurred at several collieries in the district since about 19 May and which are still taking place.'

'25 South Yorkshire Collieries have been affected and the loss of output has been considerable.'

'These strikes mainly originate by the boys refusing to work without having made any previous complaint either through their union or direct to management. In a few cases, sabotage of haulage machinery has been reported and every effort has been made to trace the offenders, without success.'

'The strikers are not supported by their union and the union officials both locally and from the head office of the YMWA have taken energetic steps to keep the pits at work, but with only a limited amount of success and strikes continue to occur. Two large collieries are reported on strike today.'

'I am desired to ask if the ministry will consider the desirability of taking any action within their power which will effectively curtail these unofficial strikes and consequent loss of production'.

It should be noted that the Yorkshire area was under right wing leadership in the war years and even areas which had 'left wing' leaderships in the form of the Communist Party, were co-operating in the war effort and the suppression of strikes. This was particularly true after the Nazi invasion of the USSR. However, the statistics demonstrate that the rank and file followed its own political agenda, although there was a small Trotskyist influence in the Yorkshire coalfield in the war years. The right wing leadership persisted until the rise of the unofficial miners movement culminating in the unofficial national strike of 1969. The area started to swing to the left as did the national union as a whole. Revolutionary ideas started to permeate the pits; especially the young miners responding to progressive trends in their generation overall as well as their early cultural traditions.

The 1972 strike smashed all of Heath's efforts to hold the line on pay restraint. The strike was a high point in the miners' history. The rank and file established its control of the strike early on. The Tory government was fully committed to breaking the strike, the scene being already littered with the broken remnants of previous challenges. The government had lectured individual private capitalist firms on holding out against pay demands and was committed to setting an example in 'the public sector'.

The 1972 strike took up a number of challenges, not least the fact that we were breaking the new anti-strike Industrial Relations Act. The impetus of the struggle and the widespread solidarity demonstrated by

the bulk of the organised working class ensured that the government did not dare implement its 'penal sections' against the pitmen. The organisation of flying pickets was unparalleled in size since the 1920's and unprecedented in their mobility. Miners' wives, girlfriends, mothers and daughters were strongly evident on many pickets, the miners had moved into battle with their whole community engaged, they were due to win an astounding victory.

In 1974, the unthinkable happened, the miners acting as a catalyst for the whole of the working class, brought down the Heath government. But the class war is a dynamic force, the balance is always changing and the ruling class started immediately after the collapse of Ted Heath, to find ways of knocking the miners once and for all.

It is the final blocks of this strategy that we are now witnessing. It is not inconceivable that we are looking at the end of mining in Britain within the next decade or sooner. It is the final pages of a long running plan first envisaged and planned by Tories while they were out of office in 1976 and presented by Nicholas Ridley in 1978. It is a strategy to cut the balls off the labour and trade union movement by decimating the miners' and their union. **It is a vision to replace coal power with nuclear power and rail with private road haulage.**

The NUM has long been regarded as the vanguard of the working class, the brigade of guards of the labour movement, or as the mad monk Keith Josphe called us, the storm troops of the TUC. They want shot of us, they wanted shot of us two and a half centuries ago, but they couldn't do without our labour, because they couldn't do without coal. Even today, 70% of all generated electricity comes from coal, in 1984 it was higher. But they risked everything by throwing down that challenge, in what was a well laid strategy. They announced the pit closure plan. As you well know, we took up that challenge in 1984 and fought the government and its whole state machine over energy policy – yes – but also over the right to organise and the right to fight. It was winner takes all. It cost the British state **twice as much as the Falklands war** and was at least twice as important to them.

Ian MacGregor tells us in his autobiography; three times we came to the verge of victory. In fact, if the dockers had stood out another three days and those bottleless bastards at Immingham hadn't broken ranks, we would have won and altered the course of history. If NACODs had acted on either of their tremendous strike ballots, the government was ready to take flight.

Twice in ten years the miners would have crushed a hostile Tory government. In such a context it is doubtful whether Thatcher could have survived and all the misery, war and depravation caused by her government, need never have happened. For the working class in general, what would it have demonstrated? That the ballot box was at best, a confirmation of the power on the streets; that election or not, the working class could impose its own judgments in its own time without waiting for the five yearly ritual of a general election. The implications for the Labour Party hierarchy were almost as horrendous as for the Tories, perhaps this is why the Labour leadership heckled the strike from the side lines and did everything they could to derail it.

