

10 July 1985

PRIME MINISTER

VICTIMISATION OF WORKING MINERS

When you see Mr Walker today, you may wish to ask him about various disturbing reports which suggest that there may be even more victimisation of working miners than had previously been suspected.

We attach an article from the Daily Telegraph, which gives a detailed account of intimidation in the Kent coalfield. The most disconcerting feature of the report is the suggestion that the NCB's transfer policy is proving ineffective; (see highlighted paragraph).

We also attach a report from the Conservative Backbench Energy Committee which records the evidence given to the Committee by representatives of the CTU and the National Working Miners. They alleged that:

1. NCB transfer arrangements are not working.
2. The Industrial Relations Officers employed by the NCB are former members of the NUM who support the strikers and disapprove of the working miners.
3. Selby is now in the hands of militants.
4. The intimidation of working miners now, will make them unwilling to work when the next strike comes.
5. Money given by the Government to the NUM (via Hobart House) for training is being abused.

Apparently, the Department of Energy do not believe that the picture given by CTU and NWM to the Backbench Committee was accurate: a refutation is said to be on the way. You may want to ask Mr Walker about this.

OL Letwin

Oliver Letwin

WORK-ON MINERS STILL FACE THREATS AND ASSAULT

By GERALD BARTLETT

MINERS who worked during the pit strike claim they are still being assaulted, intimidated and spat on in the street throughout the militant Kent coalfield.

Despite promises from senior Coal Board officials that victimisation would be stopped, wives and children of miners who worked at Kent's Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown collieries still claim they are being abused.

Four months after the strike ended they are being jostled, stoned and cat-called in and around their homes, they say.

Houses being daubed with a combination of tar, creosote and flotation oil and windows being smashed at night by flying rocks are said to be commonplace in the mining communities in and around Dover and Deal.

Pet cats and dogs, it is claimed, are regularly wounded and maimed by bullies' heavy boots and working miners' vehicles are apparently sabotaged.

Screwdrivers are still apparently being rammed between the ribs of those who worked. Such incidents happen on the way up and down pit shafts in darkened cages.

Slums offered

Men offered transfers to pits away from their daily tormenters say that the Coal Board is offering them "appalling slums" to live in. Some claim that militants are threatening potential buyers of their Kent homes with daubing and broken windows so that they cannot be sold.

A young Tilmanstone miner said yesterday: "Transfer? ... it's a bloody joke when you can't sell your home here and all you have in prospect, by the Coal Board's own admission, is a pit slum up north."

"I can't prove it but I have had three potential buyers of my Deal house frightened off by nasties threatening to smash their windows and daub the house front if they buy a scab's property."

"A new and vicious" twist in the coalfield is the alleged use of schoolchildren to intimidate fellow pupils whose fathers were "scabs."

It is also claimed that "thugs" from the unemployment queues are being selected to abuse and cat-call working miners and their wives as they travel to and from their Kent homes.

An innovation is the breaking open and wrecking of working miners' lockers and soaking their clothes in strong bleach.

A working miner who asked not to be named said last night: "Life is a living hell in Kent for the men who worked during

the pit strike, their wives and children.

"The hate campaign against us is being carefully orchestrated by a handful of vicious miners." One man who held out against practically everything crumpled up when his kids started to be threatened with knives in the playground.

"Intimidation is rife and commonplace in this coalfield but it has come to a pretty pass when those responsible are even recruiting children and the unemployed to do their dirty work."

One of the saddest victims is Mrs Mary Smart, 56, who daily fears attacks on her husband, their Deal home and children and is taunted by neighbours.

She waits up until 2.30 a.m. every day in her Canute Road terraced home with two large walking sticks and a large bottle of bleach by her side.

Little prayer

Recently her husband Alec, 57, returned home from Betteshanger colliery where he loads trains and lorries at the tip, to find his home daubed in black oily sludge.

"It must have happened at about 5 a.m. and I was that angry that it all welled up here in my chest," said Mrs Smart, a grandmother and mother of three, last night.

"I felt so knotted up inside and angry that I had to come back in here to say a little prayer: basically 'If what we are doing is right please show us the way.'"

"To disperse the anger we decorated the daubings with pretty crepe flowers and it became quite a tourist attraction."

Mrs Smart, whose epileptic daughter, Lorna, has twice, she claims, been attacked and left unconscious in the street, regularly receives silent telephone calls and is abused and threatened daily.

"All this does hurt me a great deal," Mrs Smart said. "People round here that are taunting us as scabby b's and worse are lads we've seen grow up from babies these past 30 years."

Silent calls

Her husband whose brother, Stanley, has not spoken to him since the strike began said: "Nobody is going to chase us away from here. I started work at Betteshanger and that's where I'll finish."

Mrs Irene McGibbon, 39, who

frightening things to law-abiding people."

He said five of the nine were striking miners and no doubt inflamed by drink they became a mob.

He said what they did was made no worse or better by the fact that there was a miners' strike.

