

miners' language. It means a horror we can never forgive or forget.

Because of this, despite all provocations on the part of the coal owners and procrastinations and timidity on the part of the Government, we have tried to deliver the coal.

Yes, there have been strikes, which every responsible miner, whether in the rank and file or the leadership, has deplored and tried to prevent. But they are small compared to what one would expect, in view of the record of the industry and its treatment of the men.

It is the same spirit which causes miners to rescue a comrade who is buried under a fall; as that which actuates him to support a comrade in conflict with the employer, right or wrong. You cannot have one without the other.

The proposals of the Miners' Federation would do more to eliminate strikes and absenteeism than anything else which has yet been proposed.

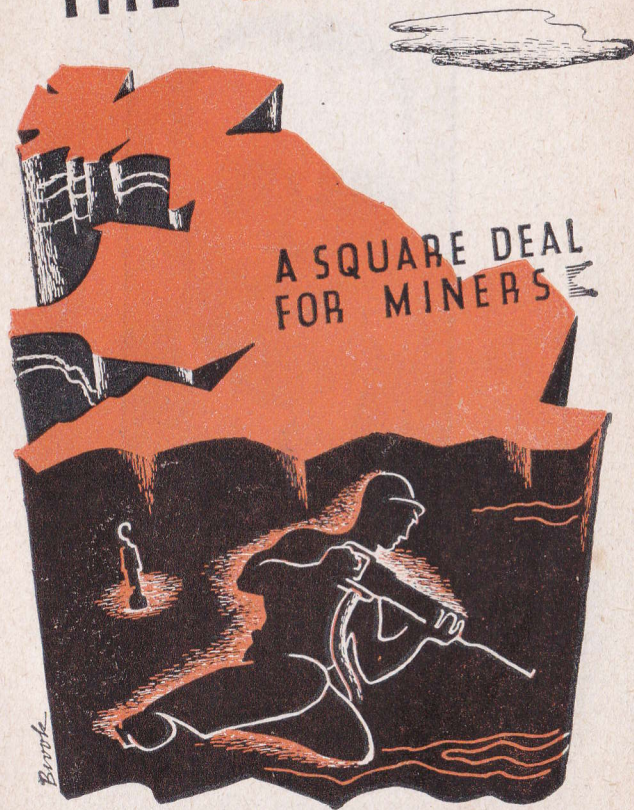
The nation needs sufficient coal so as to take full advantage of every new favourable turn to finish the war quickly. We believe that only by carrying out the Miners' Federation proposals can that coal be provided. We ask you to give them your serious consideration and support. It is time that counts now. This is why we appeal to you to do your part, for rest assured, miners will never again return to the past and all that means for the miners of Britain and their families. We are no longer going to be the outcasts of industry. The nation needs coal and it needs the miners, but it has got to be prepared to treat us as one of the most important sections of the working population and to provide wages and working conditions and all the facilities that modern civilisation has in its power to give these workers, who are the salt of the earth—men and boys who for far too long have been taken too much for granted.

We demand life and we demand it more abundantly.

The nation must provide the means. Without the mines the nation cannot live.

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COAL & THE NATION



By Arthur L. Horner

1943

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Arthur L. Horner is a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party, and is President of the South Wales Miners' Federation.

Coal and the Nation

by Arthur L. Horner

WHY is there a regular crisis in the Mining Industry?

How is it possible that in Britain, where we have some of the richest coal fields in the world, that hardly a month goes by without mining and the miners being front page news?

I will try to explain the position so that you can help in the ways that are open to you, and we need your assistance for the solution of a problem on which victory over Fascism depends almost as much as upon military action.

There is an unprecedented internal demand for coal. Every industry in the country is working at full pressure. We have to admit that we are not able to bridge the gap between coal production and consumption, even though we do not have to produce for export markets, which absorbed a considerable percentage of our coal production in peace time.

How has this position been brought about?

At the end of the last war there were 1,100,000 workers employed in the mining industry. By 1920 there were 1,220,000. At the beginning of this war there were 790,000. At the present time there are 703,000 men. The man-power is reduced by nearly half. This is only understandable if you appreciate the miner's attitude to the Coal Industry.

