

COAL

Current Situation

44 pits are working normally and 14 partially. Over 60,000 working in the coalfields, approximately 30% of the total workforce. Increasing number of miners returning to work in several areas. Coal stocks remain sufficient for several months and have reduced in recent weeks by only 1½% a week.

The Way Forward

The only way to a prosperous future for the coal industry lies in co-operation between the management and the workforce. The Chairman of the National Coal Board has expressed his willingness to continue talks with the National Union of Mineworkers along the lines of those at Edinburgh on 8 June. I urge the National Union of Mineworkers to take up that invitation.

Offer to Miners

1. A pay offer keeping them 25% above the national average.
2. No compulsory redundancies.
3. A record voluntary redundancy scheme in which over 20,000 miners have now expressed an interest.

Effect on Steel

Nowhere is the idiocy of a strike to save jobs more apparent than in the steel industry. Thousands of coal miners' jobs in South Wales depend upon the Llanwern steel works. Yet the NUM is trying to close it down. Will the Opposition explain why they are supporting striking miners against working steel workers?

Cost of the Dispute: a Billion Pound Strike?

The figures which have been quoted in the press are entirely speculative. In any event, the once and for all public expenditure cost of the current dispute is small by comparison with the continuing cost of failing to tackle the coal industry's underlying problems. Huge subsidies from the taxpayer, which last year totalled £130 per miner, per week, would be required year after year.

The Effects of the Coal Strike

- i) Pits are being put at risk: faces have been lost at Rossington, Bold, Tilmanstone and Goldthorpe.
- ii) Orders are being lost. In the second quarter of last year 169 firms applied for coal conversion grants. In the same 3 months this year there have been more withdrawals than applications.
- iii) Potential exports are being lost to the continent.
- iv) Miners have lost over £350 million in wages.

Energy Secretary offer to act as mediator

My RHF said that he was prepared to chair a joint meeting when the NCB and NUM had decided on what points from Plan for Coal they wished to put to him. That has always been the position.

3 July 1984



BRIEFING FOR PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS: 3 JULY 1984

COAL INDUSTRY DISPUTE: NUMBERS AT WORK

Line to take

- Nearly a third of all employees in the coal industry are continuing to work day after day.
- Attendances at individual pits continue to rise. In North Derbyshire today Shirebrook and Warsop both have their highest attendances in the dispute so far, despite massive picketing. Bolsover continues to have over 200 men on the day shift each day.
- Last week the average improvement in attendances of mineworkers on the day shift at those pits which were not on holiday was over 700. Yesterday the number of mineworkers attending at those pits which were not on holiday improved by 200 compared with the previous Monday.
- This week we are into the industry's prime holiday period, with 14 pits on holiday which would normally be working.
- I hope that those striking miners who have so far lost £350m in wages will reflect on what they and their industry are being asked to sacrifice for Mr Scargill's obdurate convictions.
- The NCB have made clear their readiness to continue talk. . . Far from responding, Mr Scargill prefers to continue putting miners' and others' jobs at risk.



Background

1. The NCB are now preparing systematic daily figures for the main categories of NCB manpower to enable attendances, adjusted for holidays, to be compared week by week.
2. The figures show that 20% of NUM members at pit and Area levels are continuing to work, while for all employees at pit and Area levels the figure is about 27%, and for the industry as a whole the figure is about 30%.
3. On Monday, the attendance of NUM members at pits not on holiday improved by 198 on the previous Monday; of these, 99 were strikers returning to work. On today's day shift, provisional figures adjusted for holidays show an increase in NUM attendance of 91 of whom 23 are returnees.



TEXT OF PRESS NOTICE ISSUED BY NCB (SOUTH WALES), 29 JUNE 1984

NCB South Wales area director Philip Weekes today (29 June) asked South Wales miners to ignore "outside interference with our affairs" and to call off their picket of Llanwern steel works. Mr Weekes declared "Miners in Gwent and throughout South Wales should examine what their national leaders are instructing them to do and they should take rapid action to stop it. They are being asked to wreck two great industries in the county of Gwent - the Llanwern steel works and the collieries of Oakdale, Markham, Abertillery, Blaenserchan, Marine, 6 Bells and the Celynens, on which the plant has depended, accounting for 9000 jobs in steel and coal. Llanwern is now finding that it can no longer rely on Gwent coal and that there is better fuel available from other sources. It is patently clear that we depend on Llanwern, they do not have to depend on us. We must resume the movement of Welsh coal and coke into Llanwern, and do it quickly, because what is happening now amounts to industrial fratricide, brother killing brother in a war of industrial madness."

Mr Weekes continued, "It is utterly insane and completely unjustified; 1mt of coal a year comes exclusively from Gwent pits and miners have sons and daughters working in Llanwern. I do not think they should now be persuaded by Mr Scargill to commit industrial suicide. South Wales miners' leaders have recognised Llanwern's crucial importance to the coalfield, Mr Scargill clearly does not, nor does he seem to care how much damage he is likely to inflict on the county of Gwent where there are 4,500 miners and a similar number of steel workers. Mr Scargill endlessly repeats his opposition to all pit closures, but his attitude to Llanwern and the rest of the steel industry constitutes a bigger threat to the life of pits in Gwent and elsewhere than any set of circumstances it is possible to imagine. Miners, steelworkers, railmen and everyone else in South Wales should unite in rigorous opposition to intrusion in our concerns which could be ruinous for us all."



BRIEFING FOR PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS: 3 JULY 1984

COAL INDUSTRY DISPUTE

Additional Background

There are 35(+10) pits working normally this morning; 5(+3) are turning some coal; 4(+1) have some men working, and 109(+8) are idle. Figures in brackets represent pits on holiday that would normally be expected to be in these categories.

Parsonage (Lancashire) has moved from the second to the first category today for the first time since the Lancashire NUM threatened working miners with suspension.

In North Derbyshire, Shirebrook and Warsop both have their highest attendances in the dispute so far: Shirebrook has 88 men (and 300 pickets), Warsop has 47 men (including 6 new faces this morning) despite around 1000 pickets. Bolsover continues to have over 200 men on the day shift each day (218 today). Markham and Renishaw Park also have small numbers of men working.

Picketing outside North Derbyshire is light this morning: only 2 pits in Nottinghamshire have more than 100 pickets, and in Lancashire a moving picket of around 150 men has been at 3 pits this morning.

Following yesterday's decision by the TUC Steel Industry Committee not to accede to NUM pleas for a halt to steel production, the NUM met transport unions last night in Llandudno, where the NUR annual conference is taking place. That meeting resulted in a reaffirmation of support for the NUM from the transport unions.

This morning the first iron ore convoy of the day moved unhindered from Port Talbot to Llanwern. Over 100 lorries were involved, but there were only token pickets at each site.