

THE Trades Union Congress of 1984 will be remembered as the week in which the British trade union movement began a determined and united fight-back against the destruction of British industry, the decimation of jobs and the death of communities.

Over the past five years, the TUC has campaigned incessantly against the effect of the Tory government's policies on working people and their families.

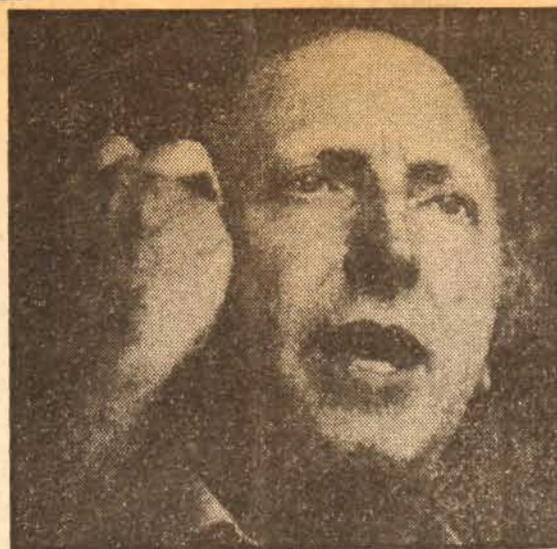
Inherent in the aims and policies of the TUC are *support* for the right to earn a living; *support* for Britain's economic independence and self-sufficiency, for the quality of life worth living, built on a foundation of economic security and stability.

The TUC calls for a national economic strategy which carefully plans and stewards Britain's most precious resources – such as energy, needed to produce the basic materials and goods which people and society as a whole require.

The TUC itself was born out of the long, painful and often bloody battles of working people to establish their rights in a social system determined to deny those rights. In the present situation, it is responsible for coordinating the campaign against a series of anti-trade union laws created by this government for the sole purpose of weakening workers' capacity to defend ourselves against exploitation by employers.

These are the aims, the policies, the purpose of the Trades Union Congress. Now it has given its backing to a group of workers who, faced with a savage attack upon their industry, their jobs and their communities, have responded with their only means of defence – strike action.

In supporting the National Union of Mineworkers with physical and financial solidarity, Congress has



**ARTHUR SCARGILL:**

S. Tms - 9 SEP 1984

**'Miners are fully aware of the forces massed against them'**

placed itself squarely behind our campaign to secure a speedy and victorious end to a dispute which has now lost the nation 54 million tonnes of coal production, and cost British taxpayers approximately £4 billion.

In its vote for the NUM resolution, and through the general council's statement on the miners' strike, the TUC has not only reaffirmed the basic tenets of British trade unionism, but has carried out Congress policy, which is to fight for the rights of working people against the most savage government of this century.

Miners are fully aware of the forces massed against us. Those forces were displayed clearly last week in the pages of this newspaper, where the utterly dishonest invective of energy secretary Peter Walker and that of the EETPU's Frank Chapple were joined in unholy unity beneath the blessing of the Sunday Times leader.

We know who our enemies are.

We know *why* they seek to destroy our industry and our union.

British coal, vital to this nation's economic and social future, is under attack from a government which seeks to abandon a signed agreement charting the course for Britain's energy requirements well into the future. That signed agreement is Plan For Coal, designed to meet the needs of our economy, and of the human beings dependent upon it.

Plan For Coal, drawn up first in 1974 and revised in 1977, looked into the future, and realised that Britain's coal reserves must be protected and developed to take the nation into the 21st century, past the decades when oil and gas will run out. Based on irrefutable common sense and shrewd planning, it was acknowledged as the basis of energy strategy when Mrs Thatcher took office in 1979 – and reaffirmed again by her government in 1981.

What Plan For Coal could not foresee was the ferocity with which the government elected in 1979

would commence its programme of decimating British industry, dismantling health, education and welfare services, plucking back the social wage, presiding over the export of capital and the investment starvation of the British economy.

The appalling mismanagement of the National Coal Board under Tory directive signalled from the beginning threats to Plan For Coal, despite government assurances to the contrary. Those with time to delve into the strategies underlying these destructive policies were aware back in 1978 of the plans laid down by the Conservative party policy group on the nationalised industries.

These plans, marshalled together under the byline of Nicholas Ridley, recognised that in order to cripple an industry such as ours, a determined government would have to cripple our union. That is precisely what this government has tried to do.

With a fury unmatched in present times, the Tories, relying primarily on press and broadcasting media,

have attacked the NUM relentlessly since we began our fightback against pit closures over two years ago.

Today, miners and their families face a closure programme which would over the next few years wipe out virtually half the coal industry. The coal board's announcement on March 6 that 20 pits would close with 20,000 jobs destroyed during the coming year was only the beginning of the government's onslaught upon us.

There is no ambiguity, no confusion about the closure programme: official coal board minutes reveal clearly the extent of the decimation planned.

The choice for our people is very simple. Either we give in, we submit – or we fight to save our jobs, pits and communities.

We know that the media (including most specifically this newspaper) advises, indeed, demands that we do give in. We are called criminals for refusing to surrender our livelihoods.

But, over the past five years, mining families have witnessed the effects of government policies on other industries, other communities. We see that the primary features of British society in 1984 are anguish and despair, physical and mental ill-health, and unemployment. Most criminal of all, perhaps, is the effect of government strategy upon young people, victims of increasing social abuse.

We have witnessed the effects on *people* of de-industrialisation, privatisation, homelessness and the savage cut-backs in health care.

Our response, like the choice before us, is very simple. We will not give in. We will not submit to the decimation of a vital industry. We will not stand passively by while jobs which belong to future generations are bought up and destroyed.

We are fighting back; and we will win.