In the course of the last war, as a result of the owners' mismanagement and refusal to increase wages in spite of high prices and harder work for those left in the pits, output declined and there was widespread unrest. Early in 1917 the Government therefore took over full control of the mines guaranteeing certain profits to the mineowners, but at the same time improving wages. When the war came to an end, the mineowners demanded

decontrol, while the miners urged that the only guarantee of any future for the Coal Industry was to make the control permanent by nationalisation.

In 1919 the Sankey Commission was appointed to examine the question. A majority of the Commission, including the Chairman, Mr. Justice Sankey, reported that on the facts examined "the present system of ownership and working in the Coal Industry stands condemned," and it recommended that not only royalties should be taken over by the State, but "the principle of State ownership of the coal mines be accepted."

The Lloyd George Government, which had declared its acceptance of the Report "in spirit and in letter," went back on its pledge. It refused even to take over royalties, which remained as an intolerable burden on the industry. As for the coal mines, the Government did not dare at that moment to hand them back to the mineowners; State control remained, until the slump came, and in April, 1921, control was brought to an end, while at the same moment the mineowners opened a vicious attack on wages and conditions, resulting in the bitter struggle of a three months' lock-out, when it became crystal clear that all the fine promises made to the miners during the last war were to be betrayed.

Wages were reduced, working conditions were worsened. Later there was another short boom, and in 1924, by the recommendations of the Buckmaster Enquiry, our position was improved. But only for a short time. Within a few months the owners attacked. We resisted their demands, and in consequence the Baldwin Government was forced to pay a subsidy to the coal owners in order that our wages could be maintained for a period of nine months from August, 1925, to May, 1926.

That nine months was used by the coal owners and the Baldwin Government to prepare their plans for the attack in 1926, when again they demanded lower wages and longer hours.

We refused to accept, and we were supported by the whole Trade Union Movement; and on May 1st, 1926,

for the first time in the history of the Labour Movement, a general strike was declared. This proved to be one of the greatest demonstrations of working-class comradeship and solidarity ever witnessed. It lasted nine days. After it was over the miners fought on until November, 1926, supported by the rank and file from other industries, and by the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union.

No one will ever appreciate fully what our people suffered during that time, nor will they ever understand the bitter feelings which were engendered in the heart of every member of the mining community.

Finally, we were driven back to the pits, and, with hours of work prolonged, the owners commenced the most vicious policy of victimisation. Scattered all over Britain to-day are some of the finest miners in the world. *For years on end they endured the poverty and misery that victimisation brought in its trail, until they were finally forced to leave the places of their birth, their homes, and families, and to seek fresh jobs in other industries.* It was not until the present war that the owners would agree to employing some of these men who were left behind in the mining villages. Those who found another way of life can never be persuaded to return to the pits, except in the interests of a great cause.

Thus, in spite of the conclusive evidence, brought forward at a public enquiry and accepted by a Government Commission, that only the taking over of the mines could save the industry from economic and social disaster, the miners were repeatedly cheated, and the Government helped the mineowners time after time to defeat every attempt the miners made even to maintain their conditions.

To show the effect of this on the outlook of the miners, I cannot do better than quote from the evidence submitted by Mr. S. O. Davies, on behalf of the Mine-workers Federation, to the Samuel Commission in 1925:

"In considering the attitude of the miners towards the subsequent course of events in the industry, this fact must not be lost sight of for one moment—that the mineowners, with the backing of successive Govern-

ments, have succeeded in preventing the re-organisation on which alone the prosperity of the industry might have been founded. In spite of the condemnation by the 1919 Commission and by the whole of public opinion when the facts were brought together, the re-organisation has been sabotaged and the miners, after successive struggles against the mineowners and the Governments which carried out the wishes of the mineowners, have been driven down to a level worse than that which was universally condemned in 1919."

In 1930 began the worst depression ever known in our industry. The great coal exporting districts of South Wales and Durham became derelict areas.

We organised hunger marches to London to draw attention to our plight. In the streets of the West End of London it was a common thing to see miners' choirs singing for coppers to send to their families in South Wales. Homes were broken up, forced emigration took place to the Midlands and the outskirts of London. Family life was destroyed. Every day you could see tearful scenes at Cardiff Railway Station as parents sent their boys and girls to various parts of Britain because all hope of employment in the coalfields had gone.

Between 1921 and 1939 when war broke out, thousands of miners left their homes to work elsewhere. They vowed never again to return to an industry and a set of employers who had robbed life of all its meaning and its promise.