So don't let anyone tell you the strike and mass picketing was a waste of time, we were within a fraction of winning, despite the scabs and useless totality that is the TUC leadership.

We lost though, and 120,000 jobs have gone, 122 pit communities turned into ghost towns, and no future in sight for the youngsters now looking for work. The despair we see throughout the country, in village, town and inner city, tell us we were right to fight and deserved to win.

Despite the massive losses it is quite clear the government still thinks we are too strong to leave alone, 40,000 miners is still too dangerous a force. The way the air became electric as Arthur Scargill strode to the 1992 TUC rostrum, the way the hitherto dead or dying delegates in the room suddenly came to life, demonstrates perhaps that, while any pit remains we shall always be too dangerous, in inspirational if not in physical terms. All evidence points to another imminent massacre of the industry.

This will be achieved through the Power Generator's stranglehold on the market. The size of the coal contract between British Coal and the generators will determine the size of the coal industry. So how will they replace the displaced coal? What is the 'competition'?

20% of the energy market is reserved regardless of price for the nuclear industry. It represents 11% of every single person's electricity bill. The most efficient nuclear power station is Hinkley Point C which generates electricity at a cost of between 7.7p and 9.33p per kilowatt hour. Coal power stations with modern technology, can generate electricity at a cost of 3p per kilowatt hour. On average nuclear power is four times more costly than coal, but the power is generated **regardless of price.**

So where is Thatcher's theory that *'you can't buck the market'*? If

you're Nuclear Electric, you're not even in the market. Neither is gas generation, the power generators have agreed to take 15% gas generated electricity, **regardless** of the fact it is dearer than coal power. Gas, which is relatively scarce and should be kept solely as a domestic product, is destined to get dearer and dearer as the quantity goes down. Coal prices on the other hand have fallen in real terms over the last seven years, this means the profits made by the generators were taken off the backs of the miners and mining industry, but never passed on to the customers.

What of the growing threat from so called 'cheap' imports? So called, because with the exception of South African coal, British coal is the cheapest deep mined coal in the world. Polish coal for example is brought to British ports at under £40 per tonne, though it costs £78 per tonne to produce; it is being given away to earn hard currency to feed the debt to the West. The added labour of course comes off the backs of the Polish miners at no extra reward for their labour.

South African coal can never be called 'cheap' coal. It is the dearest coal in the world with miners working for £25 per week and paying with their lives to the tune of 500 per year, with many thousands injured - a subsidy of bones, flesh and blood.

In Colombia, the BBC's 'Look North' programme, on a recent investigation, found that their coal cost £70 per tonne to produce, £30 dearer than the British coal. They sell it here for less than £40 per tonne after hauling it halfway across the world. How come? Because the director of the company says he is prepared to speculate in order *'to gain market share'*. In other words, subsidise the costs until he drives cheaper producing units out of business and he can then grab the market and raise the prices and recoup his initial loss. A secret? Hardly, he said it in front of millions of 'Look North' viewers. Do we think Her Majesty's Government doesn't know about it? They ought to: **British Coal own a 20% share in the Colombian mining industry.** Talk about biting the hand that feeds you, these bastards have chopped it off and eaten it!

So don't let Mr Eggar or anyone else lecture British miners on competing in the market. We have beaten them with both legs tied together, but they aren't interested in our survival. It is no secret that the next British Coal power station contract is likely to be very much reduced, despite the fact that we produce the cheapest coal in the world on our doorstep. Informed estimates predict a contract of 45 million tonnes, 10 million tonnes of which is open-cast - thus 35 million tonnes. They currently take in excess of 60 million. That is a reduction of nearly

50% or, translated, about 20 pits or 20,000 jobs. The contract could be for five years, or as few as two years, with no guarantee that further job losses won't follow at the end of that time. This would leave between twenty pits at most, or as few as fifteen nationwide.

The power generators have been using their unchallengeable market position to play all sides off against each other. Although they are not simply trying to get the cheapest fuel, because that would be British coal.

So with the prospect of the ultimate decimation, with no view of a future revival (something which has never faced us before) how do we meet the current situation?

'Get off your knees Arthur!' Yes, Arthur we are back to the Socialist Workers Party's concise book of strategy: one page, one line, one word — **charge!** Our reality is not so simple. In 1984—85, the miners', their wives and children threw everything that bones, flesh and blood could muster: 11,000 were arrested, 1,000's jailed, four killed and 1,000's were seriously injured. Marriages broke down, many lost their homes, hundreds have never worked since.

