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the most powerful Prime Minister in living memory, Mrs Thatcher, said 'the Poll Tax is to remain'. Working people's refusal to accept that not only brought about a change, but the ensuing hatred and revulsion led to her downfall.

Besides 31,000 miners' jobs there are 70,000 engineering, power and transport workers' jobs at stake. For every miner's job 6 other jobs would disappear. Whole communities and the very fabric of our society is at stake.

It has been said that this is the miners' Alamo. This is true; but only partly. It is the working class's Alamo. If the miners go down this time we would not have the strength, dignity and clout required to stand against tyranny for decades to come.

"In one day of industrial action workers can learn more than in twenty years of intensive education". Arthur Scargill, London. February 6th.

EITHER we vote YES on March 5th, **OR** condemn ourselves, our children and our communities to a slow death and destruction in years to come.

EITHER all workers in other industries heed the call of the NUM and RMT for industrial action by voting with their feet, **OR** face a miserable future on Workfare schemes.

As unemployment continues to soar by 70,000 a month, no-one's job is safe.

If we are to go, let's go with dignity. We have nothing left to lose.

"Remember, if miners lose we have all lost; but if they win, we will all be certain of victory", Arthur Scargill, Cotgrave Rally, 31st January 1993.

Let's stand proud and stand together.

UNITY IS OUR STRENGTH.

Diary Dates

Sunday 28th February : 7.00p.m. Market Hall, Chesterfield. Chesterfield Miners Support Group presents Banner Theatre Co.. The battle for coal, from Saltley Gates to the present, in sketches, song and slides.

Friday 5th March : NUM, NACODS and RMT ballot for industrial action.

Saturday 6th March : Newcastle-under-Lyme. March and Rally.

Monday 8th March : International Women's Day. Visit your local camp.

Saturday 13th March : Davey Jones Memorial Rally. Wreath laying at Ollerton. March at East Kirkby, Yorkshire. Details from the contacts below.

Every Wednesday : 7.00p.m. Notts. Women Against Pit Closures meet at the Village Hall, Rainworth.

Strike Back is produced by Notts Campaign Against Pit Closures.

Meetings every Tuesday, 7.30 p.m. at International Community Centre, Mansfield Rd, Nottm. Contact: Box No. 5, 118 Mansfield Rd, Nottingham.

Tel. 705788, 608363, 509528

STRIKE BACK

news letter of the notts campaign against pit closures

To All Workers

MARCH 5th AND BEYOND EITHER / OR

"Over the past four months we have won the economic, social and political arguments. But still the government remains impervious to logic". Arthur Scargill, "The Miner", February 1993,

Hearing Heseltine's announcement on October 13th last year that 31 pits must shut immediately as there is 'no market for coal', no-one would have believed that more than four months later, thanks to the wave of outrage which has been demonstrated through the length and breadth of the country, the pits could still be open.

The success of the last four months has been unquestionably due to the resolute, clear and uncompromising stand of the NUM, not only against all pit closures, but against all other job losses in power, engineering, transport, and in harnessing the solidarity action of workers in many different industries.

'Not 31, Not 21, Not 10, Not 1. No Pit Closures' has already become part of working class folklore.

The actions of women, who took it upon themselves to fight alongside the miners (occupation of pit offices, setting up of pit camps, taking the message directly to Heseltine by camping outside his Ministry on February 5th, and then leading the highly spirited march on the 6th) have illuminated many hearts and minds, and indicated the correct path for standing against injustice.

All these actions have also influenced the court rulings in favour of the NUM and NACODS, which clearly stated the illegality of the government's and

Coal Board's actions, and denounced Heseltine as a law-breaker.

However, so far the Tory and Labour crocodile tears, and the favourable court rulings - due to mass demonstrations and rallies - have only kept the morale just high enough to keep us going. They have not brought about a tangible change.

Thousands who had put their faith in the courts and the much delayed Select Committee report were totally disappointed when the report was finally published. It not only ignored all the sound arguments put forward by the NUM for a complete overhaul of energy policy, the report of the Select Committee on unemployment and the European parliament's reports on energy, but actually went so far as to recommend 6-7 day working and 10-12 hour shifts without proper safety cover.

