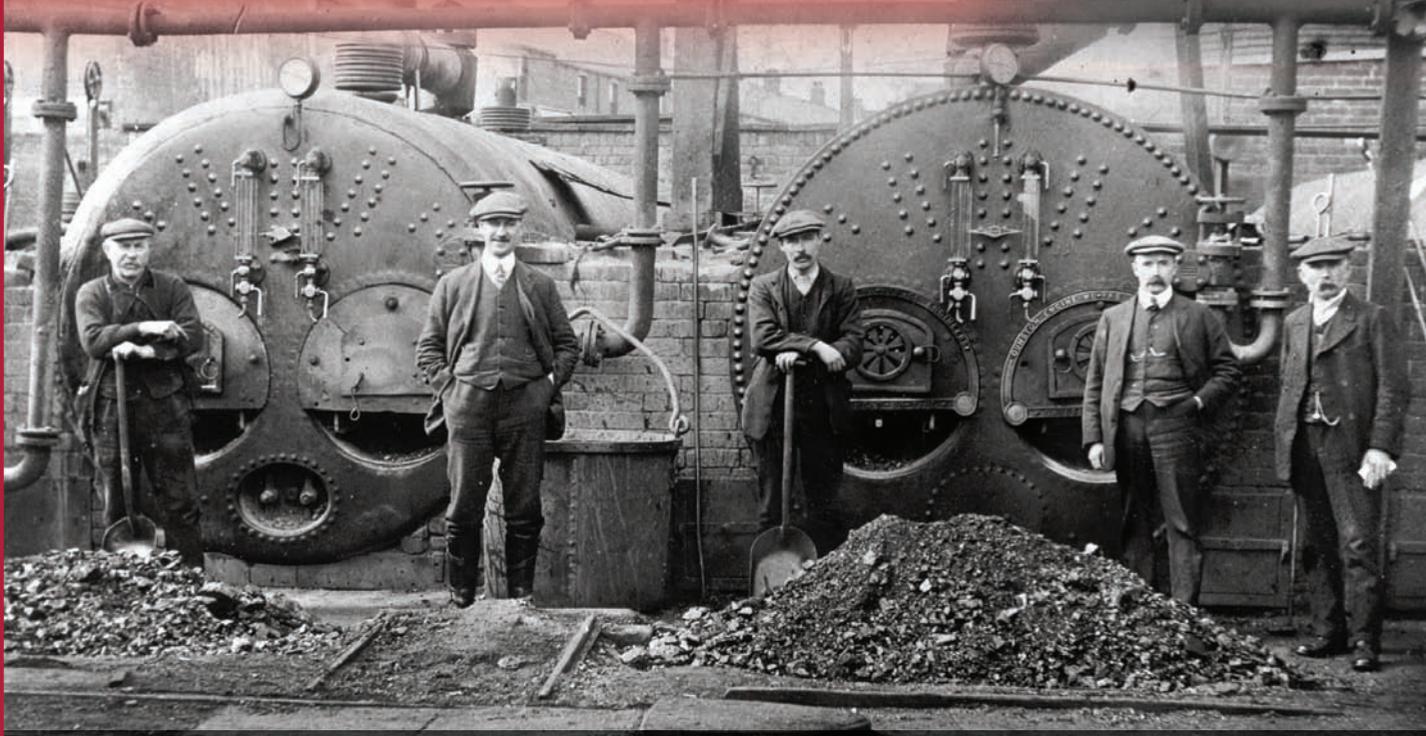


Strikes and Conciliation



Officials at Hedley stoking the colliery boilers during the 1926 strike (DCRO D/MRP 75/46)



Byers Green and Binchester inhabitants digging for coal in the railway cutting south of Byers Green station, during the 1921 lock-out (DCRO D/X 779/157/14)

Lock-out, April – July 1921

After the mines returned to private ownership in March 1921, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain pressed for a national standard wage. The owners' offer of local bargaining was refused and a lock-out began. The National Union of Railwaymen and Transport Workers initially supported the Federation but withdrew their support when the union rejected negotiations. The miners continued their action. Eventually both sides agreed on a National Wages Agreement with a national wages board, district boards and a short-term government subsidy of £10 million.

