

# Scargill wins support for attacks on 'state violence against miners'

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Reports from Alan Wood, Bob Morgan, Sheila Beardall, Stephen Goodwin and John Winder

Making clear that the NUM was challenging the whole concept of Mrs Thatcher's Government, ~~Mr Arthur Scargill~~, the union's president, obtained, amid prolonged acclaim, the support of the Labour Party conference at Blackpool yesterday in the dispute over pit closures.

"For God's sake give your support to our membership and take us on the way to victory", he declared.

As for violence on the picket lines, Mr Scargill attacked state violence against miners whose only crime was the desire to work and to save the industry and jobs of mining communities. He successfully commended the NUM motion reaffirming the Labour Party's commitment to the *Plan for Coal*, a commitment that should be in its next manifesto.

The widow of a miner, Mrs Muriel Williams from Maesteg, also got a standing ovation for a speech in which she said that miners' wives would see that miners did not starve. "The miners' wives are as determined to win as any Margaret Thatcher".

Mr Tony Benn, MP for Chesterfield and a former Secretary of State for Energy, replying to the debate, said the Government had planned the dispute years ago and had budgeted for it. The Labour Party wanted to make clear that it backed the miners all the way.

The conference duly did carry with only a few hands raised against both the NUM resolution and the recently published national executive statement, which Mr Benn said, did not criticize the NUM for its handling of the dispute.

Although Mr Benn asked the conference also to carry a motion calling for a freeze on all further development of Bri-

ment is their very lives in this industry". (applause).

The NCB talked about coal output of 495 million tonnes in the next five years. After the seven-month strike, and the previous overtime ban, without one pit closed, the maximum coal output was 480m tonnes.

"There is a deliberate attempt to mislead not only the NUM but also the general public on the cost of closing pits and making miners redundant - it is as much as keeping these pits open and the jobs secure. I am sick and tired of the balance sheet mentality of this Government. We are not talking about the miner whose job is lost - it is not his job to sell. The jobs belong to future generations.

"We have seen attacks on the picket lines from a state police

## The mineworkers' conference motion

The NUM motion carried by the conference stated:

This conference pays tribute to the historic struggle of the miners in 1984 which has attracted the widest support of the trade union and labour movement and congratulates all those men and women who have contributed so magnificently to the defence of jobs, communities, trade unionism, and socialist principles.

The conference deplores the total dishonesty of the Conservative Government during the miners' dispute for which it is held wholly responsible having, through the National Coal Board, deliberately violated the *Plan for Coal* by the declaration that 20 pits and 20,000 jobs had to go as a first instalment of their rundown of the industry.

It recognizes that this policy stems not only from their dogmatic adherence to mono-

struction of a reactor at Sizewell and condemning the gross inefficiency of nuclear power stations.

He said that the motion was not designed to shut down the nuclear industry after Labour came to power and was not intended to commit the party to a regressive non-nuclear policy but was an attempt to meet the concern of the growing number of people about the wisdom of committing themselves to a nuclear future.

To do so they must assess what it would mean for the economy and environment. That sort of analysis had never taken place, even under a Labour government.

Ray Buckton, general secretary of Aslef, said he joined with the millions of people who applauded the miners, their wives and children who could see their communities being absolutely ruined by the vicious attack from the Government.

In an appeal carried overwhelmingly trade unionists were asked to stand by what was a basic principle of the movement - that was unless there was an agreement with the union concerned do not pass official picket lines.

Mr Eric Hammond, general secretary of the electricians' union, EETPU, was hissed and booed when he said the NEC statement demonstrated what was wrong with the policy-making in the Labour Party.

"There is no attempt to analyse the real problems, underlining the conduct of this dispute, no attempt to understand why the refusal to ballot the membership had split the NUM, no call for the TUC guide on conducting disputes to be observed and, most shameful, no demand for the violence and hooliganism on the picket line to be stopped."

Mr Benn speaking for the



tain's nuclear power, it was thrown out in the first card vote of conference by 3,483,000 votes to 2,967,000.

Mr Scargill said that for seven months, British miners, their wives and families had been involved in an historic struggle. The NUM had found itself in a position of having to defend the coal industry, its jobs and its communities against the economic insanity of Mrs Margaret Thatcher's monetarist philosophy.

