

COAL STRIKE

Prime Minister

Alfred Sherman brought the enclosed material in by hand this afternoon.

It relates to the degree of control which Arthur Scargill now exercises over local Labour Parties local authorities and, indirectly, over police authorities and transport. As Alfred points out, this control is exemplified by the Education Authority's decision to keep the schools open during the holidays to feed not only children but parents as well, free.

Alfred did say to me that if you wanted to see either him, or the author of this paper, to discuss the matter, they would be at your disposal. But I understand that you have recently spoken to Alfred, and this may not be necessary.

Tessa

MICHAEL ALISON

18.7.84

CONFIDENTIAL

NOTE

All bracketed numbers refer to attached
papers.

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Douglas Eden

DATE: 16 July 1984

Intimidation in the National Union of Mineworkers is not a straightforward matter. There are basically two types. Official Union procedures and employment of traditional practices. This is in addition to the straight-out threat of physical violence or damage to property. The practice is also varied from region to region.

In areas like South and West Yorkshire where most of the mining communities are generations old, control is more easily exerted, exploiting their loyalty to the Union and the tribal nature of the community. This also applies in Durham and Northumberland, Scotland, Kent and Wales although it is less significant in Durham and Northumberland as there are so few pits left there. Reduction in the industry in Scotland too has weakened these aspects there as well. However, many Scottish miners over the years have been transferred to estates especially set aside for them in the pit villages and towns in the Yorkshire coal field. There they have retained their customs. Kent has been on the defensive for so many years that it has developed the same siege mentality. The Welsh valleys bear many similarities to the Kent and Scottish experiences.

The other coal fields exist in areas where alternative forms of employment have usually been available, where productivity has tended to be easy and efficiency high, and perhaps most important of all, most mining communities are not generations old.

Indeed, in these areas (such as Nottinghamshire and South Derbyshire, the Midlands and Lancashire) there is much greater movement into and out of the communities by individuals and families than in the other regions.

The key area therefore is Yorkshire with more than one third of the total Union membership and its members part of traditional mining communities. In areas like Yorkshire it is possible to operate a system of democratic centralism masquerading as an expression of tribal loyalty. It is possible to establish a mafia relationship between the Union boss and mineworkers. Hence, for example, Arthur Scargill's exploitation of the post of Compensation Agent in the Yorkshire Area for some 15 years - a post he retained even after being elected President of the Yorkshire Area. By administering NCB compensation funds Scargill was able to convince about 1,000 miners per year that he had been personally responsible for getting their compensation money. He was thus able to build a personal following in the Yorkshire Area and achieve God-father status in a society vulnerable to such institutions.

The incestuous clannishness of the Yorkshire mining communities enables each member to feel justified in opposing any law or regulation imposed by an authority outside the community and the NUM. Violence in doing so is no barrier in a society where brawls and violence on Friday and Saturday nights are normal parts of village life. It certainly raises no compunctions when the honour or interests of the tribal communities are perceived to be opposed or threatened.

(See Andrew Stephen's article on Scargill in yesterday's Sunday Times⁽¹⁾, much of which is based on material I provided, for the means Scargill used, such as the Compensation Agent's job and the affinity between Marxist-Leninist democratic centralism and Yorkshire miner tribalism. Also see attached document from the Yorkshire Area Council Minutes⁽²⁾ which are fully explained in the accompanying press releases⁽²⁾. The attached letter from the General Secretary of the Yorkshire Area, Owen Briscoe, indicates the way Union finances are used to mobilise miners for political ends.⁽²⁾)

Total control of the massive Yorkshire miners workforce is essential to force a national stoppage in the other coal fields. Scargill has such control. The means by which it is enforced through Union regulations is well known and the attached Minutes of the Yorkshire Area Council Meeting⁽²⁾, referred to above, is typical. The one delegate who voted against these regulations was soon victimised and discharged from the Area Committee. (Press cuttings attached⁽³⁾.) More recently, the manner in which Scargill organised last week's delegate conference and the rule changes that were made there follows the same style as was used to reduce the ballot for strike action from 55% to 50%. This is well known and a matter of record. Any area or branch of the Union under the control of Scargill and his confederates is run in the same way - ie by decisions imposed through democratic centralism lubricated by patronage. Tribal loyalty assures adherence to those decisions despite the method by which they are reached. For tribal values over-ride liberal democratic values in Yorkshire style mining communities.