The miners are proud men. They don't want charity. Hard work has no terrors for them. They found work in the new industries around London and the Midlands. This work was more congenial and better paid than in the mining industry. Instead of dark and dangerous pits they found new great well-lighted and constructed factories, regular wages, few accidents, housing estates which seemed luxurious compared with the mining cottages which had caused their womenfolk such hard and unnecessary labour.

This is not a pretty picture, but it is a true one. The miners felt that their worth was neither understood nor

valued. When such disasters as Gresford took place, there was a wave of public sympathy. Relief funds were opened, editorials were written expressing public sympathy with the brave miners. But this mood never lasted long. It did not bring about any change of heart on the part of the coal owners or the Government. We were soon the forgotten men once more.

Then came the war. What a change took place then ! At once there was a demand for our labour. We were important again. Despite all the years of provocation, the miners were ready to return to the pits. A great cause had appeared—the necessity to defeat Fascism, which the miners had always hated.

The demand for coal and for miners seemed endless. We did our best to supply both. Then came the collapse of France in 1940, and the entry of Italy into the war. In twenty-four hours our export trade collapsed : miners were again redundant.

The Government did not look ahead. It did not understand what the demand for coal would be during the course of the war. Thousands of miners were persuaded to go into other industries, although D. R. Grenfell, M.P., questioned the wisdom of this at the time. Many miners went into the armed forces.

Wherever miners are, the Government know they are the steel framework around which some of the best war industries have been built up, and that they form the nucleus of the finest fighting regiments. For one reason and another the mining industry lost a large percentage of its man-power, and for this the nation has now to pay a heavy price.

What is the Present Position ?

We now have to produce sufficient coal to fulfil the requirements of all our war and transport industries, and to build up stocks ready for immediate export to every European country we liberate from the yoke of Fascism.

For these purposes we need 210 million tons in the coming year. The industry, as at present organised and manned, produces less than 190 million tons annually.

The present man-power in the mining industry is approximately 703,000. At the present rate of production we need approximately 89,000 additional men to be safe—in short, we require approximately 800,000 men working in and about the mines. This apart from wastage of man-power per year.

It is estimated that more than 20,000 miners leave the industry every year for a variety of reasons such as old age, sickness, accidents and death, etc. Unless we deal in a really humane manner with the miners by more effective schemes of rehabilitation, including medical treatment for the industrial diseases of the coal industry, we face the prospect that the rate of wastage will increase.

To bring 90,000 more workers into the mining industry is not practicable at this stage of the war. But it must, however, be clearly understood that it is quite beyond the physical capacity of the present man-power to produce the necessary coal to meet the situation at home and abroad.

We must budget for supplies to North Africa and Sicily and other countries we expect soon to occupy. When we liberate these countries from Fascism, we must send them coal: unless we do that we shall not be able to utilise the resources of these countries to the fullest extent for further attacks upon Hitler.

Take the case of Italy. Germany undertook to supply Italy with one million tons of coal per month. We shall have to do likewise, otherwise Italian industry will come to a dead stop—this apart from any concern for the Italian people who will be bereft of light, heat and power. At the present time America and South Africa are assisting to supply coal to Africa and Sicily, bringing it over unnecessarily long distances.

If we landed in France to-morrow, we should have to be in a position to send big stocks of coal there at once. We can be sure that Hitler will apply the “scorched earth” policy to France, as the German Army did in the last war, when, in their final retreat, they destroyed or put out of action for a long time most of the most productive French coal mines.

So you see that there is a really serious coal crisis. We still have some accumulated stocks which were accumulated after the fall of France, but please understand, however, that once these have gone, production to-day is too low for them to be replenished. I must warn you, despite official propaganda, if it had not been for the very mild winter last year and the absence of bombing, those stocks might not have existed to-day. I must warn you, too, that a grave coal famine may develop this year if there is a hard winter or any effective bombing of decisive transport communications.

Churchill's Speech and Parliament

Some few months ago the Prime Minister addressed in London a special conference of miners and colliery managers, so as to impress upon all concerned the gravity of the situation and the tremendous importance of the coal industry. On October 13th he went back on his own words. He will have to do so again in a few months' time. But by that time serious damage will have been done to the war effort.

