

COUNTER INFORMATION



CHRONOLOGY

DIRECT ACTION from the 'grassroots'

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF MINERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE TAKING POSITIVE AND IMAGINATIVE DIRECT ACTION TO FURTHER THEIR STRUGGLE. HERE WE LIST SOME OF THESE ACTIVITIES, IN THE HOPE OF ENCOURAGING MORE SUCH ACTIONS.

3RD AUGUST. 200 pickets raid a Coal Board transport depot at South Normanton in Derbyshire, damaging 14 lorries and 2 coaches.

(source Scotsman 4/8, Black Flag 20/8)

8TH AUGUST. Using CB radio to co-ordinate their actions, hundreds of miners attack Coal Board property at 3 places in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. First target is Silverhill Colliery, where NCB office windows are smashed, strikebreakers cars are damaged, and a police vehicle rammed. Next stop Harworth Colliery, 20 miles away. More damage to NCB and scabs property.

Across into Yorkshire for the final target as strikers smash £2,000 worth of windows at the 11 storey Coal Board offices in Doncaster.

(Information: Black Flag 20/8 and 3/9, Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism (FRFI) Sept., Class War)

12TH AUGUST. 5 Coal Board coaches being fitted out for strike breaking are destroyed by fire at J. Thompson engineering works at Pleasley Vale, North Derbyshire.

(Information: Black Flag 3/9, FRFI Sept., Guardian 14/8)

22ND AUGUST. Mass actions by pickets throughout Yorkshire. At Markham Main colliery miners use a crane from the pit yard to block the road with concrete blocks, and hijack an excavator to help build the barricade. At the colliery yard pickets smash TV cameras, floodlights and office windows.

In nearby Armthorpe pickets build a large barricade and set it alight. Police cut off the village, baton pickets, break into people's homes, and generally terrorise the whole community.

Pickets at Bentley Colliery barricade the pit entrance with an overturned colliery van and Coal Board bus. NCB property in the Colliery is damaged. Miners build a barricade and set it ablaze at the gates of the Yorkshire Main colliery, Edlington.

In Durham a mass picket successfully prevents a solitary scab entering Easington colliery.

(Information: Guardian and Scotsman 23/8, Black Flag Autumn 84)

30TH AUGUST. South Wales miners take direct action to block coal supplies to steel workers. They seize a transporter bridge and use it to prevent ships passing up the River Usk, Newport.

Simultaneously 103 miners occupy a British Steel jetty at Port Talbot and climb onto cranes being used to unload coal.

(Information: FRFI Sept., The Miner 21/9)

2ND SEPTEMBER. A Coal Board office is demolished with a bulldozer in an overnight attack. £250,000 worth of damage caused at Thurncroft Colliery, near Rotherham.

(Information: Guardian and Scotsman 3/9)

5TH SEPTEMBER. Pickets fell trees to block the road used by police to bring in scabs to Tilmanstone Colliery, Kent.

(Information: Guardian 6/9)

10TH SEPTEMBER. The main A645 road is closed for over 2 hours as around 4,000 pickets attempt to prevent 2 strikebreakers from entering Kellingley Colliery, North Yorkshire.

(Information: Daily Telegraph 7/9)

21ST SEPTEMBER. An estimated 6,000 pickets take action at Maltby Colliery as 7 construction workers enter the Yorkshire pit. Miners barricade and block the road into the colliery for 3 hours. The police say they faced "a continuous barrage of missiles".

Miners succeed in limiting arrests to 5, by retreating when police advance, then resuming the offensive.

(Information: Daily Telegraph, Daily Record)

22ND SEPTEMBER. 40 pickets and supporters burst into a police station at Rochester, Kent in a bid to rescue a comrade who'd been arrested and detained. In the ensuing melee 4 people are arrested.

(Information: Radio News)

24TH SEPTEMBER. More mass action at Maltby Colliery near Rotherham as 5,000 pickets besiege the pit.

(Information: Glasgow Evening Times)

25th SEPTEMBER. Pickets and Union officials persuade a miner to return home after he went into work at Wooley Colliery.

26th SEPTEMBER. Miners block roads into Wooley Colliery with rubble and an excavator, to prevent any strikebreaker entering.

(Information: The Express 28/9)

26th SEPTEMBER. Before dawn 300 striking miners march through the Kellingley Colliery gates and take over the Yorkshire pit for more than 6 hours. They occupy the coal preparation plant and the two winding towers. Police arrest 43 miners as they leave, but they are later released.

(Information: Yorkshire Evening Post 26/9, Newsline 28/9)

27th SEPTEMBER. Over 4,000 pickets erect 2 barricades to prevent strikebreakers entering Allerton Bywater colliery in Yorkshire. With the main village street blocked for 4 hours, it is well over 3 hours past their usual starting time before the 5 scabs can clock on. As the miners disperse, police attack and assault pickets, making 6 arrests.

(Information: Newsline 28/9, Guardian 28/9, Yorkshire Evening Post 27/9)

28th SEPTEMBER. Pickets build a barricade and halt a police convoy on its way to Silverwood Colliery, South Yorkshire. Police vehicles are pelted with missiles and two vans are overturned. Police set dogs on the pickets and make 5 arrests.