When we went back to work, the bosses pulled on the jackboots and in the process, 122 pits have closed with the loss of 120,000 plus jobs. Agreements have been torn up, union recognition at all levels abolished. Branch officials served with writs and injunctions, sacked and suspended. To each of these over the last seven years we have responded with wildcat strikes, coalfield stoppages, unofficial pickets, overtime bans and all forms of guerrilla action. The war has been continuous and exhausting. Rumour and counter rumour of more impending disasters, the job losses continuing like drops of blood, weakening us, day by day. Every newspaper, every TV report and every leaked letter spells another dose of doom.

In such circumstances can you wonder that many looked to a Labour victory to come riding over the hill like the cavalry to the rescue? Some bloody chance. I reckon if Kinnock had been chief of the Sioux at Little Big Horn, Custer would have won!

In the course of a recent exchange with the closet intellectual Frank Field MP, he said I wasn't in touch with ordinary voters.

As I replied: '*That's great from a political party which has just lost four general elections in a row, during the period of the most unpopular government ever*'. He says that I am out of touch. So no relief came and now the Board have reduced redundancy payments by £10,000 per person. In the context of all this, talk of strike in abstract is nonsense, for

the miners' reason; the management will close the gates behind us, sack us all, and still shut the pit. Another reason of course is that many, many men are so sick of the treatment, so war weary, that asked to *fight to save the pit*, will tell you to fuck off, because they don't want to work down the pit any more.

Against the same backdrop, how do we mobilise a fight against privatisation? Our perspective is to enthusiastically support the union's efforts to obstruct the privatisation plan. That effort is woefully inadequate up to press. We should have the dynamism of the French lorry drivers, we should be braying at the doors in Brussels, we should be calling upon the International Miners Organisation to start blocking every road throughout Europe. We should be stopping the business of the House of Commons and the European Parliament in protest at what is happening.

We demand that this government explains the logic, the justice, in British Coal's fate, to the EC. British taxes are the second biggest contributor to EC funds.

That fund goes to a joint energy source to subsidise European coal. All the countries of the EEC with mines take from this, **except the Tory British government!** So while the Germans for example get to produce everything below a price of £60 per tonne, (and the dearest British coal is £44 per tonne). **All British pits producing at more than £34 per tonne will close, because the British government refuses to take from the fund or subsidise to the agreed level.** Instead it pays to subsidise the French, Spanish, and German miners. This is not a moan at 'foreign coal'. The Germans and others are right; it is the British government following an entirely destructive vendetta against 'its own' British mines. If Britain was to take the subsidy on offer, indeed only 33% of it, its coal would be cheaper than any other coal in Europe. But Britain will not export coal to Europe even though it is allowed to and it is the cheapest **by far** of any European coal.

So don't let anyone lecture the miners on *economics, the market, balancing the books, justice* or whatever. None of those forces are operating here. The big picture is to defeat and destroy British coal production, burn off the scarce supply of gas and then allow foreign coal producers to 'up' the price because native coal production will no longer exist. So the story will revolve back to a massive expansion of nuclear energy. The long-term plan finally unfolds: the present 70—75% of British Energy produced by coal will be replaced by nuclear energy. No

nasty commie miners, no discontentment spreading from their ranks, but a big macho nuclear production line, turning out atom bombs on the side, so we think we're still playing in the big league of world power structures.

Therefore, we take these arguments to the British people and into Europe. We need to kick, scream and shout from the roof-tops just what this evil state machine is manipulating at the expense of our communities and their survival. They can't beat us with arguments, logic or anything other than the brute physical force of parliament backed up with the law, the police and the army.

The other thing the union is doing is to make the privatisation unattractive to potential buyers. For example, British Coal have been stealing money from our pension fund. Money which prevented them from operating at a loss this year and last. How long do they expect to continue to do this? Especially as the union is going to the European Court to demand all the funds taken from our pension fund, about £800 million in total, be returned and spent on what it was set up for, the pensions of the miners; retired and still working.

