

**COAL
NOT DOLE**

Introduction

The future of our pits and towns is threatened today as never before.

The Government and NCB are determined that 70,000 jobs and 70 pits will go. With them will go our villages.

And that will not be the end. The Tories would like to privatise the coal industry. They are trying to turn the clock back 40 years. They are trying to destroy the nationalised industry past generations fought for.

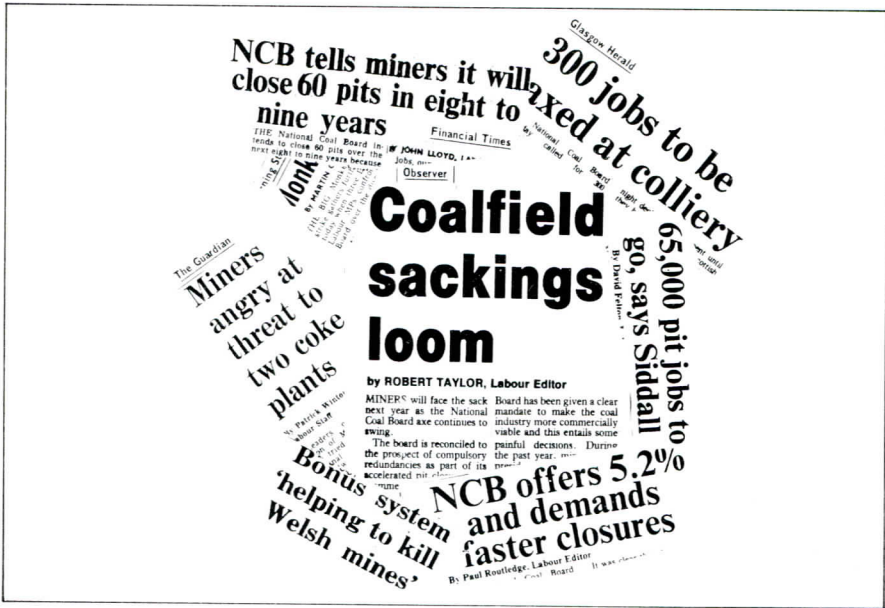
But there is an alternative.

We should have a properly supported nationalised coal industry.

Even without economic recovery, huge new industrial, commercial and domestic markets are available for coal. The nuclear programme must be stopped. Exports could be increased.

With more markets for coal and better ways of producing it, working hours underground could be shortened. Miners could retire earlier.

The cold wind blowing through the coalfield is bringing a message of doom. But we must fight for our alternative: coal for the country, not dole for the miners.



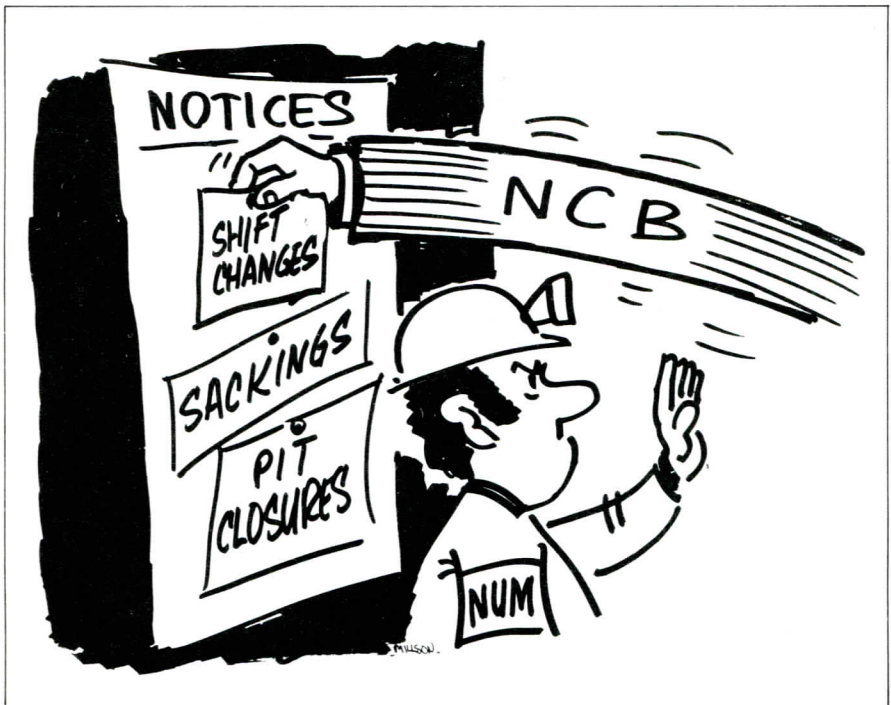
The tough and harsh new regime in the industry has brought closures and sterilisation, harassment and sackings. Since Ian MacGregor started as the new Chairman of the Coal Board on 1st September, 1983, the screws have been turned on pits and works:

