

SECRET AND PERSONAL

(AT has seen)

15

Daily Coal Report - Monday 1 October 1984

	<u>Number</u>	<u>plus on holiday</u>
(i) Working normally	45	-
(ii) Turning some coal	9	-
(iii) Some men present	18	(2)
(iv) On strike/picketed out	96	(4)

Seafield (Yorkshire), where the number reporting has dropped from 4 to 3, has been relegated to category (iv); though the pit is on an official rest day.

The general situation is little changed from last week. The Coal Board report that 22 ex-strikers returned on this morning's shift. Main points to note are as follows:

- attendances in the main working areas are holding up;
- NACODS men have continued to report in these areas. There have, however, been higher than usual absences reported in the South Midlands, and at Mardy (South Wales) NACODS men walked out;
- in Scotland 181 men reported at Bilston Glen;
- in the North East both Wilkinsons reported at Easington; 17 at Wearmouth;
- 44 men reported in Yorkshire. These included the first men back to Manton - Messrs Foulstone and Taylor, who last week won a High Court ruling that the strike was not official, together with two colleagues. (See below);
- 32 men reported in Kent, at Tilmanstone and Betteshanger.

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Coal Movements

The Board's provisional estimate is that 883,000 tonnes were moved last week, of which 645,000 tonnes went to the CEEGB.

41 coal trains ran on Friday.

Law and Order

After clashes with the police last night 23 pickets were arrested at Manton. A police car was ambushed, and one of the occupants hit by a piece of concrete. Later a barricade of tyres was placed across the road and set on fire.

Elsewhere picketing was generally moderate, though there were 1500 pickets at Yorkshire Main.

Industrial Relations

At the time of writing, talks between the Coal Board and NACODS have just been adjourned until tomorrow. Preliminary reports indicate that in the discussions NACODS placed great emphasis on colliery closures procedures - apparently seeking some form of independent tribunal to take final decisions. A similar proposal is understood to have been made today by the opposition energy spokesman, Mr Orme, who is reported to have sent copies of his plan to the Coal Board and ACAS.

D/Employment report that ACAS, in pursuing their further exploratory soundings of the Board and the NUM, propose to start with the latter - but they have made it clear to Scargill that they do not intend to make a special trip to Blackpool for this purpose.

Court Hearings

After Friday's High Court ruling that the strike was unlawful, Scargill claimed to the press that the 1981 ballot vote giving an 86% majority for strike action in Yorkshire "was, and is, official". It is understood that the

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two Manton miners who brought one of the actions are now considering further action against the union for contempt of court.

[Stop press: A writ has just been served on Scargill which, according to media reports, seeks to jail him. It is believed a hearing could take place on Thursday].

Labour Party Conference

Today's events included attacks on the Coal Board, police and Government by Messrs Scargill, Benn, Heffer and others. The Conference voted overwhelmingly to back a statement by the national executive which included accusations of police violence against pickets. A copy of a statement issued by the Secretary of State for Energy is attached.

Line to Take

- As before, stress key elements of Coal Board offer.
- condemn violence and intimidation. The police are acting impartially in defending ordinary citizens from the rule of the mob.

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Coal-

RT HON PETER WALKER MBE MP

Release Time: 13.00 hrs, Monday 1st October
630/84 1984

Statement by the Rt Hon Peter Walker MBE MP (Worcester), Secretary of State for Energy.

BENN - THE PREACHING AND THE PRACTICES

As the nation witnesses Mr Benn's passionate support for the miners, it is vital they recognise it is not the miners that Mr Benn is supporting, but Mr Scargill. These two men have identical political objectives. But every miner in the country should recognise that the pronouncements of Mr Benn and his condemnation of a Conservative Government are in total contrast to his performance when he was Labour's Secretary of State for Energy in four of the five years of the last Labour Government.

His record was appalling. In those five Labour years, total capital investment in the coal industry was £1,472 million. In the first five years of this Government the capital expenditure was £3,824 million. For every pound that Mr Benn was willing to invest, the Conservatives have invested £2.30. What hypocrisy for him to call on us now to expand the industry when our performance has been so much better than his.

Under Mr Benn there were 20,000 voluntary redundancies. For a married man aged 55 under Mr Benn he received a maximum of £72 per week. Under the Conservatives he could now receive £104 plus lump sums totalling over £15,000. For a man aged 49 under Mr Benn he received a maximum of £950, and now under the Conservatives he could receive £33,000. That is the contrast between the way in which the Conservatives have dealt with those who wished to retire early or to take voluntary redundancy and the harsh treatment of Mr Benn.

Now Mr Benn says he supports Mr Scargill in retaining every uneconomic pit. He did not tell the country that when he introduced the Coal Industry Act of 1977. He personally was the prime sponsor of the Bill. And what did Clause 6 of that Bill say in its very first paragraph: "The Secretary of State with the approval of the Treasury may, out of money provided by Parliament, make to the Board such grants as in the opinion of the Secretary of State will further assist in the redeployment of the manpower resources of the Board and the elimination of uneconomic colliery capacity". Mr Benn was therefore the prime promoter of a Bill where one of the declared objectives was the elimination of uneconomic colliery capacity.

What hypocrisy to posture now as a man passionately opposed to the closure of uneconomic pits. Indeed, in Mr Benn's last months of office, one pit was closed where there were reserves of coal which would certainly have lasted a further three to four years. Another pit closed with reserves of more than 1½ million tonnes. How dare he now suggest that Mr Scargill and he will never close any pit unless it is totally exhausted of coal.

But how did this advocate of treating the miners generously behave when it came to the issue of pay? I will tell you. He brought about the biggest successive annual reductions in miners' earnings since nationalisation. Between 1975 and 1976, in real terms, miners' earnings dropped by £13.10 a week. Not satisfied with that, the next year they dropped in real terms by a further £15.70 a week. In two years of Bennery therefore miners' earnings plunged by £28.80 a week.

Be it investment, be it pay, be it early retirement, Tony Benn was a disaster for miners compared with this Government. On uneconomic pits he spoke with one voice in power and a totally different voice out of power. Let every miner recall that it was Mr Benn who told the House of Commons as the Minister responsible for the then Labour Government "It is Government policy to phase out subsidies to the nationalised industries. In line with this the Government hope that the coal industry will be able to operate without the need for assistance, apart from the social grants". If we now pursued Mr Benn's policy the Coal Board would be bust, insolvent and the miners jobs would be destroyed.

ENDS