This court case will take a few years, but will some prospective buyer be ready to put £800 million away in case we win? Not so attractive! Secondly, European funds of up to £40 million have recently been paid to British Coal to modernise and save British pits. Markham Main was one of them. We are going to the European Parliament to get those grants repaid, because they've been misused. Indeed, they are likely to be used to help close Markham and many more. If they will rule the £40 million has to be paid back, who will pay it? A private buyer? Not so attractive! But the most unattractive thing to a potential buyer is the energy market. If PowerGen only sign up for five years or worse, two years, who will speculate in such short term markets, especially if the succeeding contracts are likely to be halved again? Not so attractive! So privatisation is not inevitable. We must kick and fight and raise a stink about it in whatever way we can to block it and obstruct it.

Yes, there's been talk of industrial action. But the call for industrial action cannot be made on the abstract basis of 'No Job Losses, No Pit Closures'. The call has to be made for 'No Compulsory Redundancies'.

If it's not to be compulsory, they'll have to put more money on the table for those who want out, or else yes we'll take strike action and sink the few pits they do want to keep. **If they give us nowt, we'll have nowt to lose.**

This should strike a chord with those that want to keep the job and those that want out with a golden handshake. Maybe the threat of action weighed against the added cost in redundancy terms will make the whole thing look even more unattractive to the government, already up to its bollocks in shark infested waters.

The government is not strong, a determined push, a strong industrial action, a set of massive labour movement demonstrations in London against unemployment and recession, and we can start the fight back. We can start to make them sway and I know you'll be doing some pushing with us, then we get this union of ours to come back from licking its wounds.

If we're going to die, we'll die in the way the union was born: on our feet, giving the ruling class some welly and lighting a spark of inspiration to all oppressed people in Britain.

I'll tell you this, they ain't so strong. They're even shit scared of rave parties – never mind national strike action.

Maybe we should adopt it as a new form of direct action. Rave for rebellion. Beats wandering round Birmingham on a wet Sunday with the same old worn out SWP chants. I urge Class War to adopt the mass rave as a weapon in the protest armoury.

Meanwhile, while recession grows and tens of thousands join the dole queue each week – heard anything of the Labour opposition? Not a bloody squeak.

Indeed, while we're kicking and struggling trying to hold on to our jobs, fighting to keep work and the Tories are hell bent on closing everything down, putting every bugger on the dole - what does Labour spokesman Terry Fields do...

Comes on the Telly...
to protest...

about New Age Travellers getting dole money...

'Are they actively seeking work?' he asks.

Is he brain dead? What bloody work? There is no work. It's not that though, is it?

They're fucking enjoying themselves! **How dare these Hippies have fun when they're not working.** You're supposed to be all defeated and desperate and hung up and grateful to smug gits like Fields. Instead, here are people who've accepted it's a waste of time trying to find work, grovelling along to petty tin gods, they've actually gone to try and live their lives another way and have fun.

Well I've told Mr Fields: 'We've had no damn help off people like you when we're fighting to save our jobs. You never criticise the Tories when they take the work away. So stop crawling up the backsides of middle class Tory voters in the hope of looking more Draconian than the Thatcherites'.

Anyway, if we fail and they shut our pits there's a canny few pitmen have got their wigwams packed now. We're going to try some of this fresh air and freedom bit. We'll have some of that safe sex, drugs and rock and roll. I want to fornicate on some rich bastard's front lawn and have a shit in his wood.

We might yet learn the lesson. That the pit communities are more resilient than the pit. Our traditions are too deep, too red, too etched in struggle for them to die with the colliery. Our struggles will continue. In other forms. In other ways, in every way. The visions of freedom first raised by the miners 152 years ago will live on, to fight on.

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The call for industrial action against compulsory redundancies was based upon a strategy aimed at uniting the redundancy freaks with the men who wished to stay and fight.

Hatfield's resolution and a similar one from Rossington, were accepted by the special council meeting on Monday 12 October, together with a more abstract motion for strike action against 'pit closures' as such, which had come in from the Selby group. These resolutions would form the basis of Yorkshire's strategy at the forthcoming National Conference. Before we got that far, the government, pulling the Coal Board's strings, moved fast and ruthlessly.

First, they announced the closure of 31 pits. Far, far worse than we had predicted. Many would close at the end of that very week, that is with three days notice.

Second, they announced new redundancy terms. The restoration of the £10,000 top up figure, bringing the maximum payment to around £37,000 for a worker of full service and right age bracket.

Third, these redundancy terms would be withdrawn if we took strike action, or indeed any industrial action.