On October 12th and 13th, there was a two days' debate in Parliament on the coal crisis. Do you think that in the present stage of the war, two days would have been given over to discussing the position in the coal industry if no crisis existed? The intervention of the Prime Minister was, to say the least of it, most unfortunate.

It is claimed that “it soothed the Labour Party” or has been “a great parliamentary triumph for the Prime Minister.” The speech will not only not produce one extra ton of coal, it can have the opposite effect. It has conveyed to the miners that the gravity of the situation has been exaggerated by their own leaders and has led to the belief that the coal situation is well in hand. Mr. Churchill will have to eat his words within the next few months, and will be compelled to impose single control of the industry as advocated by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, and this by the logic of events.

Let me now come on to the proposals of the Miners' Federation to solve the coal problem.

The Policy of the Miners' Federation

Let me explain the general approach to the problem. We believe that if certain changes are made in the organisation and administration of the mining industry, and if those changes are accompanied by certain improvements in the standards and working conditions of those employed in the mining industry, the increased coal, so vital to the war effort of the nation, can be obtained. On this basis, we justify our proposals.

1. Control of the Mining Industry

When the Government scheme known as The White Paper on Coal Control was published in June, 1942, we expressed our grave doubts as to the efficacy of the kind of control that was advocated.

The essence of this control was that the manager in each pit remained responsible to the owners and not to the Ministry of Fuel and Power, though the Ministry assumed responsibility for coal production as a whole. This system became known as dual control. This is a wrong description. It is in fact a contradictory control. This places managements and technicians in an impossible situation. They have their jobs to think of, and whatever suggestions may be brought forward in a particular pit for increasing production have to be examined by them in the last analysis through the eyes of the coal owner, and not those of the State or the nation.

This leads to dual loyalty and allegiance, and this more than anything else has prevented the White Paper scheme from fulfilling the promise held out to the nation in the Parliamentary debate at the time of its adoption.

The Miners' Federation has always taken the view that in peace and war alike coal is so vital to the nation that its production ought not to be left to what is called private enterprise. Coal production should be the responsibility of the State. We have never departed

from this position. There have been times when we could have used our power to enforce it, but have not done so because we could not precipitate a political conflict when the nation was fighting for its life against Fascism.

There is only one way through which all the conflicting interests—that are stronger entrenched in the coal industry than any other—can be eliminated and production really organised on a planned basis; this is for the establishment of a single control in the Coal Industry.

We recommend that the Government be made responsible for the full financial and operational control of the mining industry, so that everyone employed in and about the mines, in whatever capacity, is freed from the fear of violating private interests and everything is subordinated to the supreme task of obtaining the maximum amount of coal by the combined activities of miners, technicians and managements.

We have many examples of how the present system of contradictory control works to the detriment of the nation. It is a fact that the miners on Pit Production Committees have made a great number of suggestions for increasing production which have been ignored, precisely because they conflicted with the coal owners' ideas. They were rejected not because they were impractical, but because they were thought not to be in the interests of the coal owners.

In the South Wales coalfield, 50 reports out of 82 giving the opinions of the miners' representatives on Pit Production Committees all stressed the point that if results are to be obtained from their work, then there must be the fullest co-operation from the managements, and for the reasons stated above, this is not forthcoming at the present time.

Let me put it to you in this way. Imagine you are a manager whose job depends upon the goodwill of your employer. You know he has strong objections to anything that interferes with his private profit either now or after the war. You, on the other hand, have also to deliver the goods so far as the Ministry of Fuel and

Power is concerned, but appreciate that this position is temporary. Your present employer will then recover the right to dismiss you, and you will have no right of redress. It is perhaps only natural therefore that even to-day you have that situation in mind and do nothing in the meantime to offend your employer. This is the dilemma on which the present form of Dual Control is breaking down and proving unworkable. Many pit managers and technicians would like to operate suggestions made by the miners' side of the Pit Production Committees, but are hesitant to do so out of fear of the owners.

Then, again, the coal owners are for the most part deeply hostile to Pit Production Committees; they believe (and it may be, rightly), that if the workers succeed in making these committees work successfully, this will greatly strengthen the case for national ownership of the coal mines at some future date. And so in many areas the big combines have made a conscious drive to sabotage the Pit Production Committees, to discourage their work and to make the miner members of them feel hopeless and frustrated about the whole idea.