The second form of "intimidation" - by traditional practices - is made possible because the NUM has effective control of personnel management at the pit head. The NCB conceded this many years ago and probably does not have the final say on personnel management in any pit in the country. This means that NUM officials decide the membership of work teams and which members work various shifts. Some shifts provide greater opportunities for earnings than others and most miners have preferred shifts in any case. Basically, the allocation of shift working is a source of some patronage to NUM officialdom. In most areas, also, the NUM - note not the NCB - administers the free coal schemes for miners, retired miners and their families. Again the frequency with which miners suffer injuries warranting some compensation, and the control of the NCB compensation scheme by NUM officials is an important power lever.

In close knit traditional communities as in Yorkshire every mining family knows about this and does not have to be told to toe the line. Any eccentric dissident knows that to speak his mind - let alone take overt action - against the official line will have consequences for him, his home and his family. And families are rather large and extended in these communities. Hence direct threats of intimidation are rarely necessary. However, I know of specific intimidatory threats made during the current dispute in Yorkshire; but to divulge them would place individuals in certain danger. I have hinted about this as far as I feel able to do publicly in my speech in the Council for Social Democracy in Edinburgh on May 13th (press release and speech attached⁽⁴⁾).

The above should go a long way towards explaining the extensive personal support for Scargill which manifests itself as "Arthur's army". It is simply an additional advantage to him that in Yorkshire type mining areas there are many young single men who do not qualify for supplementary benefit and to whom "Arthur's shilling" is very welcome - another source, paid out of Union funds, of Scargill's patronage administered through his cronies. Many of these lads are quite happy to use mass pickets as alternative situations for what are normally their Friday and Saturday night punch-ups. Many long outstanding personal feuds between miners and groups of miners are fought out under cover of a mass picket and many personal scores are settled. Yorkshire police, familiar with the way of life in the mining towns and villages, may well, in some cases, enter into the spirit of the affair as I know them to do from time to time in the course of their normal patrols in normal times. That some of this has been going on during this dispute is a playing out on a public scale of activities which are part and parcel of community life. For example, much play was recently made in the press about the bricks being thrown through the windows of the police station of Goldthorpe. We cannot be sure this has much to do with the mining dispute. The last time the windows were smashed was last Christmas and similar events have occurred approximately three times in the last 18 months to two years. It is the way of life. This is why it is best to use out-county police forces to deal with Yorkshire pickets.

Outside Yorkshire and the other "militant" areas, the straightforward forms of intimidation (ie violence and threats of violence) are much nearer the surface and many examples have been widely reported and documented. In Nottinghamshire, for example, threats by itinerant Yorkshire miners and Scargill trained Nottinghamshire miners have been well publicised. Alastair Burnett at ITN has received masses of letters over the last few months from wives of miners in South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire complaining of violent intimidation and begging him to provide more coverage of their tribulations on television. I have helped as much as I can in this direction so that some two months ago graphic stories of intimidation began appearing on the News at Ten. Andrew Neil, editor of the Sunday Times, is also aware of this correspondence. I expect Andrew Stephen to produce another major piece for the Sunday Times following on his highly briefed profile of Scargill in the last issue.

I have access to the most reliable freelance and local journalists, mining union members and officials antipathetic to Scargill and political figures in the Labour Party antipathetic to Scargill in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire and could, for known and agreed purposes, get all the information that anyone could get at short notice.