(Information: Guardian 29/9)

1st OCTOBER. Just after midnight pickets ambush a police patrol car near Manton colliery. Later pickets nearly succeed in breaking through the police lines outside pit. 21 arrests.

(Information: Glasgow Evening Times 1/10)

2nd OCTOBER. In the biggest ever picket of Frances Colliery 600 miners hold up the strikebreakers minibus. Police re-inforcements eventually force a way into the Fife pit for the scabs. 11 arrests, 2 remanded in custody.

(Information: Scotsman 3/10)

Occupations, attacks on Coal Board property, barricading roads, resistance to police oppression – all these kinds of activities are worrying the Coal Board, the Government and the State.

For not only are such direct actions effective, they challenge the very 'rules of the game'. Many miners are recognising that the laws, the police and the whole legal system are only there to protect the power and wealth of the ruling classes. 'Acceptable trade union activity', as advocated by Kinnock and Co., means accepting THEIR rules, and getting smashed.

Many, probably most, of the kinds of actions we're talking about seem to be the initiatives of miners and their families themselves, at the grassroots level. It's vital that control and decision making IS exercised by the 'grass roots', NOT by the NUM officials through the official Union structures.

There are indications that the NUM leadership is trying to control and/or stop some miners direct action. For example, the Yorkshire NUM made an agreement with the police. The Union would discipline pickets who threw missiles, and the police promised not to make baton charges. (Needless to say, the police battered people as usual (Newsline 28th Sept.))

BILSTON GLEN – DIGGER DUMPED

On September 21st pickets persuaded a lorry driver transporting a JCB digger not to enter this Lothian pit. Miners suspect that the digger was to load coal onto lorries – which would then be used to take coal out of the pit, to power stations, etc.

(Information: pickets at Bilston Glen, September 1984)

KENT CLAMPDOWN

Miners in a transit van were stopped by police while following a bus carrying strikebreakers to Tilmanstone Colliery, Kent. Four of the miners were arrested and held in detention for TEN DAYS.

Meanwhile residents of Elvington, Kent have held a meeting to protest about the police occupation of their village – residents have been arrested for the 'crime' of standing on the pavement.

(Information: Kent miners picketing the NCB HQ in London, Sept. 1984 and 'The World this Weekend' Radio 4, 23rd September, 1984)

POLICE HARASSMENT

Recently police in Bonnyrigg turned up at the house of an unemployed youth, the son of a miner, and announced he was under arrest 'for secondary picketing at Bilston Glen'. Luckily at that moment his mother returned home. After she'd made her feelings known the police left rapidly with burning ears – and without a prisoner.

Meanwhile police in the area continue to harass people active in the strike, threatening them with arrest and sitting in police cars outside houses for hours on end.

(Information: pickets at Bilston Glen Sept. 1984)

EVICCTIONS – READY TO RESIST

Abbey National and the Halifax are among the building societies threatening Lothian miners with eviction because they can't pay their mortgage. But Bilston Glen pickets say they are ready to take action at striking miners homes to prevent bailiffs putting anyone out on the streets.

(Information: pickets at Bilston Glen, Sept. 1984)

And why doesn't the NUM paper 'The Miner' ever report on the kind of actions we've reported here?

Another danger is the NUM channelling all effort into stopping the scabs, and neglecting the equally important task of SPREADING the strike to other workers.

The ability and imagination shown in the miners direct actions illustrates that working class people have no need of leaders to tell us what to do, whether they're 'right' or 'left-wing'.

SECRET SERVICE

There have been several reports of soldiers secretly participating in police actions against the miners, e.g. in North Yorkshire, in Scotland at a miners demo in London. Some Kent miners believe the numbers of soldiers involved may well be in the hundreds, if not thousands.

A year or two back there was a local controversy in Kent when it was revealed that the authorities had purchased 2,000 extra, seemingly totally unnecessary, police uniforms. Ratepayers raged at this 'absurd waste of money'.

Now rumour has it that a thousand of these uniforms have been delivered to the army at Connaught Barracks, Dover, Kent...

(Information: Kent miners picketing the NCB HQ in London, Sept.)

Posties are refusing to cross the miners picket line to deliver mail to the NCB Head Office in Grosvenor Place, London.

We hope postal workers can keep the miners informed of the alternative addresses to which Coal Board mail is directed, so pickets can challenge mail deliveries there too.

Even better if NCB post was completely blacked... or, like Grunwicks mail during that strike, was re-directed to Australia...

(Information: Kent miners picketing NCB HQ in London, September)

COUNTER INFORMATION

This news bulletin was collated as a service by anarchists and revolutionaries from Edinburgh and Clydeside.

It is a part of our activity that also includes street collections for the miners and solidarity actions, like a small demonstration in Glasgow on October 4th in protest against the 10 miners killed in South Africa and the 5 miners killed in Britain.

Please use the information in this bulletin as you see fit.

ANY NEWS FROM YOUR OWN AREA WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

Write to COUNTERINFORMATION Box 81, First of May Bookshop, 43 Candlemakers Row, Edinburgh.

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