But, if the mines are operated by the Government, who assume full financial and operational responsibility, then everyone knows where they stand. Workmen, technicians and managers alike would know where their responsibility lay. There would be an entirely new scope for the work of the Pit Production Committees. An enormous impetus would be given to producing coal and these committees would become one of the most decisive mediums through which this could be done. They have, in fact, already shown what a decisive force they could be in obtaining increased production if their scope was not limited by the existing contradictory system of control. The work of the Regional Coal Committees would also become more effective.

2. Man-power

There is justification for the demand that immediate steps should be taken to increase the effective man-power of the mining industry. We know that there are

ex-miners in the Armed Forces and engaged on full-time Civil Defence work who should be released forthwith for employment in the mining industry. They are skilled miners who were called up as reservists and Territorials at the commencement of the war and who are now about 40 years of age, whose service could be of better use in the mining industry than in the Services.

In addition, there are scores of thousands of ex-mineworkers who were transferred to other industries following June, 1940. Had there been no collapse of the export markets at that time, the great majority of these men would still be employed in the mining industry. We are aware of the efforts of the Ministry of Labour and National Service to transfer these men back to the coal mining industry, and we have some knowledge of the reasons for the limited success which the Ministry is able to report.

These men resist every effort that is made to bring them back to the mining industry. Their simple and understandable objection is based on the fact that their wages and conditions in these other industries are far better than those in the coal mines, without all the daily dangers and hardships which are part of the miners' life.

In our view, therefore, the main burden of coal production during the war must remain on the shoulders of the present man-power, together with those ex-miners who ought to be returned from the Services and other industries. They can and must, of course, be supported by such additional workers as it may be possible to obtain through option and direction.

Taking all possible sources of man-power into account we are compelled to face the fact that it is unlikely that a higher man-power than 720,000 can be secured at any given time. To improve this figure we would need an additional 18,000 men forthwith, plus a replacement of 30,000 men per year. If the present rate of output of 5.1/3 tons per person per week can be maintained (and this is doubtful), a man-power of 720,000 would give 3,840,000 tons per week, thus leaving a deficiency of some 360,000 tons per week.

If this man-power is accepted as the maximum obtainable, it will be necessary in order to reach a gross output of 4,200,000 tons weekly for the output per person to be raised from 5.2/5ths to 5.5/6ths—an increase of approximately 10 cwts. per person per week. Since only one-third of the workers in the industry are directly employed on hewing coal (the remainder are on haulage, repairs, etc.), this would require an increase of approximately 30 cwts. per face worker per week.

Giving men the option to choose between mining and the Armed Forces will help a little. Conscripting workers to go into the mines will also help. But let us have no illusions. We know that the unskilled worker cannot just walk into the tool room of an aircraft factory and take a job; so, in the same way, mining must be recognised as a highly skilled trade in which experience and custom have to be combined with great physical strength.

Can a weekly production of 4,200,000 tons be attained with man-power of 720,000? We believe it can, providing our proposals as a whole are adopted without further delay.

3. Wages

When one thinks of all that has been said and is commonly known about the dangers faced by all who work in the mines, one would never think that the bitterest struggles to obtain a living wage have had to be fought in the mining industry. Indeed, it is ironical to think that as far back as 1912 we had to wage a tremendous fight to obtain the principle of what is called a minimum wage.

When the Miners' Federation recently stated its view that there should be a wage of £6 per week for all underground workers, I noticed how this got the sensational headlines in the newspapers. It was made out to be a colossal wage. Yet none of the people who write those headlines, and not many of you who read this pamphlet, would be prepared to go down the mines, if you could avoid it, for twice that sum every week.

It is said that the miners have received the greatest wage increases of any industry since the outbreak of the war. Actually, miners' earnings have risen by just about as much as those of other workers. But what is not said is that we were amongst the lowest paid section of industry as a whole at the outbreak of the war. In 1938 our average earnings were only 11s. 3d. a day, and 5 days' work was considered as reasonably good time.

Yes, I believe that if you want coal you have to be prepared to pay a living wage to those who have to get it. That is why in the present emergency it is necessary to state frankly that one of the ways in which production can be increased will be by granting a wage increase to all mine workers, whatever their part of the productive process may be. Two-thirds of our people are on a fixed wage of under £4 10s. 0d. a week. It is not good enough.

