

Prime Minister (4)

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File

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OPINION RESEARCH ON ATTITUDES TO TRADE UNIONS

This survey, like most other recent studies, shows that there is widespread support for the Government's aims and considerable dissatisfaction with the tactics employed by radical unions. But it indicates considerable misgivings about the Government's present performance.

1. Trade Union Behaviour

Although 75% of trade unionists say that their union is protecting their interests very well or fairly well (table 25), almost everyone is dissatisfied with the methods employed by some trade unions: 84% of those interviewed oppose the mass picketing tactics used in the miners strike (table 5), and 75% disapprove of 'sympathy strikes' such as those organised by the dockers (table 11). 63% believe that unions should be more democratic (table 22).

2. The New Laws

Most people support the aims of the new laws: for example, 73% are strongly in favour of secret strike ballots (table 1). Moreover, 77% of those interviewed believe that unions should obey the law (table 9). But 78% think that the new laws have worked badly or not very well (table 14), and 57% of these believe that the problem is caused by people's unwillingness to use the laws (table 15).

81% believe that there is a case for new, tougher laws on union power and mass picketing (table 16). And 83% believe that the Government should restrict the number of pickets by law, though only 57% are in favour of the limit being placed as low as 6 (table 4).

3. Handling of the Miners Strike

63% believe that the Government has handled the strike either badly or 'not very well' (table 13). 32% consider that the Government has been too weak, whereas only 26% believe that it has been too tough (table 34). 82% believe that employers should have made more use of the picketing laws (table 8).

Conclusion

It appears that the Government is likely to find popular favour if it:

- a. encourages more use of the civil law in the miners' strike,
- b. continues to take tough action on mass picketing,
and
- c. introduces new rules on picketing in the next round of trade union legislation.

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