- The rate of redundancies has been stepped up – it is now 450 per week.
- The rate of pit and works closure has increased.
- Big modern pits as well as smaller pits are in the firing line as:
 - machine shifts are cut back drastically;
 - developments are shelved and seams closed.
- Consultation is being broken off and agreements torn up.
- Union Branch Officers face stepped-up harassment.
- Large valuable coal reserves are being mothballed.

And now the Board Chairman wants changes made to the Plan for Coal which would eliminate all units where coal production costs more than £60 per tonne. This would mean the closure of 44 pits – signing the death warrant for collieries throughout the coalfields.

Divide and rule tactics are being used across the coalfield as the NCB tries to set miner against miner, pit against pit, area against area. The bonus scheme, transfer allowances and redundancy payments are the wedges driven between men.

- The bonus scheme cuts earnings at low investment pits. It increases them at high investment pits. No wonder men are so eager to transfer.
- Transfer payments tempt men to transfer from pit to pit.
- Redundancy pay seems a large sum of money. No wonder men are tempted to sell their jobs, and those of future generations. But it doesn't last long and cannot substitute for doing a skilled job well.





Colliery closures kill the community.

- The Government's plans to cut back the coal industry will only create more unemployment in already hard hit areas. In many mining areas unemployment is already 20 per cent.
- Even the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report has said:
"We recognise that the closure of high cost collieries would have serious implications for employment in some of the most depressed regions of Great Britain."
- With the death of a pit come other closures — shops, local businesses and leisure amenities. The loss of spending power in a town losing 700 jobs has been estimated at £2m a year. Bankruptcies and closures are inevitable.



Photo by Keith Brookes

- Not only small businesses, but also larger companies will be affected. Engineering and wire, for example, will be forced to cut back production once the pits have closed.
- Alongside this, the Government is already cutting back on public services. With less rates from the industry, local councils will have little choice but to close schools and libraries. They will be forced to cut social services in the area, at a time when these are most needed.
- Unemployment causes stress, suffering, increased ill health, more suicides and increased crime.
- Research put to the House of Lords shows that a rise in unemployment of one million over five years will increase the death rate by 50,000.
- This means even more crowded doctors' surgeries and hospitals.

But there is always Social Security. Or is there? With successive Government cuts and changes in rules, Social Security is now worth less and harder to get.

- If you have £2,500 of savings or redundancy pay you don't qualify for supplementary benefit at all.
- If you do qualify, the levels of payment are too low for a decent standard of living