That is why the Miners' Federation is now asking for a wage of £6 per week for all underground workers and £5 10s. 0d. per week for workers on the surface, and that piece work prices shall be adjusted in accordance with the increases in the basic wage. We also demand that the Porter Award on the national minimum wages for young workers shall be revised, and a new Award be drafted that is in accord with the wage demands we are making for the adult miners.

Miners are glad when other sections of the working class receive wage advances; we are happy when so many powerful trade unions win comparatively good conditions for those they organise. We do not want the lower wages prevalent in the mining industry ever to become the lever whereby the wages of workers in other industries are reduced. But it is well-known that when any general wage offensive is started by the employers, the miners are attacked first, and if they can be forced to accept reductions, then it soon becomes the turn of all other workers. The experience of the whole trade union movement after 1921 and 1926 is proof of this fact.

Let the coal owners, the Government and the public face facts, however unpalatable they may be. The miners are no longer content to be the outcasts of

industry. We are going to win a living wage, one that is not only adequate by comparison with Government figures of the "Cost of living," but which also bears some relation to the risks run and the character of the work performed, and which will compensate for the isolation of our villages and for the lack of transport facilities and amusements that are enjoyed by workers in other industries.

We know all about the complaints of the coal owners that they do not make profits; but we note, too, they hold on to the pits. If the loss and burden are so great, why do the owners offer such vigorous protests against proposals for the Government to nationalise the mines, or become responsible for their financial and operational control?

4. Compensation

One basic cause of unrest in the mining valleys is the low rates of compensation paid to miners when accidents occur, whether fatal or otherwise.

Never forget that every year in peace and war more than 100,000 miners are injured and 1,000 killed in the course of their employment. And what do they get? *The maximum compensation paid to miners is thirty-five shillings per week for man and wife.* Would you be prepared to live on that? Then why expect miners to do so?

Since the outbreak of the war the miners have received a total wage advance of 37s. per week, but only a fragment of this in increased compensation rates. To-day, tens of thousands of miners stay at work who ought to have left the pits long ago because of old age. They are suffering from diseases caused by coal dust, stone dust and bad ventilation. I could tell you terrible stories about the sufferings of miners from silicosis.

If such things were occurring now on the Italian front, they would be hailed as marvels of human endurance and suffering. The sufferers would be hailed as our heroes. The country would be told it owed them an everlasting debt. But because it is the miners who endure and suffer, who cares?

New scientific methods have now been invented to prevent dust and thus avoid this disease, but the owners and the Government still hesitate to make them compulsory.

The Miners' Federation have fought for years to get the compensation rates increased, with little actual results. We have had promises in plenty, but they don't butter any miner's bread, neither do they get coal.

Even after our recent long and protracted negotiations with the Ministry of Home Security, in which we were supported by the Trades Union Congress, the Bill that is now before Parliament is inadequate in many important respects.

It introduces a differentiation between married and single men. It does not provide adequate allowances for the dependants of those who are killed or who die in consequence of industrial diseases, nor does it provide sufficient burial expenses for workmen who have no dependants. Nothing can make it right to call upon men to take grave risks in the interests of production and then penalise them and their dependants so harshly when they suffer injury or death.

5. Food and Transport

Do not be surprised that the Miners' Federation considers the granting of extra food rations one of the most important contributions we can make towards helping to get more coal. The miner is placed in a totally different category from any other section of the workers.

First of all, his work demands a tremendous physical exertion; then, he has to work under such conditions that allow none of the facilities that are open to most other workers. There can be no provision underground for canteens, or hot meals. It would not be much good if there were, because the miner works straight through his shift, with a short break for what he calls his "snap." He would not eat in the course of the shift, especially if he works in a small seam, because he would be forced to vomit immediately afterwards.

Have you ever thought what it is like to do a miner's work? Bent and cramped during the whole of the shift, sometimes in the most impossible positions; crawling on knees or shuffling on his belly, frequently in high temperatures, or up to the knees in water.

The miner wants his food at home. Canteens at the top are alright, and we want more of them. They serve a useful limited purpose. But the average miner wants to have his bath, and get home as quickly as possible. Then he wants to sit down to a good hot meal, one that gives him stamina and strength. He cannot get this on present rations.