"To say well done, for half the pits will stay open, is the same as telling those who were facing Nazi gas chambers: well done, still half of you are alive". Arthur Scargill, Nottingham Rally, 30th January 1993.

What we can conclude so far is that not only can we not trust the Tories or British Coal, but above all, not to put faith in the courts, as they have not compelled the government to put the wrongs right.

The leaked letter from PowerGen and National Power to Heseltine regarding their secret negotiations, clearly shows that they have no intention of abandoning the discredited 'dash for gas'.

But we must not forget that only three years ago

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Facts, figures and LIES

Lie

British coal is too expensive compared with other European countries.

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

Coal won't last much longer anyway.

We have plenty of other, cheaper energy resources.

Coal causes pollution: other fuels are safer and cleaner.

Fact

Tonne for tonne British Coal is the cheapest deep mine coal in the world. All the ten pits marked for immediate closure produce coal cheaper than imported. It is only due to massive subsidies that other countries can sell cheaply. France gives £10.99 per tonne, Spain and Germany £39, and Belgium £55! USA and Australia give 150% tax rebate on research and development. The British government gives *nothing* to coal.

Indonesian miners are paid a dollar a day. Columbia uses child labour in its mines and is dumping its coal on the market at artificially low prices to get a grip on the market that it can exploit in the future. Black South African miners are paid a fifth of the wages of white miners. Less is spent on miners' safety in both the USA and Australia than in Britain, and their higher levels of mining accidents and deaths bear stark testimony to this.

There is 45 billion (45,000,000,000) tonnes of recoverable coal in Britain - enough for 300 years.

Oil is given £6 billion subsidy. Proven UK reserves are expected to run out within six years. One estimate says that gas reserves will be exhausted in 20 years, another that all gas for energy generation will have to be imported within 10 years. Powergen has conceded that Coal is cheaper than gas to produce electricity. Nuclear power has a subsidy of £1.3 billion (£1,300,000,000) a year. British coal can produce electricity at a quarter of the price. If British Coal had the same subsidy it could give all its coal away free and still make a profit of over £400 million a year!! If we do have to import energy resources, what are we going to pay for them with? Under the Tories Britain is a debtor nation - we buy more than we sell. Importing energy sources to replace our own would add another £700 million per year to our debt.

Coal can be burnt cleanly. It would cost £2 billion to do. The government will spend £1 billion on miners redundancy payments alone. Oil is dirty and dangerous (remember Piper Alpha) and is imported. In the most efficient gas-fired power stations 50% of the energy is lost into the atmosphere as heat, contributing to global warming. Nuclear Power? Would you move your family next to Sellafield? (or is it Windscale?) It is accepted that the old Magnox Nuclear power stations need to be decommissioned - we don't need more potential Chernobyls to take their place. Deep mine coal is more environmentally friendly than open-cast. British Coal now want to strip mine the sight of Gedling colliery which they closed four years ago.

FACT: It will cost £2,100 million to close the pits. If the pits remained open and this money were used as a subsidy we could sell an extra 25 million tonnes of coal per year, for six years, in the EEC alone - this would mean taking men on, not laying them off. As men are being made redundant from the forces there should be jobs like these for them to take.

FACT: If the pits close with the loss of over 30,000 mining jobs then 17 coal fired power stations will close (7,000 jobs) and 5,000 rail jobs will be lost; thousands more will go in the mining related industries and in the service industries in the communities around all of them. It is like a pebble in a pond - the job losses ripple out well beyond the initial point of entry.

FACT: The Henley Report estimates that the result of closing the pits with the lost resources and cost of unemployment, will be an extra £1,302 million in 1993 on the PSBR (the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement - the amount Britain has to borrow to keep afloat), and a further £1,670 million in 1994.

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

FACT: We can do something about it. When people took to the streets of Warsaw and Prague, Moscow and Manila, Peking and Bucharest, the British Government applauded their efforts for democracy as **People Power**. When they took to the streets of London they were ignored. Ninety per cent of the British people want all the pits to stay open.