* * * *

Arthur Scargill's conduct in organising his strength in the Labour Party in the Yorkshire area throws a great deal of light on his method of operation⁽⁵⁾. This is easier to follow than his manipulations in the much more closed world of the NUM. Each

affiliated Trade Union branch is permitted a maximum of 6 delegates to any Constituency Labour Party General Management Committee. To gain control of the Labour Parties in South and West Yorkshire, Scargill embarked on a massive programme of affiliation of branches. He even created branches where none had previously existed and he used retired miners and retired pit heads to bump up the numbers. For example, retired miners were to be considered still full members of the Union and were organised into their own branches. Each new branch of course was eligible to affiliate to the local Labour Party. As part of the negotiating process with the NCB Scargill would prevail on them to keep redundant pit heads open. In this way the number of branches for each pit was determined by the number of pit heads. A good example is Highgate Colliery near Barnsley where a new pit head shaft was sunk connecting it with another mine. Scargill got the NCB to keep the old Highgate pit head open even though access to the pit was now available through the new pit head. This enabled him to form two branches out of one pit, both of which would be eligible to affiliate to the Labour Party. Miners delegates from all branches were carefully whipped by the miners head quarters. For instance, in Barnsley, all Labour Party meetings are held in the Yorkshire Area Miners Offices. Before Labour Party GMC meetings letters such as the attached one from Owen Briscoe are sent to all NUM branch delegates. (This, again, is referred to in the Andrew Stephen's article in the Sunday Times.) NUM funds are available to pay subsistence and travel expenses for all NUM delegates to Labour Party meetings and to pay compensation for any absence from work.

The NUM delegation meets in a room in the Miners Offices where they are briefed on the Labour agenda and told of the Area Council's policy which should guide their voting in the Party meeting which immediately follows their Union pre-meeting. They then go into the Labour Party meeting room through a connecting door where they vote en bloc as determined at the pre-meeting. The rigid discipline which governs this procedure is laid down in the Minutes of the Yorkshire Area Council NUM Meeting, under Arthur Scargill's chairmanship (which is attached and referred to above). Scargill now controls all the constituency Labour Parties in South Yorkshire with the possible exceptions of Doncaster City and Rotherham. His people dominate the three District Councils of Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster as well as the South Yorkshire County Council and they have paramount influence in Sheffield City Council. He tried to extend his Labour Party reach into Nottinghamshire following his success in Yorkshire but has made little headway. It is entirely reasonable to deduce his manner of running the NUM from the way in which he has operated in the Labour Party.

* * *

Douglas Eden

16 July 1984

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Attachment (1)

- 1 Article by Andrew Stephen in the Sunday Times, Sunday 15 July, 1984.

Attachment (2)

- 1 Minutes of Ordinary Council Meeting of the Yorkshire Area of the NUM, held on Monday 24 November, 1980.
- 2 Letter from Owen Briscoe, General Secretary of the Yorkshire Area of the NUM to all NUM delegates of the Barnsley Constituency Labour Party.
- 3 SDP Press Release, dated 1 May, 1984.
- 4 SDP Press Release, dated 1 May, 1984.

Attachment (3)

- 1 Three press cuttings from the Barnsley Chronicle, December 1980.

Attachment (4)

- 1 SDP Press Release, dated 9 May, 1984, and copy of speech made by Mr Douglas Eden at Edinburgh on 13 May, 1984.

Attachment (5)

- 1 Affiliation of miners branches to Barnsley CLP.
- 2 Press cutting from the Barnsley Chronicle, April 1982.
- 3 Press cutting from the Sunday Times, April 1981.
- 4 Press cutting from NOW, November 1980.

Attachment one.

People

PROFILE

What drives Arthur Scargill?

Andrew Stephen probes the background and political philosophy of ARTHUR SCARGILL, the most controversial figure in Britain today

ARTHUR Scargill is sitting behind an iron-framed oak desk in primary school in wartime south Yorkshire. He is only six but already he stands out among his 50 or so classmates. Some of them call him *brussen* - cocky - always needing to be right, always verbally outsmarting them. Others admire his superior ways and he has already acquired a small but devoted following in the playground at Worsborough Dale school. They think he is something special. They are right.

Like many of the other boys, he will begin his working life at 15 at the pits. But he will soon escape. He will travel the world, discussing its future with Khrushchev in the Kremlin, Castro in Cuba, go on lecture tours of America, rap out orders in snazzy offices where his portraits hang on the wall, debate in the Oxford and Cambridge unions, stay in a flat in London's fashionable Barbican, close by Tory cabinet ministers.

