

Thatcher endorses police conduct in miners' dispute

● Mrs Thatcher praised the police last night for their conduct in the mining dispute. She was speaking on the eve of the emergency Commons debate.

● More than a thousand pickets took police by surprise at two pits in the Midlands. About a hundred miners were arrested and tension increased sharply

● A bitter war of words has opened between miners and police about overall police tactics including allegations that the police are using underhand methods

● Extra school dinner supervisors were drafted into Doncaster despite a teacher's strike to ensure miners' children were provided with free school meals

By Julian Haviland, Anthony Bevins and Richard Evans

The Prime Minister last night endorsed without reservation the conduct of the police and their "very, very great achievement" in seeing that miners who wanted to go to work could do so. She said the police had been wonderful.

"I find it totally and utterly false to cast a slur on the police for the superb way they have handled this dispute."

On the eve of today's emergency Commons debate on police activities in the dispute, Mrs Margaret Thatcher foregrounded the defence which Mr Leon Brittan, the Home Secretary, is expected to mount. Her language was also a warning of the severity with which the Government means to treat any generalized criticism of the police from the Labour benches.

She said that if there were individual complaints about policemen there was well-established machinery for pursuing them, but added: "I would be very, very concerned indeed if I thought that people were going for the police, except on specific complaints."

Mrs Thatcher, who was being interviewed by Sir Robin Day

on BBC 1's *Panorama*, complimented the police for the way they had kept open a man's right to go to work unmolested. This was a fundamental right and "it would be far better if people looked at who is trying to stop that right, and criticized them."

She said the dispute was not between the miners and the Government, but between miners and miners. "Some passionately want to work and are working; others want to vote and are not being allowed to vote."

The Government was not involved in the dispute. "I believe the police are upholding the law; they are not upholding the Government."

The National Union of Mineworkers had in its constitution a right to a national ballot, but had not yet been able to have one.

On the wider question of coal industry's future, the Prime Minister said no government in history had invested more and that the Government and Mr Ian MacGregor, the Coal Board chairman, wanted a prosperous industry producing coal economically.

She said that there was no difference between Labour and Conservative governments on their attitudes to pit closures. Certain pits had to be closed.

The choice was whether to subsidize older pits which were not as good, not as healthy to work in, or to invest in new pits, much healthier for miners, and much better equipped for the future.

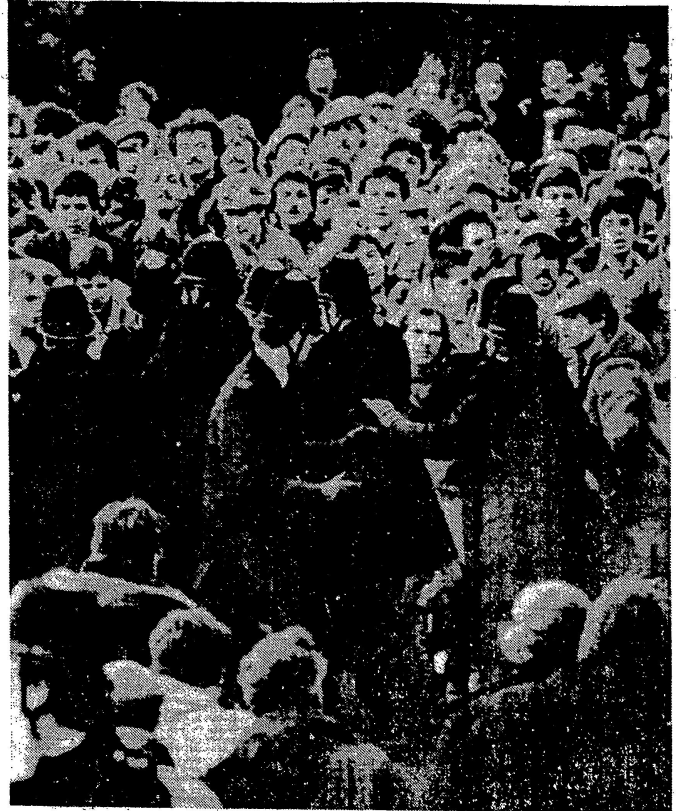
Towards the end of an interview which touched on most points of current political controversy, Sir Robin asked about the £300m contract for a new hospital in the Gulf state of Oman, which Mrs Thatcher helped secure for Cementation International with which her son, Mark, was connected.