3 *In the corridors of power*

PIT SALE PLAN BY MAGGIE

**Privatization of coal, rail, post and
electricity urged by bank review**

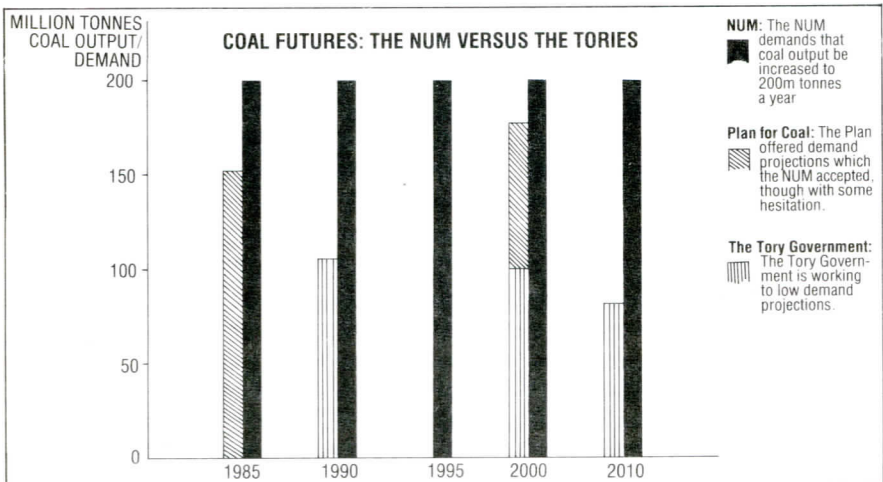
**Coal Board may lose
£200m in grants**

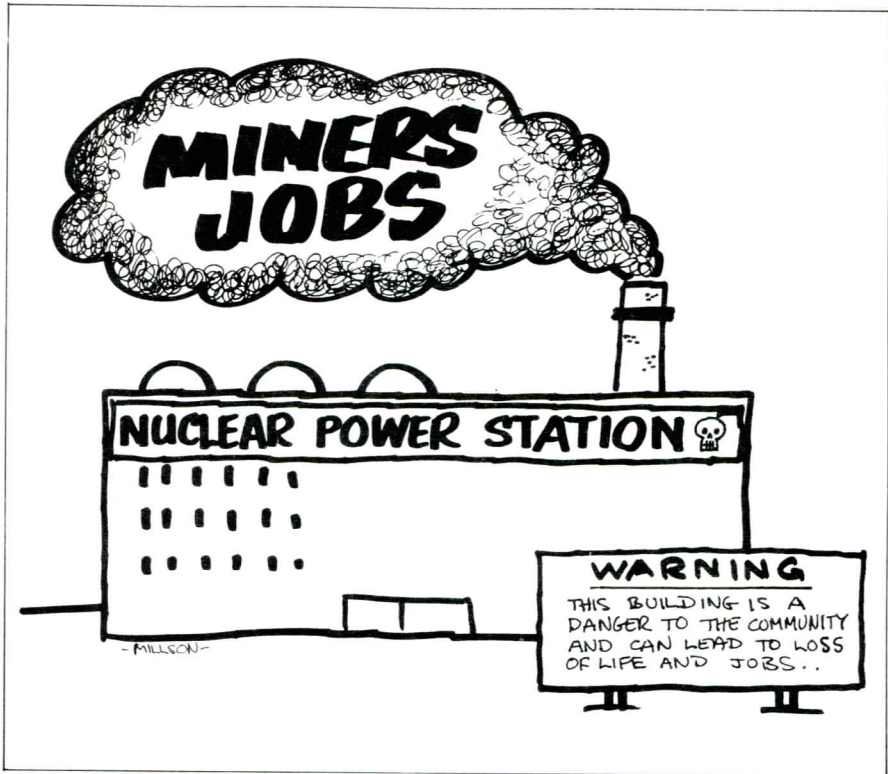
It is clear that the Tory Government is laying plans to decentralise and privatise our coal industry.

- No one wants to return to the days of the private coal-owners. Accident rates were high, and medical care for injured miners was poor. Wages were low. Hours were often long. Sometimes there was no work. Private owners starved the pits of investment. Miners fought for decades to get the coal industry nationalised.
- But shortly after his appointment Ian MacGregor said that he would welcome private foreign capital in our coalfields.
- Economists close to the Prime Minister have been writing that coal is a good candidate for private ownership.
- The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has recommended that Areas of the Coal Board become independent business units. If this happens, some Areas will go under, and others could be sold to private enterprise.

The Government is withdrawing funds from the coal industry.

- The 1980 Coal Industry Act was the first attempt to make the coal industry “break even”. It would have forced a programme of rapid and widespread closures. It was modified under pressure of NUM industrial action.
- Now the Government wants the industry to “break even” by 1987/88. The Board admits this means closures and the loss of 60-70,000 jobs.
- But the British coal industry already receives the lowest subsidy in Western Europe. In 1982 total aid per tonne was a mere £4.20 compared to £24.87 in West Germany. With a larger subsidy, the NCB would sell more.
- In fact, the industry is being starved of investment and other funds. The 1974 Plan for Coal, which promised financial assistance, has been torn up. The Government does not support a strong coal industry as part of rational, long-term energy planning.
- Meanwhile, the Government continues to put a huge interest burden on the Board. The interest charge in 1982/83 was £366 million, or nearly £2 million per pit.