Make your voice heard! Join the Campaign! Save all the pits! Save all the jobs!

Women's Pit Camp Vigil



Notts Women Against Pit Closures have now established a pit camp outside Rufford Colliery.

The decision to go ahead was taken at a meeting on the night of Wednesday 20th January and the Camp was in place by Thursday teatime.

Women will remain at the camp round the clock for as long as is necessary.

These pit vigils are a visible sign of the fight against pit closures. They are keeping the pit communities spirit alive, raising public awareness, showing solidarity with the NUM and encouraging others in the fight for jobs, resources and a decent future for ourselves and our children.

On Day One of the Rufford Camp rumours were spreading of a secret deal between the UDM and the government. It was being suggested that the Notts pits might be spared (in exchange for worse conditions and abandonment of safety) because the government owes a debt to the UDM for undermining the 1984/5 strike.

We are not interested in secret deals. Our debt is to those miners and their families who battled on throughout the year long strike facing financial and psychological hardship to gain a better life and more secure future for us all.

We will not give in to divide and rule tactics. Our fight is not only to save Rufford, not only to save the Notts pits, but to save every one of the threatened pits in Britain - and then to start opening new pits! We need the coal; we need the jobs; and we need to maintain our communities.

Since the camp was set up people and donations have been arriving at the camp. **Call and see us.**

Any woman wishing to do a shift on the rota should go to the camp, or phone us on 0831 803546.

Donations should be sent to Freda, 48 Hillside Road, Blidworth, Notts. Cheques payable to "Women Against Pit Closures" (Rufford Account)

I am from Nottingham Women Against Pit Closures, Rufford Camp. It's not just the miners' jobs; it's everyone's in the country.

So come on people, stand and unite. Let's show this government we mean to fight. Think of your families, your mortgages too; Don't let this government shit on you. People power is what we need, To kill this government and their greed. Don't let Heseltine have his way, Call for a bloody Action Day. Have one quick, have one fast; Let them know we're here to last.

**Linda Draycott
Rufford Camp
(Her rousing speech to the Nottingham Rally. 30.1.93)**

**NOT 31! NOT 21! NOT 10! NOT ONE!
NOT A SINGLE PIT CLOSED!
NOT A SINGLE JOB LOST!**

The NUM - Fighting Against Pit Closures

by Keith Stanley
President Notts Area NUM.

The recent report in the UDM newsletter in early January suggests that the UDM alone have tackled the problem of pit closures in the courts, in Europe and in general. This is nothing more than stupidity. They seem to be grasping at straws now to gain any kind of credence to cover up the embarrassment of supporting British Coal and the Government over the last seven years.

The UDM was formed by miners who refused to join the 84/5 miners' strike. Miners nationwide were fighting pit closures then. Do the UDM feel that this time it is a different issue? Or, is it merely because Notts pits are threatened that there is sudden concern? The NUM always warned that this would be the case.

A few facts the newsletter fails to report on ought to be made clear.

It was Arthur Scargill who produced the leaked Portillo/Salisbury document from the DTI forecasting that the closure plan was to be of a very high scale. Immediately, the NUM set the wheels in motion to combat the closure plan. MEPs raised the issue in the European Parliament. The Miners' Parliamentary group, on behalf of the NUM, raised the issue in the Commons.

An NUM delegation met the European Commissioner for Energy to set up opposition to the Government's plans.

In September 1992 the NUM along with NACODS, sought a judicial review of British Coal's proposed Admin pack, which was part of the privatisation and pit closure plan.

On the 15th August 1992 the NUM's special delegate conference agreed to ballot its membership for action if the closure programme continued. The NUM pledged to support all 31 pits: the pledge still stands.

The NUM marched in London, in October, the day of the Miners debate in Parliament. The following Sunday the TUC affiliated NUM was supported by other Trade Unions on the biggest

rally ever seen in the capital. These marches received incredible public sympathy, forcing the government to reverse its scheduled closure plan and review the situation again.