Strike, May – November 1926 (General Strike and subsequent miners' strike)

When the existing wage agreement ended in April 1926 the miners were asked to accept a reduction in wages and increased working hours. Some Durham mines were already closed - the Consett Iron Company's men had been on strike since 1925 over a pay dispute. A General Strike was called in May 1926 to support the miners, but only lasted for 12 days. However, the miners remained on strike with the Miners' Federation leader, A.J. Cook, demanding 'not a minute on the day, not a penny off the pay'. Eventually, the men returned to work on the employers' terms – subsistence wage reduced by 10d. per shift to 6s.8½d., and working hours increased by one hour per day to eight.



Kay's Soup Kitchen, Easington Lane, during the 1926 strike (DCRO D/MRP 121/19)

Strike, January – February 1972

In 1972 the NUM wanted wage increases of £5 (faceworkers), £9 (other underground men) and £6 (surface workers) to restore the position of miners in the wages hierarchy. The NCB offer resulted in an overtime ban and then a strike. Both sides agreed to a wages enquiry, and the Wilberforce Enquiry recommended £4.50, £6 and £5 respectively, which was accepted.

Strike, February – March 1974

The oil crisis in 1973 coincided with another attempt to increase wages. In breach of the government's wages policy, the NUM wanted weekly wages of £45 (power-loaders), £40 (other underground men) and £35 (surface workers). An overtime ban in the coal industry eventually resulted in a three-day week in December 1973 to conserve power. The miners' strike which followed led the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, to call a General Election on 28 February 1974. After the formation of Harold Wilson's Labour government the NUM accepted a settlement of £45, £36, and £32 respectively.

Strike, March 1984 – March 1985

This was not a pay dispute but was provoked by NCB plans for pit closures and cuts in production to match the reduced demand for coal. Collieries, steel works and power stations were all picketed and police reserves were brought in from non-mining areas. The strike ended after a year as increasing numbers of miners returned to work. Within ten years Durham's deep mining industry was no more. Vane Tempest, Easington and Westoe collieries all closed in 1993. Wearmouth, the final deep mine in the Durham coalfield closed in December 1993 and was demolished in 1994.



Miners at Birtley with bread baked in a communal oven built in the brickyard during the 1926 strike (DCRO D/MRP 137/1)

What are the Alternatives?

There are alternatives to pit closures which will create jobs, security and benefits for everybody.

- Build more combined heat and power schemes using an extra 15 million tonnes of coal.
- Extend the Coal Firing Scheme to more factories, hospitals and schools – 22 million tonnes of coal.
- Develop Coal to Oil and Coal to Gas projects.

Share out the benefits of new technology instead of using the productivity increase to put men on the dole:

- A four-day working week promised in 1971.
- Early retirement at 55.
- Longer holidays.
- Open up new jobs for young people.
- Retraining in new skills.
- Invest more in South Wales, Scotland and the North East.

Remember – pits are made "uneconomic" through lack of investment. By fighting for pits and jobs miners are fighting for a human future and against permanent mass unemployment. We owe it to the young people. We owe it to future generations.

How can I help?

You can help the miners by building solidarity with the strike and by raising funds for miners, their families, and to pay for publicity, petrol and so on.

- Non-perishable food contributions will also help.
- Get your Trade Union, Community Group, Ward Party, Women's Group, etc., to pass a resolution supporting the miners and pledging financial assistance.
- Hold weekly workplace collections.
- Invite a miner to speak to your meetings.
- Visit Nottinghamshire and experience the police state.
- Send delegates to the picket lines.

The CHSS deems strikers to be paid £15 per week and to knock money off the benefit that miners' families can claim. A family can end up with literally nothing to live on.

Food for miners' families should be sent to the NUM Area H.Q., or pack-up point nearest to your home.

Donations should be sent to:
**MINERS' SOLIDARITY FUND,
 CO-OPERATIVE BANK, SHEFFIELD,
 Account No. 30000509, Sort Code 08-90-75.**

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN FOR COAL AND SAVE THE NATION'S ENERGY FUTURE

For further copies of this leaflet contact the NUM National Office, St. James' House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield S1 2EX. Large quantities available for Trade Unions and Community Groups, etc.

NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS

FACT SHEET

THE MINERS' STRIKE

Miners are on strike to stop pit closures and prevent more than 20,000 jobs being axed in 1984.

In June 1983, the National Coal Board Chairman said that 25 million tonnes of capacity must be phased out of the industry. This is 6 times the amount admitted publicly by the Board and its implementation, alongside new technology, will lead to the closure of over 70 pits and the loss of more than 70,000 jobs.

This leaflet explains what is happening to the coal industry and why you should support the Miners.

Fact Sheet distributed by the National Union of Mineworkers in 1984 (DCRO D/X 779/5/43)