The Government has also decided to develop the nuclear industry at the expense of the coal industry. In this case – unlike when it talks about coal – the Government is not interested in the balance sheet. Nuclear power is more expensive, as well as more dangerous, than coal. The Government is interested in using nuclear power to crush the NUM.

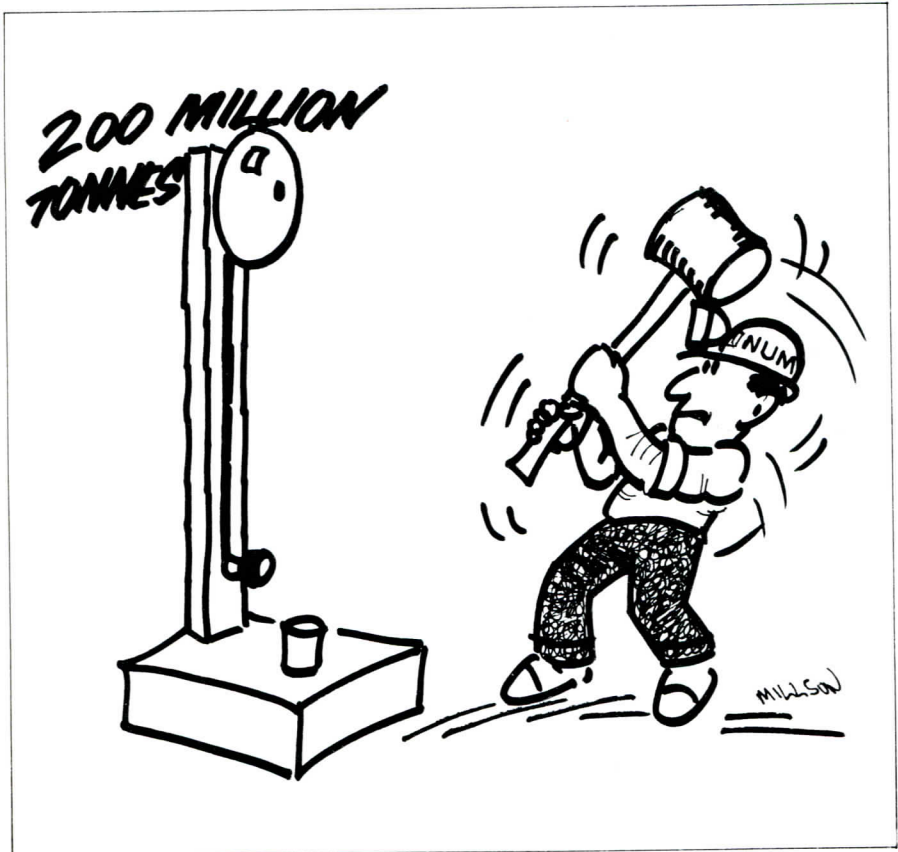
- By the year 2000, if the Tory Government has its way, nuclear power will provide almost half our electricity. That may mean over 50m tonnes of coal pushed out of production or over 100,000 jobs lost.
- Each station the size of the proposed Sizewell B PWR displaces 2.5 m tonnes of coal, or about 5,000 jobs.
- And the Tories have not been able to conceal their intentions. A leaked Cabinet minute of 23rd October, 1979 noted that:
"A nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity from disruption by industrial action of coalminers and transport workers."

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Fighting for our future

The future of our pits and towns is in jeopardy.