The NUM's 14 point plan to save all 31 pits was produced for the Energy select Committee, and the arguments our union put forward began to enlighten ministers of our case. The case for every pit to stay open was placed before J.Boyd & Co. acting for the Government.

The NUM have had speakers available for every March and Rally during this campaign.

These points alone ridicule the UDM's boasting. If Notts miners really want to fight the pit closures they should join the NUM, who have a history of fighting for their rights and are only too aware of the twists and turns British Coal and the Government might try.

A Message from Cotgrave from Steve Bunting, Cotgrave NUM

I would like to bring your attention to the plight of the Cotgrave miners, and the effects the pit closures will have on their community and families.

The men going to work every day and being sent home is soul destroying. This pit can and should be turning coal, by law.

I see young men walking about the village with nothing to do but worry for the future of their families. This is a daunting outlook for the rest of their lives.

At the same time they make me wonder - those in the UDM, which is the majority union at Cotgrave. They are told lie upon lie, but still they remain with that "union". This is more soul destroying than anything else.

When will they realise that they have been used by very devious people? The very same people who have taken the miners livelihood away to meet their own ends.

The Select Committee Report - A Condemnation - by Arthur Scargill

"It FAILED to recommend phasing out expensive nuclear power, or even the closing of the ageing Magnox stations; FAILED to recommend a halt to subsidised coal imports of 20 million tonnes a year; FAILED to recommend stopping the "dash for gas" which could displace yet another 20 million tonnes of British Coal's market.

Most important of all, and despite overwhelming evidence, the Committee FAILED to recommend that all 31 pits remain open.

It also recommended changed working practices which if implemented would mean a 10 hour day, an extended working week, lower safety standards and still further loss of jobs.

The Select Committee has recommended that the 10 pits under immediate threat of closure should be put

into the Modified Colliery Review Procedure.

While we welcome the recommendation that the 10 pits should restart coaling, we find illogical the failure to recommend that development work should also restart.

The mining and rail unions will lose thousands upon thousands of jobs if the closure plans are not stopped. We have agreed to recommend jointly to our members that they vote on 5th March for a 24 hour stoppage, as part of a rolling programme of industrial action to stop pit and railway closures.

Railway workers, pit deputies and NUM members will be asked to vote YES in defence of their industries and jobs.

We are not fighting alone - this is a fight we can win. I call on every miner to vote YES on 5th March."

Cotgrave Fights Back

On Sunday 31st January a March and Rally took place in Cotgrave. Up to 600 people took part. People from the North East, Stoke-on-Trent, Yorkshire, London and others.

Bob Anderson from Trentham spoke about keeping ALL pits open, and asked for miners to unite and fight against pit closures under the NUM.

Arthur Scargill condemned the Select Committee report, saying that any report that says ANY pits are to close cannot be any good. He also called for industrial action.

A vote is to take place on March 5th. This is the miners' Alamo. If we do not stand and fight we shall be beaten. Pits will close. Communities will be run down. Many people will be put on the dole - maybe for the rest of their lives. What a future to look forward to!

Support the call on March 5th.

And think of the "little people" like Bob Anderson told you.

Give them a future.

Mick Chewings, President Cotgrave NUM.

A Message To The UDM

How can you members of the UDM trust your leadership, when after meeting John Major P.M., saying they were owed a "favour" because of 84/85, they did not trust the government. Yet the following week, after meeting Tim Eggar (Energy Minister) said they would change working practices to save your jobs, not only at Cotgrave, but at the 10 pits under immediate threat.

Q. Did they do all this with your knowledge and blessing?

A. No! They capitulated (gave in) for a longer shift, extended by 33%, and 6-7 day working with no safety cover (i.e. deputies).

Higher output will not only put your lives at risk, but miners throughout the country at risk also.

Ask yourselves, do you really want this? We in the NUM are fighting for the survival of all our collieries. We will not compromise in any shape or form, either with this unfeeling government or the ruthless British Coal. When at war you don't surrender half way through. Your leadership wants to on your behalf. Do you? If not, join the NUM. A Union to be reckoned with.

Warning : Do not trust the Tories or British Coal.

Above all, don't put faith in the courts.