He will be an important visitor to 10 Downing Street: have a chauffeur, luxury cars, Airedales, ponies, smart suits, a large salary and generous expenses. His verbal smartness will swell into forceful political rhetoric. His enemies will be some of the most influential people in the land. His devoted followers will be members of one of the country's most powerful unions.

Forty years on from the time the blue-eyed little boy sat behind that desk, he will be locked in a conflict that stretches the nation's political system, its method of maintaining law and order and its economy. He will be one of the most important, most admired, most hated, most feared men in the country.

HOW DID he become so special? The most obvious clues lie in his parents. Arthur was an only child. His father, Harold, still alive at 78, was a miner but went into the RAF in the war, so Arthur's mother, Alice, had her young son largely to herself. She doted on him. Years later, when he came home from work, his dinner would be on the table, his slippers waiting, if they weren't, Arthur would be upset. But mother didn't mind: to her Arthur was always on a pedestal. He was devastated when she died when he was 17.

The vital input from his father was political. Although the family's material circumstances were by no means bad - when Arthur was three, the family moved from the basic industrial cottage where he had been born to a comfortable crescent home with two bedrooms and a bathroom - Harold Scargill was a devoted member of the Communist party.

The newspapers that came into the home were the Daily Worker, Reynolds News and Tribune. The pamphlets and tracts were on subjects like starvation in imperialist, capitalism-ruled African countries. The books were The Iron Heel, or People of the Abyss by Jack London, or The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists by Robert Tressell. Not surprisingly, they coloured young Arthur's view of life. Tressell's 633-page "story of 12 months in hell" about a group of oppressed industrial workers, the hero Owen concludes that the public ownership of land, mines, railways, canals, ships, factories, and all other means of production, was the only solution to life's problems.

The boy the mother had placed on a pedestal became an ideologically well-educated young Communist dedicated to overthrowing the capitalist system. It was a potentially explosive combination.

It was natural that he should join the Young Communist League. In those days the YCL had discipline. Stalin was still a wonderful example. Not just anyone could join: it was decided whether you were suitable. You had to have the correct ideas, socialist ideas, and be willing to develop your ideology in a disciplined manner. Because mining dominated the area, much time was devoted to how the industry would play its part in overthrowing capitalism: after all, miners clearly would benefit by Marxist policies.

But they didn't necessarily know that it was capitalism that was holding them back. Strikes, disputes - struggles - could educate them.

Soon Arthur won a place on the national YCL committee, with special responsibilities towards industry. He had become one of Britain's leading young Communists, and his father was proud of him.

BY NOW Arthur was working. Although his mother had wanted to protect him from it, Arthur had gone to the pit at 15. It was a traumatic experience for him: the noise, the dust in the screening sheds (on the surface) and later at the coalface itself were almost too much. Yet the job made sense for anyone who wanted to change the face not just of industry but of Britain too. Increasingly sophisticated automation meant that the number of men needed was certain to decline, just as many pits were sooner or later stocks would be geologically exhausted were doomed. These constant threats or fears simply strengthened the miners' powerful sense of loyalty to both their industry and their union.

And at the busy Woolley pit, north of Barnsley, the young Arthur found plenty of reasons for struggle, straightaway becoming a self-appointed leader of the apprentices who, he insisted, deserved better treatment.

Up to then it had been a relatively peaceful time for management-union relations at Woolley: the union leaders were

least by 1984, the last) time in his life, he tried the first option by standing as a Communist candidate in local council elections in Worsborough. But the proletarian - the working people who were to spearhead the revolution - decisively rejected him. His Labour opponent got 87.2% of the vote to Arthur's 12.8%.

So what was the best way forward? It was an ideologically unsettled time. The Soviet praesidium had started to disown Stalin but the British Communist party had made no protests. Accounts of the way Stalin had murdered and butchered his way through millions of political opponents were yet to gain common currency. How, demanded young Arthur, could you expunge Stalin's achievements merely by renaming Stalingrad and removing his body from the central Moscow mausoleum? Later he was to agree that Stalin had committed - "possibly" - major crimes.