The Government's decision last year to appoint Mr Ian McGregor as chairman of the NCB was designed to provoke the NUM. This had followed a period when the Government had firmly believed it could pursue policies which would end up destroying British industry.

He claimed Mr MacGregor had butchered thousands of jobs at British Steel. The Tories and Mr MacGregor believed the same job could be done in the mining industry.

"After seven months, I say to Mr MacGregor and the Government they will not succeed. This is another war they will not win."

Nonsense was put forward by Mr MacGregor, the Government and their supporters in the media, he added.

"They constantly refer to the industry as being uneconomic and to uneconomic pits. There are no uneconomic pits - only pits deliberately starved of investment by successive governments. If that investment had been put in, they would be viable".

He said that Mr MacGregor argued about what to do with coal output. It should be given to old-age pensioners for the twilight of their lives.

Mr Scargill said that in 1974 a *Plan For Coal* was agreed by the Government, NCB and Mining unions, which was reaffirmed in 1977 when Mr Tony Benn was Secretary of State for Energy. In it there was no reference to closing pits on the grounds of economics.

He said Mrs Thatcher and Mr MacGregor were always referring to the business and the costs of the industry. "They never talk about the investment in human beings whose invest-

ment is being destroyed by the capitalist economic policies, but a determination to attack the NUM and the whole trade union movement by repressive legislation and an unprecedented and wholesale operation involving unlawful actions by the police, organized violence against miners, their picket lines, and their communities by means of an unconstitutional nationally controlled police force.

The conference declares that the manifesto of the next Labour government will reaffirm wholehearted commitment to the *Plan for Coal* and introduce an integrated energy policy based on an expanding and healthy coal industry to protect and develop jobs for our young people, making sure that technological innovations both improve working conditions for miners and actually increase and enhance their job prospects.

armed with riot gear. Yes, we have violence - state violence against miners whose only crime is the desire to work, whose only crime is fighting to save our industry and jobs in the mining community. We are asking for your support. We are entitled to ask for it.

"The NUM is fighting not only for the jobs of miners but is fighting against the whole concept of this Government's economic policy, which is designed to destroy jobs and create havoc".

Mr Scargill went on: "I reject the right of any employer to destroy the jobs of miners or any other worker."

He said his union wanted an energy policy based on coal in line with previous Labour Party conference decisions. The TUC had given the NUM its support and this support was now turning into practical backing.

Seconding the NUM motion, Mr Gregory Moakes, Elmet, said that a future Labour government must depart immediately from the present mad Tory energy policies. There must be a sound commitment to coal by the Labour Party, based on *Plan For Coal*, 1974.

Mr James Slater, general secretary of the National Union of Seamen, moved a motion reaffirming opposition to con-

NEC, recommended acceptance of both motions. He said that the Government had planned the dispute years ago.

The Government had tried to use the DHSS to starve the miners into submission and had failed. They had tried to use the NCB to bribe the miners with redundancy pay. They had used riot police and mounted police to harrass and assault miners to seek to criminalize those on whose skill and dedication the future of the country depended.

The Government had tried to use the magistrates by manipulating the bail conditions and to punish people who had never been put up for trial by imposing restrictive bail conditions.

"If they would build on Labour's plan for coal, expand the industry and give miners equal power to decide about the future of the industry this strike would end tonight.

"We need a socialist integrated energy policy. We need all fuel in common ownership. People are entitled to have enough heat and light at home at prices they can afford to pay. Fuel is a service and not a business. That is what a socialist energy policy is about.

"The miners are engaged in a titanic struggle and have transformed the prospects for our party. The union has reminded us of the old principle - you do not cross a picket line.

The hopes of millions who had nothing to do with the mining industry were focused on the strike.

It was a mistake to think the miner's struggle was an opportunity for overthrowing the democratic institutions which the Labour movement had done more to build than any other group in Britain.

"We are struggling to defend democracy, as in the GLC and the Met Counties, to defend the jobs and services that Parliament created for us, to defend civil and human rights, to defeat the Tory party and to elect a Labour government and transform society."

The NUM resolution and NEC statement were agreed to and the NUS motion rejected in a card vote.

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