We all would like more, you say. Yes, but we are not all asked to be miners. Most of us, members of the Government, coal owners, and trade union officials, can get more food than the miners, through the restaurant facilities that are open to us. Ask any miner what he looks forward to the most. It is to sit down to a good hot meal after his work is done—and he wants this every day and not only on Sunday.

Let me tell you a perfectly true story. You know we mineworkers have a number of convalescent homes up and down the country. A doctor friend of mine was going through one of these the other week and at the end of his visit he said to an old miner in the grounds:—

“Are you satisfied here, dad?”

“Satisfied?” he replied. “Why, we have a Sunday dinner every day.”

We have trained what we call “Military Commandos,” and it is common knowledge that these brave and resourceful men receive special conditions, food, pay, training and medical attention. It is right that they should, because of the special risks they are called upon to run, as at Dieppe and elsewhere. *The miners are called upon to run such risks every day, and it is high time that the country realised that it has got to find the resources to provide extra rations for the miners, so rightly described by Will Lawther as “The Commandos of Industry.”*

Many miners are called upon to travel long distances to get to their work. Yet how is the miner placed in comparison with workers from the same mining areas,

who have to travel to war industries the same distance from their homes? Workers in factories near the coal fields are not called upon to pay more than three shillings per week in fares, the rest being made up by employers and often the Government, while the miners are paying ten shillings a week and more per week in fares. Is it any wonder we feel that the country is not serious when it talks about our importance and the vital part miners are expected to play in the war effort?

7. Young Miners

In the last ten years there has been a growing reluctance on the part of miners and their wives to permit their sons to enter the pits.

Countless times I have heard miners say to me when visiting them during the course of my official duties, “Arthur, my boys are not going down the pit!” and the mothers are even more emphatic. This is because parents see no career in mining for their sons in the mining industry. They have had a bellyful themselves, and they will go to any lengths to prevent their children going through similar experiences.

It is indeed a warning to the country, for Britain without coal is a Britain without hope or a future. It is indeed the most striking indictment of the private ownership of the coal mines that those born and bred in the coal fields have no longer any confidence or trust in the industry.

It would be defeatism on our part to accept this philosophy.

The mines and the miners are vital to the war effort, as they are essential to the economic life of this country in peace. One day the people will own the mines, and the miners will freely work in the interests of the nation. Just for that reason we have to fight now all the harder to improve the conditions of the young miners.

Mining can become a career. We can make every young worker who enters it feel that he has a future, has something to work for and look forward to. We take no pride in a situation where young men are offered the option of going into the mining industry or

the Armed Forces. It is no compliment to the mining industry that half of one per cent. chose mining. It degrades the industry and the men who work in it.

We have yet to see the sons of the rich volunteer for the mines. The threat that they may be directed to do so has already caused concern about the conditions they would have to face, and has brought new arguments in our support for improving the miners' conditions now.

If the Government were wise, they would not make so many fine and eloquent speeches about what they are going to do for young miners in post-war years, but would prove their *bona fides* by what they do now. Give the young miners decent wages, shorten their hours, give them a reasonable holiday with pay, and facilities for technical training at full wages. Brighten up the mining villages and valleys with adequate sports and cultural facilities, dance halls and cinemas, many of which are taken for granted in the big industrial centres.

8. Other Points

The Miners' Federation have many other important points in their policy to solve the coal crisis, but I have had to be content with the most urgent and important.

I will refer briefly to a few of these other points to familiarise you with them before they come under public discussion.

There has been a great development in mechanisation of coal production. It is now playing a very important part in the production of coal, but there are endless breakdowns because of the lack of spare parts. Surely it is not too much to ask for priority to be given to the mining industry for all the machinery and spare parts that it requires, and that these essentials be pooled.

Emergency measures should be taken to build new houses and hostels for miners who are now being transferred to other coal fields, and for whom no adequate accommodation is provided. I know two of the most important coal fields in the country, which could absorb thousands of miners to work on very prolific seams, but this cannot be done because there is no living accommo-

dation for them. If it were an aerodrome or soldiers' camp that had to be built, we would mobilise building materials and labour. We would rush everything needed to the spot and the job would be quickly done. It can, and must be done for the miners.

We now have a pit bonus scheme which we hope will lead to improved results. New methods must be developed to replace the prosecutions of the miners for offences that could be adequately dealt with by more elastic machinery. Such prosecutions in other industries are hardly known. It is always the miners who are singled out for provocative treatment. Coal owners are hardly ever dealt with and none are ever sent to prison, as miners are.

