

In Trade Union World on Channel 4 this weekend, there were some fascinating interviews with working miners. Their concerns and rhetoric were of great interest. None of them mentioned the question of uneconomic or economic pits, or commercial logic. They all saw the dispute in terms of democracy and a conflict of loyalties. As one of them said, the question for him was whether to support "loyalty to the NUM or loyalty to the Notts miners". After much heart-searching, "I found my loyalty was loyalty to democracy and the Notts miners".

Another miner commented on how "I feel ashamed about drawing money . . . but I will support the Notts men". He said "Scargill has thrown all democracy through the window".

Those involved in setting up the Notts Working Miners' Committees have said many people had come to Committee members asking "what can I do?" Money had flooded in, and much of it had come from old age pensioners: Colin Clark, President of the National Working Miners' Committee, said these pensioners saw in Scargill "another dictator . . . we don't want another Hitler". He stressed over and over again the importance of the views of the membership of the union, and explained that it was the Working Miners' Committee that was out to "safeguard the rights of the membership".

All this to me indicates that the strong points that have to be made - as in the draft speech for Conference - are points about democracy, ballotting and loyalties, and not points about economics.

In a recent interview, Neil Kinnock agreed that a ballot would have given "a coherence to the efforts of the miners" at the outset of the strike. He conceded that there are circumstances where the miners would consider closures on economic grounds. He stated "I do not think the miners' strike enhances the standing of the Labour Party".

He was then closely questioned about the problem of Militant Tendency. He stated that "it will be defeated . . . by a demonstration that . . . it's alien to the democratic tradition of the Labour Party". When an organisation contradicts the constitution of the Labour Party it has to be dealt with. "Sectarianism and infiltration do not thrive in the Labour Party".



JOHN REDWOOD