Was she at any time warned by officials of a possible conflict between her public duties and her son's private interests?

Mrs Thatcher answered along lines familiar to MPs who have several times heard her pressed on the question in the Commons.

She had been advised to raise the matter of the whole university contract with the Oman government, and had

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Police moving in to separate pickets at Babbington Colliery.

IRA guns used for 7 killings

From Richard Ford

World Court will be ignored by US

From Nicholas Ashford, Washington

Thatcher endorses police

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done so "I believe very forcefully" because she wanted the business to come to Britain.

"I am sorry the Labour Party does not like the business coming to Britain."

Sir Robin asked if the public could be sure that, if all the facts were disclosed, there would be no evidence of impropriety on the Prime Minister's part and no breach of the standards expected of those in public life.

"I believe that is correct."

"Then why not publish all the facts?"

"Because the facts will be published in due course, when the 30 year records come. But you know as well as I do that discussion between heads of government is confidential."

Was the Labour Party really suggesting that she should break confidentiality on commercial contracts and that this was the way to get contracts for Britain?

"They have not been able to say that a single thing I did was wrong, not a single thing." The work has come to Britain, and it was the government of Oman which had decided where it should go.

Sir Robin put once more the one point which has been made consistently by Mr Peter Shore, chief Labour spokesman on trade and industry, that the Prime Minister's mistake was her refusal to say whether she knew that her son had had a financial interest.

Mrs Thatcher replied: "I answer for what I do."

Doubts dispelled on Trident

Mrs Thatcher dispelled all possible doubts about the future of the Trident deterrent system, when she said that nothing else could give such good deterrent value for the money, nearly £9,000m on the latest estimates.

But she also said: "I do not recognize a moral case against it. Either we have these weapons, or we leave them totally in the hands of the potential aggressor."

"To leave the world's most powerful weapon totally in the hands of a potential aggressor seems to me to be the height of absurdity and danger. The nuclear deterrent is there to deter all war, and it has."

Nevertheless, the Prime Minister said that there was a need for an East West dialogue, "to talk across the divide", because once the Soviet bloc understood that Nato was purely defensive and that both sides had a common interest in a reduction of armaments, then a movement in disarmament talks might become possible.

As for the European negotiations, Mrs Thatcher said that she was fairly confident of a budgetary settlement, but she was robust in her response when Sir Robin said that she had been accused of being tiresome.

"There are nine of them being tiresome, and only one of me, I can cope with the nine of them, so they ought to be able

to stand one of me. They could end the tiresomeness and stubbornness by giving me what I want, which is a fair deal for Britain."

Mrs Thatcher, who said that she had every intention of fighting the next election even though she might be 62 and hold the record for the longest continuous period in No 10, said that consensus was not her style. It was too "wishy-washy."

"We got a really rather good consensus during the last election. Consensus behind my convictions. I go for agreement; agreement for the things I want to do."

Her political and economic purpose were summed up in the plan to build what the Prime Minister called "a go-getter society."

"It doesn't matter where you are, where you come from. If you can make a contribution to our society and if you can build up a fortune for yourself, if you can, jolly good luck to you."

"I want the successful people here. That is the sort of economy I am building: not an envious society, but a go-getter society, which will in fact create profitable business and good jobs for other people."

Mrs Thatcher said that Britain was on the move, with a new kind of industrial revolution which was bringing new industries with good prospects and a good future.

Since 1979, British investment overseas had risen from £15,000m to £50,000m.

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By Julian Haviland, Anthony Bevins and Richard Evans.

The Times (London, England), Tuesday, Apr 10, 1984; pg. 1; Issue 61802. (1328 words)

Category: News

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Gale Document Number:CS17141386