The impact in the communities was one of utter shock and at first wretched resignation and defeatism. The valiant and defiant few who would tell the board to stuff the money and go for action, were too few to carry an immediate ballot. The campaign now became crucial and branches started, quite independently, and without waiting for the National Conference, to mobilise our communities as a whole and to involve all the related industries and workers in resistance. Hatfield started making plans for a national demonstration in London in case the Conference should not go for it.

The National Delegate Conference met. As widespread reaction spread the country and the Tories started to run for cover. A raw nerve had been touched in the working class body. Working class affinity to the miners is an ancient factor born of the fact that, not so long ago, a huge proportion of the entire working class were miners. Here we could see the imminent devastation of the last pit communities.

The working class, North and South, were galvanised. The cries of

anger were growing louder by the minute and even some Tory-voting middle class sentiments had been trampled on, after all, no way could they say this was 'fair'. The backlash from the middle class who hadn't the stomach for the kind of ruthless butchery Heseltine was getting into, caused a few prominent Tories to *revolt*.

The media decided, for interests best known to itself, that this was becoming a growing tidal wave and they would have to surf on it or be drowned by it. The whole Tory government, itself already badly unstable, started to look very shaky. This perception was enough to lift many hearts which had been flagging for some time. The fight was back on and the miners were back in the driving seat. The spectre of yet another Tory government smashed by the miners and their supporters had started to become a real possibility despite our weakened size or the lack of strike action (at the time of writing).

Our absolute mortal fear as we pushed through the crowds of reporters, TV crews and Leninist evangelists selling more tablets of gold, was that Arthur and the Executive Committee, with the wind in their hair, might think now was the time to go for a pit head ballot on strike action. Fear? Because the campaign was rolling on before us, if we voted **and lost**, the bubble would be burst and the press would conclude *the miners didn't care about the job losses*. Which of course wouldn't be true, but the ruthless threat to take away the pot of redundancy money and leave the man and his family on the scrap-heap for the rest of his life was a terrible weapon against action. Nonetheless the threat had to be made and possibly the ballot might ultimately have to be conducted.

Meantime though, the people were putting their stamp on the situation and we should not wish to stop them stamping. Victory was at least in sight, if not in hand.

Fortunately this perspective was adopted unanimously by the Conference and Arthur hailed the strategy as if it were his own, which of course, it now was. Undoubtedly the Board have felt outstepped by this manoeuvre and have so far responded by shutting down as many collieries as possible while the campaign rolled. We resolve that they will not have time to permanently damage them before the campaign is successful and we shall force their re-opening.

We next moved to use the law as far as it could be used, to stop the Board actually shutting the pits at such short notice and without compliance with the Redundancy Payments Act which states that we

should have 90 days notice and meaningful consultations on redundancies of such a scale. As I write, the final judgment has yet to be made, but the small reprieve so far is a welcome glimmer of success, though we have no confidence whatever that the judges will decide in our favour.

So how did the revolutionary left see all this? Need you ask! Workers Power, whose middle class and cosseted membership have not the slightest understanding of the deep emotional and mental torture being experienced by the miners and their families, declare that '*the campaign is a diversion*' and what is needed is to strike. The leaders of the union were blocking strike action which obviously the rank and file were itching to get at. There is really no response to this, or that of the loony International Communist (world conspiracy against Trotsky) Party, that going on strike 'is a principle'. Except to say you **stupid, ignorant, spaced out set of bastards!** The biggest crisis the Tories have faced since 1984, the biggest mobilisation of the working class since the poll tax, the real raising of class consciousness and revolutionary morale, unseen for decades and **you politically blind set of bastards can't even see it**. What is worse, you want to throw sand in our eyes too. Striking is not a principle, it is a tactic, to be used or not, according to the conditions and the most favourable strategy available.

If this doesn't accord with some Leninist handbook on how it's all done, hard lines, the miners and their immediate representatives will play this the way we see it and to our advantage. Stick around and we'll explain it to the vanguards later, though I doubt they'll ever understand.

At the time of writing, a victory is clearly visible. We are mobilising quarter of a million people into London this Wednesday, and Sunday [25 October] will the biggest demonstrations ever. Everything that has wheels is booked and moving to London. We have the clear determination that even if we lose and they sink our communities, those Tory bastards are coming down with us. We have already ripped the guts out of the government and that would be a suitable tombstone for any pit monument.

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