The nine are: RAYMOND PATTERSON, 24, of Stewart Street, Seaham; MARK ROCHSTER, 22, of Fox Street, Dawdon; KEVIN HUGHES, 20, of Mount Stewart Street, Seaham; JOHN LITTLE, 21, and his brother, BRIAN, 22, of Staverdale Street, Dawdon; STANLEY GREGORY, 22, of Staverdale Street; GARY KRISTENSON, 21, of Daphne Crescent, Seaham; GLEN BLACK, 22, of Dawdon Crescent, Seaham; IAN STEPHENSON, 18, of Helen Street, Dawdon.

led the Kent miners' back-to-work campaign, said at her home in Woolmer, near Deal: "Despite Michael Eaton's (the Coal Board spokesman) brave words to THE DAILY TELEGRAPH about stamping out intimidation way back in April, it still goes on unabated around here.

"The families of men who worked during the strike are still getting a rough ride at the hands of those who didn't. My family has to endure screams of filthy abuse every day; our home has been daubed with creosote many times and there are, of course, the silent phone calls.

"Every day without fail our family car is literally dripping with spittle as is the front of the house. Life is anything but pleasant but I will not be forced away from this part of Kent by these awful bullying yobbos.

"Day by day the conviction grows that this has all been Communist inspired and orchestrated and that this sort of intimidation will never stop until they are out-manoeuvred politically."

When Mrs McGibbon began the back-to-work campaign she and her husband, Robert, 48, a former car worker, knew that leaving his job at Betteshanger was a foregone conclusion.

Final nail

"We knew it was only a matter of time and when redundancies were offered we said 'yes'," said Mrs McGibbon. "I am very very relieved that Bob is now out of the coal industry."

Mrs McGibbon and the wives and families of tormented miners have decided to make a point of reporting every incident of house-daubing, smashed windows, threats and abuse to the police from now on.

"I know the police have got a very difficult job to do but we have got to hit back somehow," said Mrs McGibbon.

At Mill Hill, on the outskirts of Deal, Mr Christopher Woodcock, 36, a Betteshanger coal-face worker for the past five years, has finally given in to the tormentors.

"Life has just become absolutely intolerable and I can't take another second of it," said Mr Woodcock, who has had two ribs and a hand broken by mining bullyboys."

Home sold

"I have sold my home here, a former council terraced house, for £21,000 despite the blue and yellow paint daubed all over it and we are moving north."

"I can't tell you where it is but I will not spend every waking moment wondering whether my wife and children are being up or not."

"They are threatened and abused in the streets. They are spat at and children who go to the same school as mine threaten them with pen-knives because of my pit strike stand."

A 24-year-old underground labourer at Tilmanstone Colliery who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals, said: "My wife and I have had to take almost constant abuse and daily death threats because I worked during the pit strike."

"It's so bad that I can't take my wife into Deal to shop. We have to drive 15 miles to Ramsgate to avoid leering bullyboys and screaming harridans."

"I hope they close down the pits in this dreadful place. That's precisely what all these nasties deserve."

Mr George McAlpine, 55, general manager of the Kent coalfield, said last night: "I firmly believe that intimidation and harassment are receding in this area."

"But if anyone has a genuine on-going feeling that they are not getting a fair crack of the whip — and I mean a genuine feeling — then I would like them to write to me so that I can meet them and deal with the problem."

"We have had nothing reported to us at all for the month of July. I will certainly be looking at allegations that my officials are telling people not to report incidents of intimidation, but I would make no comment on that suggestion at the present time."



COUNCIL REVIEWS SECURITY

By KEITH NURSE
Arts Correspondent

THE British Council has undertaken a £400,000 review of security after the murder of two of its staff by unidentified terrorists in Athens last year.

The new arrangement, disclosed in the council's annual report published yesterday, included heavy expenditure on shatterproof glass, new doors, bag-scanning devices, search staff and, in some cases, structural alterations to premises to reduce points of access.

The costs for the year were £400,000 with an open ended commitment of £250,000 for future years. The council, which has 81 offices and 133 libraries abroad, has sought to keep its premises open to the public and at the same time reduce the risks.

'Saving' requested

One shadowy group indicated last year that the council was a target because it was exporting British "cultural imperialism."

The council has formally asked the Foreign Office for the £1,100,000 "saving" imposed this year as part of government attempts to reduce public expenditure, to be refunded.

Sir John Burgh, director-general, introducing the annual report at a Press conference in London, said:

"The British Council plays a crucial part in trying to promote Britain overseas, to enhance our national reputation at times when it is quite badly damaged by incidents such as the football riots in Brussels."

"Because of this need we have asked the Government for a small increase in our grant in real terms over the next three years."

Britain was at the bottom of the cultural promotions league far behind France, which spent four times more than Britain in this area, Germany, the United States and Japan.

The British Council annual report: 1984/85. The British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN. Price £2.50.

PIT TO CLOSE

Treforgan Colliery near Neath, West Glamorgan, is to close with the loss of more than 200 jobs, the Coal Board announced yesterday. It is the third pit closure announced in South Wales since the end of the miners' strike.

Leg ha

A LEA
Sta
caused t
April an

STR 'TI CALL

By MAUI
Indus

JOURNAL
TIMES,
the related
and a
technol
76 yester
a threat to

a.m. tod
But ne
NUJ m
that there
with m
talks are

Two
The two
offices of
company's
ing new
Later a
rejected in
ing. Voting

The com
per cent.
round plus
cent. for
with new
The unio
duction of
must initia
"research
operation.
compulsory
practice ar
must be re
months.

Es
Also tied
issue is a p
scheme unc
employees
extra £200
five and 10

Problems
ment are f
by a copyr
union says
part of Mr
News Inte
wants too f
journalists'