By his mid-twenties Arthur concluded that the Communist party in Britain was a liability to him. Changing the Labour party, he was to decide, seemed the way forward to the revolution. Getting all the Marxist groups, all the left, together: that would produce a totally new socialist party. Before long, he became a card-carrying member of the Labour party. Later, there would be many struggles within it. But what really mattered for now was the struggles within the National Union of Mineworkers and the coal industry itself. For Arthur, the real power lay



Anne Scargill, strong

moderates and got on well with management. Such harmony - or complacency - was a problem for any dedicated young Communist activist. Only conflict, struggle, after all, could educate the workers out of their apathy and bring about the revolution.

The problem was that most of the workers had little time for cocky young newcomers, practitioners of verbal one-upmanship. So when the teenage Arthur stood up at a pit union meeting and suggested, among other things, that the workers should send a delegate to the World Youth Festival in Moscow, the union leaders walked out.

But Arthur knew that many struggles had to be fought and lost before the struggle was won. He persisted. The workers had to be won over. He took his trip to Moscow (the first but not the last) and, as a member of the elite of the British Communist world, was given an audience with Khrushchev and other members of the praesidium at the Kremlin; he thought Khrushchev a convincing performer.

Back in Barnsley he joined the CND and rapidly rose in its Yorkshire leadership too. His political involvement was spreading beyond the direct interests of the miners whom he was striving to represent.

But, like all young Communists, Arthur soon faced an ideological dilemma: should he take the struggles directly to the people, and stand for election, or should he keep them confined to industry? When he was 22, for the first (and, at

They became disunited. Marx had said that this form of wage system was the most capitalist of all. If workers were set against each other instead of all being in the same, uniform, boat, they could never take on the bosses.

Arthur was acquiring a reputation at the pit; he was smart, go-ahead, hard-working, and far more articulate than the old moderate union men. He had won many of the workers over, begun the process of educating them. By the time he was 26, they voted him to be their delegate and representative at area meetings of the union. It propelled him into the heart of the NUM, for the Yorkshire area was richer than the rest of the union put together. It effectively ended his period as an ordinary, everyday miner: although delegates were still on the payroll as miners, since nationalisation a blind eye had been turned if they devoted themselves to union work. But it counted as being a miner.

The relative peace of the rich Yorkshire coalfield was no more. It was becoming militant, angry, in feeling. Struggle was in the air. A demand for an eight-hour day was put forward (Marx had argued, and left-wing union tradition agreed, that action to determine the working day meant a protracted civil war between bosses and workers.) This was unofficial, unauthorised by the union, but it was a rehearsal for a bigger struggle to come. Emissaries were sent to bring out the Scottish and Welsh coalfields, to Nottinghamshire, to Derbyshire. You must extend the struggle; make it national. Cars, minibuses, last-second switches, changes of tactics, organised chaos. The police could hardly cope.

Strike vote

This particular struggle faded away, but the new militancy had given the moderate union leadership a shock. They agreed, as an appeasement, to make future strikes easier after industrial disputes in 1969 and 1970; the majority vote needed in a strike ballot was lowered from 66% to 55%. Before long, that dry run, the struggle over the eight-hour day when Arthur had been in the forefront, would pay off and 57% of the country's miners would vote to strike over pay.

It would prove to be a strike that would not only irrevocably change the miners' union. It would also change the face of British politics. It would ultimately lead to the downfall of the government and its prime minister, Edward Heath: his place as leader of the Conservative party would be taken by Margaret Thatcher.

Arthur, now 33, was in his element and became official spokesman of the strike committee in his area. More important, he was put in charge of picketing. Initially there were disagreements inside the strike committee on the subject. Do you send your troops to many places, the enemy's vulnerable points, such as power stations, coke and coal depots, and diffuse your effort - or do you concentrate en masse somewhere? Arthur insisted on the latter. Marx, too, had taught that industry itself would create better communications and transport, which the workers could then exploit to centralise their numerous struggles.