Russ Johnson. Secretary Cotgrave NUM.

To Be-nefit or Not to Be-nefit?

The Realities of Redundancy!

Thinking about taking the money and running. Here's something else to think about.

Unemployment Benefit

Payable for one year only (possibly six months from next year) - if you've got enough stamps.

How much?	Single person:	£43.10
	Couple:	£69.70 (no extra for children)

Income Support

This is to top up (not as well as) Unemployment Benefit, and only payable if you have capital of less than £3,000. If you have savings of £3,000-£8,000 a proportion is payable; over £8,000 - nothing. Redundancy doesn't count as capital for the first year, but some of it could be counted as wages for up to three months, thus disqualifying you from Unemployment Benefit and Income Support for that period.

After a year redundancy does count as capital. If you use some of it to pay off debts or buy a "luxury" item (this has included such things as your home!) you could also be disqualified for "unreasonable disposal of assets".

How Much?	18-25:	£33.60
	Over 25:	£42.45
	Couple:	£66.70
	Child under 11:	£14.55
	Child 11-15:	£21.40
	Child 16-17:	£25.55

Child Benefit is deducted from these amounts. Child Benefit is only applicable for children still at school - e.g. A couple with 2 children under 11 get a total weekly income, including Child Benefit, of £95.80)

Rent

This will be rebated in full - though some landlords are not happy to rent to those in receipt of Housing Benefit.

Mortgage

1/2 interest only for four months; then interest only.

IF EITHER OF A COUPLE WORK FOR SIXTEEN HOURS OR MORE A WEEK THEN THEY CANNOT CLAIM INCOME SUPPORT AT ALL.

Can you live on this? Ask those who are trying to. How long would you have to live on benefits? Scores, in some cases hundreds, of people are already chasing every job. True unemployment figures stand at over 4 million, and are rising. Many have been unemployed for over five years. Can you guarantee yourself another job? Ever?

Besides, taking "voluntary" redundancy means selling a job that is not your property to sell. It belongs to all of us, mostly to our children.

Think about it.

Laura Flewitt, who wrote the poem below is the daughter and grand-daughter of miners. A "trapper" was the person employed to open and close the gates through which the carts had to travel carrying coal from the face to the shaft.

The Pit from a trappers point
of view

In my mouse hole, opening the gate for passing carts
I can hear the screaming of a child dying in pain.
My ropes seem to have come alive,
I feel tired and frightened.
A girl drops down from pushing the carts, ^{of bed.} dreaming
My master is strict, mean and nasty,
He will beat me if I fall asleep.
A boy comes through with a cut right down his cheek.
I can not feel my legs but I know they are there,
They are curled up tight under my body.
I hear a cave in.
It comes closer and closer.
I want to get out and run -
I am trapped.

by Laura Flewitt
age 9

BLOOD ON THE COAL

Laura has written about the suffering of the children who worked in the coal mines of Britain, not so very long ago.

We like to think that we are now more civilised, humane and enlightened, and no longer allow our children to face such hardship.

But what is civilised about throwing the miner fathers of today's children onto the dole; reducing their families to poverty and despair, and destroying their communities?

How can we have clean hands when we import coal from countries that use children as young as 5 years old to dig that coal? In providing the market we participate in and encourage the suffering, ill health and early deaths of those children.

Some say that mining is no fit work for men either, and it will be a god thing for all mines to close. It is a hard, dirty and dangerous job. But because we have needed coal, generations of miners have given their strength, their health, and too often their lives to fuel the country's needs. Shall we reward them by forcing them and their families into that poverty which also brings ill health and early death?

Instead we should employ the means to make mining safer and cleaner - this can be done (though not by privatisation, which has 5 times the injury and death rate of our present mines; profit being more important to the owners than the welfare of the workers).

We will continue to need coal for many years ahead. Just as miners, and all working men and women continue to need jobs.

The strength, bravery and sacrifice of miners, their families and communities has long been recorded in songs, poems, plays and novels. Let us not now destroy lives, communities, resources and our heritage through callous stupidity, greed, political expediency - or apathy.

THE MINERS' FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT