

## THE LESSON FOR TODAY...

And lo, he came from Bilsthorpe unto Thoresby and was proclaimed the new Messiah.

And he did sayeth to the people gathered there "Behold, for I have come to banish sickness from amongst you".

And the people did rejoice and shout "Alleluia" and "Praise the Lord".

But there was a voice in the crowd who said "Wait. Why do you rejoice? Have you heard the new so-called Messiah right?"

(They had not heard, because all the crowd had just had deafness claims settled).

"He has come to banish sick NOTES"

And the crowd then became angry and disillusioned, and were heard to mutter as they dispersed "That's it. I'm going to rejoin the NUM". Amen.

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## A VICTORY FOR AUSSIE MINERS

from an article by Peter Colley in Trade Union News (Jan./Feb. 1996)

On 21st November 1995 one of Australia's largest public companies, CRA Ltd., was forced to make major concessions to the union movement.

In emergency hearings before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission the company agreed to pay an immediate 8% wage rise backdated to March 1994 to striking unionists at its bauxite and kaolin minesite at Weipa in far northern Australia. The concession came after major strike action which was snowballing across a number of industries. The strikes were led by the Maritime Union of Australia which called 20,000 members out on a 5 day shipping and waterfront strike, and by the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union which called out 25,000 mineworkers in a 7 day national coal strike.

A workforce of about 500 mineworkers at the Weipa mine was denied a wage rise from 1991. From about 1993 the company began offering employees 15% or more pay rises if they signed individual documents which forfeited their right to be represented by a union. A majority of the workforce accepted, but a solid core of about 75 workers refused to sign the contracts.

The 75 workers went on strike and staged an innovative 'floating picket'

of small boats to prevent ships from loading cargoes at the mine port.

Battle was joined swiftly after the issuing of writs for damages against the striking mineworkers on 10th November. Key unions agreed to lead a massive campaign of industrial disruption that was not limited to the mining industry. A 5 day waterfront strike commenced, as did the aforementioned 7 day national coal strike. Metal, manufacturing, power station, transport and other unions announced plans for industrial action in support of the CRA workers.

Under enormous pressure, and unable to rapidly respond to the fast pace of events, the company agreed to a backdated wage rise and to further arbitration on outstanding matters by the evening of that day.

A major tactical victory has been achieved. One of Australia's biggest companies has been publically shown to be discriminating against its unionised employees and it has been forced to negotiate with Trades Unions and change its position.

Just as importantly, the union movement in Australia has demonstrated that it still has a capacity to fight collectively and on a large scale in the face of a direct attack, and that it can win.

### DAVEY JONES MEMORIAL

Members of NCAPC were in Barnsley on March 9th for the annual march and lecture (given this year by Tony Benn).

On 14th March they attended the wreath laying at the gates of Ollerton Colliery, where Davey's father, friends from Frickley Colliery and Notts. Justice for Mineworkers stood in silence to remember his death on the picket line in 1984.

Our thoughts were also with the children, teachers, families and community of Dunblane.

## An Injury to One - is an Injury to All

# The Miners Next Step

May 1996

Issue 7

# BALLOT RESULT DILEMMA

Henry Richardson, General Secretary, Notts. NUM

The recent ballot result rejecting the NEC's recommendation for a series of 24 hour stoppages is regrettable.

Mainly on the fact that the membership's failure to support the Union on this occasion will only encourage RJB Mining to be even more anti-union. The company will undoubtedly interpret the result as support for the company and a defeat for the Union.

RJB Mining are renowned for their anti-union stance and will, in light of this ballot result, undoubtedly in the future put on the screws and impose many unsavoury conditions on the miners.

RJB has terminated all conciliation agreements with all unions; NUM, BACM, NACODS and UDM.

Until we have one strong union, which should be the majority NUM, and we fight and obtain a conciliation agreement and collective bargaining rights miners will (like in the old days of privatisation) be subject to

the whims and wishes of the employer. Unfortunately RJB are not prepared to negotiate collective bargaining rights, and we won't get it unless we are prepared to fight for it. Sooner or later, if miners are to survive, that fight will have to take place!

In order to protect jobs a strong union will be required. In 1997 RJB will be negotiating new contracts with the power companies. If RJB fail to get the right terms (and the power companies will be dictating those terms) then huge job losses will ensue in this area. If we have no conciliation or bargaining rights then the union will be unable to protect our members' jobs.

Remember! Privatisation is nowhere to work for the miners' interests, but is there for the benefit of the shareholders.

Hard times are coming and the miners need a strong influential union.

Think about it!

## THE BALLOT - A PERSONAL VIEW

After the recent ballot result against possible industrial action, I personally think that we have lost an excellent opportunity to regain some of the ground lost on basic pay and conciliation after the tyrannical attitudes we have had to suffer since 1984, including the 5 year pay freeze.

However, the ballots have not been a waste of time. I was at the meeting at NUM headquarters in Barnsley when Richard Budge proposed a further 4 years pay freeze. When it was decided to hold the first ballot that was reduced to 1 year. When the ballot result was announced in favour of action back came the offer of a

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## REMEMBER YOUR CLASS

Keith Stanley, Notts. NUM Area President

**After 17 years of a Conservative government the country is now ready for a change. The Labour Party is riding high in the opinion polls and hopefully it has learned from bitter instances in the past that there can be no complacency whatsoever in the run-up to the next election. The Tory government has got to go.**

The new Labour government will have to look at a whole host of problems the Tories will leave behind. But I believe that high on that agenda must be reforms to the Employment Act, and workers' rights to become much stronger after years of deprivation in Tory Britain.

The radical changes that the Tories made to the Employment Act have been nothing more than a vicious attack on Trades Unionism in Britain. The pit closure programme after 1984/85 and the rebirth of the programme in 1992 was hailed by many as a revenge attack on the NUM for its part in overthrowing the 1974 Heath government. I for one will be glad to see the back of them. I only hope that when they are ousted that the Labour Party would look seriously at reforms to the Employment Act so that Trades Unions can play an active role in Tony Blair's New Britain.

I have very grave reservations though in some aspects that are already materialising. There is a strong possibility that the Labour Party and the TUC will be happy to adopt a 50%+1 for Trades Unions to gain recognition, instead of every Trades Union having the right to be recognised.

If this is the case then I would like to mark a couple of instances where this kind of decision would be wrong. Take Asfordby Colliery in Leicestershire where the workforce is practically divided down the middle in their loyalties to different unions. The UDM have a very very slight majority at the pit. If the Labour Party do agree to the change, then almost half the workforce at Asfordby would be without Union recognition. How can the TUC and the Labour Party consider allowing that to be so?

We have a problem in the Notts. area also. Each of the Notts. pits have UDM majorities; although, with contractors playing a big role in the running of the mines, it means that the NUM in Notts. represent a good number of the workforce. A very large proportion of the NUM membership is of coal face and development workers, who I believe are in potentially the most dangerous places underground because they work with and around exposed roof conditions etc. Again, if the Labour Party and TUC accept 50%+1 for recognition then these people will be denied any kind of union representation. The situation, I believe, is something of a nonsense, and we need to be correcting the issue under a Labour government.

The Notts. NUM have resolutions to its National Conference on the subject and hopefully there will be acceptance so that the National officials, through the miners' parliamentary group, can rectify the matter and give workers the right to choose which union they wish to be members of and have recognition.

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pay increase, extra holiday pay, profit related pay and more shares. Quite some difference.

But it could have been better. Particularly on guaranteed basic pensionable pay.

Let's not forget though the equally important issue of conciliation.

The disciplinary system is being used more and more severely and aggressively; and under the present system, if an appeal against action is requested, that appeal is heard and judged by a panel of RJB management from another area. You can make up your own minds as to the likely impartiality of such a hearing.

The previous conciliation scheme served us well for 40 years. So there can't have been that much wrong with it.

Consider this issue seriously. Don't wait until you fall foul of the system and then start asking questions.

The NUM can only fight for change if it is given the support of its members. Don't underestimate the power of that support. The results of your support in the first ballot show you that much.

**Pete Bignall**  
**Thoresby Branch Delegate**

**Once again we are saddened by the death of a miner killed whilst working at Thoresby Colliery.**

**N.C.A.P.C. extends its sympathy and condolences to the family and friends of Ronnie Cowans.**

## NUM WEEKEND SCHOOL

by Pete Bignall

**On the 4th and 5th November last there was a weekend school held at the Yorkshire Miners Convalescence Home at Scalby, Scarborough.**

The speakers were Peter Heathfield, former NUM Vice-President, John Hendy Q.C., and Seumas Milne, author of 'The Enemy Within', an account of the attempt to blacken the names of Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and the NUM by the press and security services.

Peter Heathfield gave an interesting and often amusing talk revolving around his experiences as an official of the NUM at both branch and national level.

John Hendy QC spoke about the law and the ways it is used against Trades Unions. These included the extension of the period of employment required to qualify for a claim for unfair dismissal from 6 months in 1979 to the present, when one needs to have been in a job for 2 years before an unfair dismissal claim can be lodged. A third of workers do not qualify.

He spoke of the removal by the Tories of standardised terms of conditions, which was used to smash teachers' national pay bargaining rights; the abolition of minimum terms and conditions, and contracts of compliance for local authority work tenders, and how increasing self-employment is being used to hire people on a casual basis, as is again happening to dock workers.

John Hendy explained about changes to health and safety laws, changes in the law relating to unions,

and the setting up of a fund called C.R.O.T.U.M. by right-wing groups to encourage members to sue their own unions.

All this is being done to undermine your union power and drive down wages to save employers' money. Indeed, the Tories are boasting around the world that the British are the lowest paid in Western Europe.

Seumas Milne spoke of the role the media plays in anti-Trades Unionism. How they have highlighted, exaggerated and even practically invented bad news about unions, but give little or no coverage to the victories and rising unrest and determination among union members at present.

He spoke of how the government rushed through new legislation after Daily Mail workers won a court case preventing pay discrimination after refusing new contracts.

Seumas also spoke of a slush fund of cash set up by Ronald Reagan and the CIA through which millions of dollars were channelled through organisations such as the Jim Conway Fund to undermine unions and workers throughout the world - in South African mining unions, against workers in Spain and Latin America - and how such monies and organisations were used against us in the 84/85 strike and since.

Altogether it was an enjoyable and informative weekend, and I would urge any branch officials who get the chance to attend these schools; not least for the opportunity to meet and exchange views with members from other areas. I guarantee that they would echo my enthusiastic opinions on these gatherings.

## COSTS OF BULLYING

**Management bullies are costing British business billions of pounds, and the bill could rise, experts have warned.**

Estimates put the number of working days lost through stress at 40 million a year; costing businesses up to £40 billion in lost efficiency.

Psychologist Charlotte Rayner (Staffordshire University) told a teaching conference that bullying managers were one of the biggest causes.

Victims are not just the weak and incompetent. "Don't think it couldn't happen to you. It may be only a matter of luck".

Types of bullies:

**The Focussed Exploder** shouts at weak members of staff because they feel they can get away with it.

**Personal Dislikers** target staff they do not like or who are under-performing.

**Threat Responders** bully staff they think might pose a threat to their own position.

**Anger Parcel Passers** say 'my boss is bullying me, so my staff can have some too.'

**Deliberate Bullies** think giving staff a hard time will see good results.

**Exasperated Bullies** have tried being nice to staff, but it hasn't worked.

**Sadistic Bullies** just enjoy it.

**Resignation Seekers** deliberately make life hell for staff they want to resign.

**Macho Image Seekers** feel being seen to bully their staff is essential to bolster their own position.

An unpublished survey of law firms throughout the country (Professor Cooper, Manchester University) showed that Industrial Relations cases sparked by management bullying were the fastest growing category of civil action, accounting for nearly 1 in 3.