

Prime Minister ①

Daily Coal Report - Monday 11 February 1985

35 ^{AT} 11/2

	<u>Number</u>
(i) Working normally	50
(ii) Turning some coal	30
(iii) Some men present	75
(iv) On strike/picketed out	19

By 6.00 pm 1,190 new faces had reported, compared to 2,323 last week. Considering the weather conditions this was a reasonably good total.

Area attendances were as follows:-

			<u>Change on</u> <u>last Monday</u>
Scotland	(24 hr attendance)	4,740	+ 385
North East	(24 hr attendance)	7,304	+ 544
Yorkshire	(24 hr attendance)	6,528	+ 577
North Derbyshire	(24 hr attendance)	6,232	+ 152
Western	(morning shift)	6,339	- 333
South Wales	(morning shift)	385	+ 21
Kent	(morning shift)	167	+ 11

Coal Movements

920,000 tonnes were moved last week, of which 607,000 went to the CEGB.

? 245 coal trains ran.

Law and Order

No major disorder though heavy picketing in Yorkshire coinciding with the "day of action" in that area.

NACODS

The NACODS national executive will meet tomorrow to consider the Coal Board's response to last Thursday's joint call by NACODS and the NUM for a resumption of negotiations.

South Wales NUM

The South Wales NUM is to hold a coalfield conference on Wednesday to discuss the strike situation.

High Court

The High Court today granted an injunction to South Wales working miners limiting the number of pickets at each of five named pits in the area. The order was made against the South Wales area NUM. The Judge also granted three individual working miners injunctions preventing the union organising pickets near their homes. He also ruled that a South Wales area resolution to pay all fines of members convicted picket line offences was "void", but said the union had the power to consider individual cases and to pay fines if this was thought to be in the interests of the union or members.

The Judge refused to grant injunctions against the NUM nationally or against members of the national strike co-ordinating committee. He also refused to grant injunctions banning secondary picketing or the spending of union funds on picketing.

The outcome in this case may be relevant to the similar application against mass picketing being pursued by Yorkshire miners, hearing of which is due to start in the High Court tomorrow.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

Line to Take

As Friday.

Distribution: Members of MISC 101, Paymaster General
Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr Gregson (Cabinet Office)

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SECRET AND PERSONAL

From DAVID HART

(11 Feb 85)

THE FINAL PUSH.

Like the snow, the last few weeks of the dispute must be endured bravely. We are on the brink of a great victory. If we don't throw it away at the last moment. Much greater than the Falkands because the enemy within is so much harder to conquer.

The NUM is collapsing around Scargill. COSA are going to call for an emergency NEC meeting early this week. (They may not get it). The South Wales Area delegates meet on Tuesday and will hear calls for an orderly, union led return to work. They will probably be mandated by that conference to call for such at the next NEC meeting. Scargill tries to postpone last week's NEC meeting and is forced by his NEC members to hold it. Roy Ottey publishes his memoirs in the Telegraph highly critical of Scargill. This and much more demonstrates that we are in the closing stages.

The anger and disappointment of the Scargillites and those who have a sneaking sympathy for the predicament he has created for himself (some in the government) must be allowed to wash against the rock of our determination until it is dissipated.

I wrote in an earlier note that there was a danger that public opinion, loyal to your aims in the miners' dispute, might suddenly turn. I proposed that we adopt tough measures to force men back to work and so end the dispute before that happened. I agree that there are considerable political dangers. But the greater danger is in prolonging the dispute beyond the tolerance of the public. We have not arrived at that point but I sense an unease in the street. People are bored of the strike. Bored of miners. People know that Scargill is utterly unreasonable. They cannot understand why he hasn't been defeated already. This doesn't mean that the street wants us to give in.

The NCB has held an admirably firm and unusually consistent position for the last two weeks (excepting MacGregor's not so private exchanges with Willis) requiring some kind of plain, written confirmation from the NUM that it will discuss and eventually accept the NCB's right to manage the industry and its right, after going through the Colliery Review Procedure as amended in the NACODS agreement, to close uneconomic pits.

Any backing-down from this position could be fatal to the outcome of the dispute and would be seen as a defeat for you personally since you have so clearly underlined the need for written assurances from the union. (It would also have a detrimental effect on the pound. Any weakening of resolve would be seen by the international financial community as a sign that you had lost your grip on affairs or else that the country was ungovernable).