Hundreds of men were sent by Arthur to Ipswich docks, where a heaving mass stopped coal being unloaded. The flying picket had been invented. Many of them were put up in their study bedrooms by students at Essex University, where two cultures inevitably clashed: revolutionary women students, having expressed solidarity with the miners, were hurt and confused to find themselves the subjects of ribald sexual remarks.

But this was only a rehearsal for a greater struggle, as are all struggles until the final victory dawns. East Anglia was still out in the boondocks. What was needed was a mass demo somewhere central, somewhere visible. One rainy weekend Arthur seized his chance. The phone rang in the strike HQ in Barnsley: more men were needed at the Salfley coke depot in Birmingham. Within hours, Arthur had jumped in his car and was on the way down himself.

Everything was well set up by the strike organisers. The Yorkshire lads sent to Birmingham stayed at the city's Communist party HQ. Arthur



Richard Cole

visit Moscow again; spend a May Day with Mick McGahey, hardline CP man and fellow NUM executive member, in Cuba; surprise delegates at a TUC conference by clapping his applauders, East European-style, after a speech; approve the Moscow Olympics, denounce Solidarity in Poland; and criticise the dispatch of the Falklands task force.

But his international interests did not mean any relaxation in his efforts at home. He was committed to changing the Labour party, so that all the left could join it and change it. Being a social democratic party, Labour could only go so far along the road to socialism; it would then be replaced by a real socialist party. Power in the union could and should mean power in the party, for trade unions had constitutional links with the Labour party. Indeed, they were its paymasters.

In the late 1970s, the power of the miners' union within the Labour party in south Yorkshire - and beyond - grew rapidly. Miners' MPs such as Roy Mason, a moderate and former cabinet minister, found themselves fighting for their political lives when faced with the onslaught. Some, like Brian Key, Euro MP for South Yorkshire since 1979, were ousted. His place in Strasbourg is now held by a close political and union ally of Arthur's.

In the fight to take control of the Labour party, a new weapon had been invented by the miners - the flying delegate. Union men were delegated to attend party business meetings. If delegates missed a meeting to attend, they were paid by the union and given fares and expenses. A miners' caucus meeting was often held before Labour meetings, at which the line would be discussed; the area general secretary would notify delegates of the time and place.

Nationally, Labour's constitution changed and trade unions could have a major say in appointing party leaders. Things were going Arthur's way. And all these changes were completely legal, all above board.

In 1982, the inevitable happened: Arthur was elected president of the union, receiving more than 70% of the vote. Straightaway the union HQ was moved from London to Sheffield; south Yorkshire, after all, was his power base.

Within the union there were surprises. He spoke out against making strikes easier still by lowering the majority needed to only 50%; that, Arthur explained, would always give the bosses the opportunity to say half the workforce opposed a strike.

Hit list

He hit on a brilliant propaganda ploy by repeatedly insisting that the coal board had a hit list of pits to close. He could not lose, because pits were always closing because of exhaustion and geological conditions, and any competent management would always have some kind of hit list.

King Arthur did not get everything right in the struggles. The union held two ballots on calls for industrial action in 1982 and 1983. But the miners rejected them decisively. Finally, however, a strike - the current one - did come without a ballot being held. (Interestingly, during the dispute, the union rules have been changed so a strike could now be called with a majority of only 50% plus.) The beauty of it all, again, is that it is all legal and above board, all within the union rules.

And now the big struggle is on. Arthur's followers believe they have nothing to lose but their chains, and a world to win: Marx said as much. But now, each has lost an estimated average of £3,000 in wages. Two have been killed on picket lines. There have been 4,000 arrests, 1,000 injuries.

Whatever the outcome of Scargill's strike - as the government has dubbed it - further struggle inevitably lies ahead, whether to expand on success or to regain lost ground.

met and organised the struggle with officials from other unions such as the Transport and General Workers' Union. Different workers from different unions, after all, had to centralise their struggle. Within days, Arthur was directing the outdoor struggles with a megaphone. Thousands of men clashed with thousands of police. Things became violent.