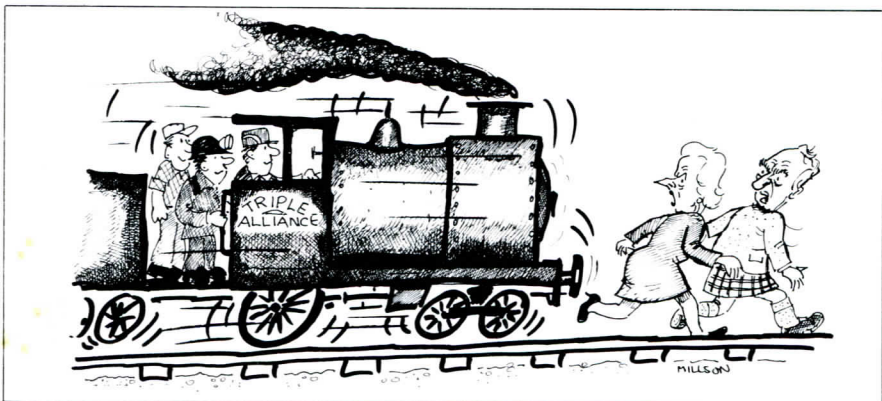
- 70 pits and 70,000 jobs at least are to go by 1988. Over 100,000 jobs will go by the year 2000.
- Government and management are attacking on all fronts. Basic wage rates are falling. Management threatens miners over the head of the union. Rich coal reserves are sterilised or by-passed so that men can be sacked.
- Our villages and towns face decay and misery. They will be left without employment opportunities. Young people have no hope.



Yet, above and underground things could be different.

Above ground:

- Instead of starving the industry of funds, Government should pay subsidies per tonne at least at the level of other European coal industries. The money that goes into redundancies and closures should go into production.
- The nuclear programme should be halted, instead of being used to crush the mining industry.
- Imports should be stopped. Where coals, such as anthracite, are not presently available in great enough quantities, investment should be undertaken to produce them.
- Exports should be increased. Europe is supposed to be self-sufficient in energy. Yet it imports over 70 million tonnes of coal, including large quantities from South Africa!
- The Government must support new ways of using coal. Many of these are already well advanced in other countries:
 - Combined Heat and Power uses waste heat from power stations to heat homes and industry. 20 large CHP schemes would use 10-15 million tonnes of coal a year.
 - With more Government aid, more factories and public sector establishments, such as hospitals, would convert their boilers back to coal. Industrial use of coal could rise to over 22 million tonnes per year.
 - Fluidised bed combustion and other new technologies can burn coal more efficiently and cleanly.
 - For the long run, we must begin now to develop liquefaction to produce liquid fuels and chemical feedstocks. We must develop gasification.



Under ground:

- Pits must stay open to provide the coal we need. And they must remain publicly owned.
- Management must negotiate sensibly with the Union, not try to undermine and ignore it. Procedures are there to be followed.
- Workers who produce the wealth of the industry must be properly rewarded. Basic pay, which has fallen drastically as a percentage of earnings since 1974, must be increased. Bonus must be consolidated into basic pay.
- There must be orderly progress towards a four day week and a proper early retirement scheme.
- Unsocial hours pay, nearly the lowest for any group of shiftworkers, must be increased.
- Miners' health, safety and working conditions must be radically improved.
- Investment in computerised mining techniques must benefit miners. The micro-revolution must cut worktime not jobs.
- The situation where a man starts on a lad's wage and ends on a lad's wage must end. Earnings must be protected.

We must now take action on jobs and pits.

- Both the Annual Conference in July and the Special Conference in October committed the union to oppose pit and works closures and all reductions in manpower.
- This was backed up by the September NEC decision to organise a national campaign against pit closures on an unprecedented scale.
- The Special NEC meeting on 27th September made the Monktonhall strike against rundown and closure in Scotland official. The NEC agreed to mobilise all moral and financial support possible and ask Miners' MPs to take part in the campaign.
- A new mood of militancy is evident in the union, with local action taking place in every coalfield.
- There is a long history of struggle in the coalfields. The National Strikes of 1972 and 1974 were just two examples of miners fighting for their industry and themselves and winning.
- We must build the broadest possible base of support. Rail and steel, the other Triple Alliance industries, are under similar attack.

So is the rest of the trade union movement. We must help each other. We must also win our families and communities to fight for our, and their, future.

We must have coal for the country, not dole for the miners.