There have recently been some strikes in Scotland. In one pit the owners locked out some of their workers. They were taken to Court and fined fifty pounds, for an offence for which imprisonment would have been a more appropriate punishment. On the same day, in the same Court, fines were imposed on miners amounting to £215. There must be an end to this one-sided treatment.

To win the co-operation of the miners, and thereby increase coal production, the Government must give firm guarantees that when peace is won, there will be no going back to the old conditions and control. Give the miners guarantees of a 5-day week after the war. It might be useful for Mr. Churchill to remember, that as a member of the Government which lengthened miners' working hours in 1926, he now has the chance of making restitution to the miners by guaranteeing them shorter hours after the war. Give them a guaranteed wage and a national minimum wage rate below which wages will not be allowed to fall; guarantee the erection of pithead baths; canteens or snack bars at all collieries within the next ten years; ensure that in the peace treaty provisions will be made for the reasonable allocation of coal markets. No more reparations in coal.

These proposals may appear drastic. Yes, but it is a grim situation and drastic measures are needed to take the taste of the last twenty years out of our mouths.

How the Public can Help

Now I come to the part that you, reader, can play. For you have a part to play—a very important one.

I have often heard coal called "Black Diamonds." Well, to-day every piece of coal is more precious than diamonds and should be treated with greater care. That is why you ought to add your voice to those others who are demanding the rationing of fuel. In April, 1942, Sir William Beveridge produced a scheme for rationing fuel. It was rejected by the Government under the pressure of the coal owners and vested interests in the electric, gas and power industries.

To-day the coal position is such that a scheme of coal rationing more drastic than the one brought forward by Sir William Beveridge is required. We may all yet regret the day that we allowed the profits of those vested interests to take priority over the public need in the grave war situation we are faced with.

You should bombard your Member of Parliament, your local newspaper, with the demand for the rationing of coal. You should get resolutions passed on this vital question in any organisation of which you are a member.

In your own houses you should carry out the most rigorous economy in the use of all forms of light and heat. You know the old saying, "We have to practise what we preach." Well, here's a chance for us to do so, and this appeal to you may drive home to you how serious the situation is and make you think more seriously than ever before of the need to husband every ounce of coal.

In the places where you work, or the places of amusement you frequent, you have opportunities for advocating fuel economy. There is far too much waste of our Black Diamonds, and you never miss what you've got until it is gone. Let there be a keen frost or series of heavy snow falls and a little coal will be appreciated; it is quite possible that there will be none for some of our important industrial centres. I am not exaggerating; I am stating hard facts. I hope the truth of this will not have to be proved in your own homes or in the slowing down of production or transport in the decisive days of the war.

If you are on a Works Committee or Production Committee, see that the question of fuel consumption in your factory is brought up for discussion. Do the same if you are on a Railway Local Departmental Committee. If you are a member of any Local Authority, take steps there to ensure that all is well in present methods of distribution and utilisation of coal within the jurisdiction of that Authority. If you live near a coalfield and you know of a technical college originally devoted to the training of the miners which is now being used for some other purpose, demand that it shall at once be given over to the training and equipment of young miners to become proficient in every branch of their trade.

If you are a Labour man or woman, call upon the local Labour Movement to rouse the people in their locality to a sense of realism and responsibility. Back up the miners' demand, and impress upon Members of Parliament to do likewise. We cannot allow the Government to give in to the dictates of Big Monopolies, as was the case in Churchill's recent speech. National Unity is not strengthened by giving way to monopoly interests, but by fighting and exposing them.

Britain has a responsibility to the miners, and the miners know full well their responsibility to Britain.

No one hates Fascism more intensely than we do. We have good cause to hate it. Miners everywhere are proud that we represent the most politically conscious section of the Labour Movement; proud that we are the strongest single force in the Trade Union Movement and in the Labour Party; proud of our international connections with the miners of all lands, and in particular those of the Soviet Union.

The miners have always been at the head of the Labour Movement in every country in the world. Whenever Fascism has come to power it has first of all tried to destroy the miners' organisations, knowing that if it was successful, it could the more easily tackle all others. We know what Fascism has done to the miners of Spain, Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, Norway and the Soviet Union. Lidice has passed into our