When Arthur saw, coming over the brow of a hill, a silk trade-union banner at the head of thousands of approaching miners, everything he believed in crystallised. It was glorious. The chief constable, fearing death and destruction, ordered: "Close the gates." It was Arthur's finest moment, his finest struggle, to date; he clambered on to a men's lavatory roof and addressed the crowd through a police megaphone.

IT MADE ARTHUR; at the same time it began the political crucifixion of the prime minister, Edward Heath, who the following year was to try to counter yet another miners' strike with a three-day week. The miners finally accepted a £103m pay settlement, but Arthur advised them to vote against acceptance. He even went to Downing Street to discuss it all with Heath. Finally Heath had to vacate No 10 for a man Arthur was to regard as another Tory - Harold Wilson. But Arthur, the victor, had become a media figure; his face was always on TV. He was nationally known.

Luck too played its part in his rapid climb to the top. First the union area's full-time compensation agent, a Communist, died; he left vacant a job vital to anyone who wanted to advance, because the agent was always seen to be fighting the management on behalf of "the lads", always able to give the stricken miner the good news that he was getting compensation. Arthur swept in with 28,050 votes, 18,000 more than his nearest rival. When the area president died in 1973 Arthur quickly won his job - but kept the vital compensation agent's position too.

In Yorkshire he was now, at 35, King Arthur: the youngest NUM regional president in history.

He was working harder than ever, sometimes on the verge of workaholicism: at one stage he had to take time off work, and he also developed a nervous twitch. But he would invariably normally be reached, even at weekends, at his office on the phone. He had a lawyer's eye for detail: he had skilfully handled the inquiry into the 1973 Lofthouse colliery disaster, when seven men died. He revitalised the union offices, rushing them into the 20th century. Marx had predicted it would be possible, that the workers should take advantage of bourgeois technology to fight the class war.

Out went the ancient typewriters; in came brand-new IBM electric. Calculators, tape recorders, batteries of aides. Arthur liked to be a step ahead,

in technology, in argument. Reminding everyone of his part in a particularly epic struggle, a tableau depicting Arthur at Salfley was hung in his office. A microfiche system that could produce any member's file within seconds, electronically-operated from 400ft. And through those front doors came every daily newspaper.

For Arthur was very media-conscious. He developed an acute wardrobe sense, collar and tie and smart suit for meetings and studio discussions, anorak and jaunty baseball cap for demos. A receding hairline would soon be covered by a new sweep-over "buffant" look. Though he would rarely drink, he would be televised sitting in a pub with a beer in his hand: that is what miners did.

He gave interview after interview, delivered speech after speech. He remembered that first day at the pit, not half he didn't. The noise! The dust! No, he was not a Communist. He thought a lot of things were wrong with Russia. But he liked Cuba. He was a card-carrying member of the Labour party, always striving for the best pay and conditions for his members: he'd sue, successfully, if anyone suggested otherwise. And he was a Christian, yes: wasn't Jesus a socialist?

But yes, he did believe very simply in the immediate nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, a complete and utter change in society. That is why

conflict was created, why there was struggle. Would there be trade unions after the revolution? Well, a tricky one, that; probably, but there'd be no need for them, would there?

There could be no collaboration with, no attempt to live in, a capitalist society. Even workers' control was diabolical, because it implied acceptance of a society that had, no question about it, to be abolished. And did you know that miners on bonus rates were 7,400% more likely to be killed than ordinary miners? Journalists duly scribbled; occasionally some would check Arthur's claims, and find out that the 7,400% claim, for example, was based on just five deaths, four of them on the surface.

But if Arthur was impressing some of the NUM members, he was alarming the two men at the top of the miners' union. Lawrence Daly, the general secretary, took Arthur apart at a union conference in 1975. Machiavelli's princes were mere amateurs compared with this, said Daly, and he was not having it. But that year Daly was badly injured in a car crash. Joe Gormley, a moderate and union president since 1971, who made no secret of his antagonism towards Scargill, later warned him that he was not president - yet. But everyone knew it was only a matter of time.

But before it came about there was time for Arthur to

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