The NCB position is tough. And is seen by the street to be. But the street knows that it is the right position.

Despite mighty efforts by Scargill and his sympathisers in the media to demonstrate that the Government and the NCB are intransigent, the position is utterly reasonable.

This doesn't mean that will-to-lose salon opinion will see it like that. And they might persuade public opinion if we do not explain ourselves properly. A substantial propaganda effort should be undertaken by Mike Eaton and Ministers this week to explain the reasonableness of the NCB position. (I have got MacGregor to agree to the NCB effort) They must be consistent with each other. There really is no point in Walker and Hunt seeming to be more conciliatory than the NCB as they did in Monday's debate. Indeed such obvious differences prolong the agony. Had we been more united Scargill might not have been able to pull the NACODS wool over the NEC's eyes at last week's meeting. NEC members would probably have forced Scargill to discuss what they wanted to discuss - an ordered return to work.

MacGregor's flirtation with the TUC also prolongs the agony. Everything is reported to Kinnock and Scargill. MacGregor offers too much. By his behaviour he entitles Scargill to think that if he just holds on a little longer the NCB may lose its nerve and make concessions. Scargill has always been a desperate man. Cornered, he is even more desperate. As his embrace of NACODS and the NACODS agreement shows. At various times recently he has publicly dismissed them both with contempt.

The street should be reminded that Scargill started this strike and by publicly refusing to contemplate the closure of uneconomic pits, despite the unprecedented redundancy arrangements, challenged the NCB's right to manage the industry. No management worthy of the name can bow down beneath such a challenge. Certainly not a management that is financed by the taxpayer. As representatives of the taxpayer the Government cannot allow the NCB to surrender. The nation does not owe miners a living. Yes, the NCB has taken a tough position. It has had to because Scargill has been so utterly unreasonable. To match toughness with toughness. Scargill has always been tough. Until now the NCB has, in fact, been conciliatory. (Another reason why public opinion is bored. It likes tough leadership).

The street could also be reminded that the present dispute is the result of countless previous fudges in the industry and had there been a clear and plain agreement it might not have happened at all. Hence the need for a clear settlement.

It is true that Scargill manages again and again to put off the evil hour. But he will run out of excuses, of feints, of a sufficiency of energy. And all the time his ears ring with the tramp of his members feet going back to work.

There are three possible ways for the strike to end.

1. Scargill will remain at the head of a dwindling, but militant band who remain on strike for much longer than most of his members.

His preferred solution. If he cannot negotiate a victory.

There would come a time when the strike was over, de facto, but it would mean no formal ending. The TUC would be against this as would the Labour party. It is a possible but unlikely scenario.

2. The NUM Executive will negotiate a settlement unequivocally conceding the right to the NCB to close uneconomic pits.

Not whilst Scargill is in charge. In any case, it is not just Scargill who is against accepting the principal of uneconomic pit closures. Most of the NEC are also publicly against, though an uncreasing number (but not by any means a majority) would accept the concept and make an agreement if it remained private. This, of course, is out of the question.

Unless the NCB cave in, a negotiated settlement is increasingly unlikely.

And undesirable. We are already seeing the weakness of the NACODS settlement in the conflicting public statements of the NCB and the NACODS leadership. Because it is a fudge both sides are entitled to claim, as they are, that it means what they want it to mean. As time passed and the weakness of a similar settlement with the NUM or the weaknesses of the concessions already made to the NUM inevitably became more apparent, people would be entitled to wonder why so much effort had been put into resisting Scargill during the strike if he was to be appeased by fudge in the subsequent peace.

3. The NUM will lead its men back to work with no settlement.

The principal motive of the NUM proponents of the ordered return concept is to avoid a break up of the union consequent upon its humiliation. They will echo Scargill's line on last Monday's Panorama that even if the miners are starved back to work they have already won because they have managed to stay out for so long. And they believe that they can defy pit closures on a pit by pit basis. (They cannot) Scargill is against such a return.

Provided the Government and the NCB remain firm this is the most likely outcome of the strike. It is the best option for us. First, it will be an unequivocally clear victory. Second, by effectively returning the industry to the status quo ante, it will bring into stark relief the utter pointlessness of the strike. For the membership of the NUM. For the country. Scargill will be blamed. Scargillism will be discredited. And MacGregor will be able to manage the business and close uneconomic pits.

David Hart. 11th Feb 1985.