A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

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A VIEW FROM BELOW: TRADITION, EXPERIENCE AND NATIONALISATION IN THE SOUTH WALES COALFIELD, 1937 - 1957

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VOLUME TWO
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Chapter 10

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Nationalisation: old piss in new pots?

"This Conference marks the most outstanding and supremely important event in our history. It is more than a milestone on the road. It is the dividing line between the past and the future. A line which in time must become so marked as will permit of no retreat, except in memory, and then only for the purpose of deepening our determination to do our part in realising all the possibilities of the future".


"That's nationalisation again for you... The conditions were bad for years after. Good God, it was a Powell Duffryn product which took over in 1947; it was the same people who were in charge of everything. Same everything, barring you became top-heavy with administration... The miners were definitely let down; they thought it was manna from heaven then, but it didn't come".

The Coal Industry Nationalisation Act establishing the National Coal Board received the Royal Assent on July 12th, 1946, and the Board Members formally took office on July 15th of the same year.

Coalfields were divided into 48 geographical areas (each under a general manager) grouped into 8 geographical divisions; at the head of each division was a board consisting of 6 full-time directors including a Chairman and Deputy Chairman. Thus a chain of command was established: Colliery Manager responsible to Area Manager, who was responsible to the Divisional Board, which in turn was responsible to the National Board. NCB headquarters consisted of eight departments: Production, Marketing, Finance, Labour Relations, Manpower and Welfare, Scientific, Legal and Secretary's.

On Vesting Day, Jan. 1st., 1947, the Board took over 14,000 collieries, 55 coking plants, 30 fuel manufacturing plants, 85 brick and pipe works, colliery power stations and waterworks, aerial ropeways and railway sidings. It became the owner of 225,000 acres of farmland, 2,000 farm houses and 141,000 other houses together with railway engines and motor lorries.

The employees totalled 745,000 and, jointly with the Miners' Welfare Commission, the Board became responsible for the welfare and educational activities in every colliery village. Sir Walter Citrine, the Board Member for Manpower and Welfare, was also

1. P.R.O., Coal 21.
Chairman of the Miners' Welfare Commission.

In the South Western Division² the Coal Board took control of 220 collieries which were divided, for administrative purposes, into seven Areas: Swansea, Maesteg, Rhondda, Aberdare, Rhymney, Monmouth and the Severn Areas. The labour force, numbering well over 115,000, produced a saleable tonnage during the first year of nationalisation of 22 ½ million tons and its members were rewarded with average weekly earnings of £6-12-1d. (for underground workers) and £5-13-11d. (for surface workers). By Dec. 31st., 1957, the number of collieries operating in the Division had been cut to 138. Between them, they employed just over 104,000 miners who produced 23 ½ million tons of coal for average weekly earnings of £14-15-6d. (underground workers) and £13-7-9d. (surface workers)³.

Amongst the members of the National and Divisional Boards were men who formerly had been prominent and active officials of the Miners' Union. It was believed, both by management and union that such individuals would bring to their new posts first-hand industrial knowledge and experience which would serve them well in the years to follow⁴. The delegates at the S. Wales miners' Annual Conference in 1947 were informed that "... for the first time, ... the miners are prominently and influentially represented in the direct control and management of the Industry".⁵

Matters of general principle were decided, after 1947, between Executive the NCB and the Executive Council of the NUM; the application and
administration of such matters were dealt with by the Divisional Coal Board and the Area Council of the Union. In the ten months which had elapsed between the Board assuming power and the S.Wales miners' conference in May, 1947, a great deal was accomplished in connection with the work of establishing machinery for mutual discussions. A Conciliation Board Agreement had been concluded on the coalfield which comprised, essentially, the National Model adapted to meet the requirements of the Area. The Agreement provided for the retention of the existing wage arrangements for a temporary period pending the completion of the new wage structure which was being negotiated nationally. Machinery was provided for questions in dispute to be dealt with at colliery level between representatives of the Management and the Lodge. In the event of failure to settle at that stage, cases were to be referred to the Miners' Agents and the Labour Officers of the Board in the Area. Any cases still unsettled were then to be transferred for examination by the Labour Director on the Board where it had been established that a change of circumstances had taken place. Whilst the NCB was entitled to invoke the provisions of the National Wage Agreement, they chose instead — presumably as a gesture of goodwill — to proceed with negotiations for putting into effect the five-day week and also to examine the proposals for a new wage structure and other matters which could otherwise have been excluded. The Exec. Council of the S. Wales NUM responded with the following public display of gratitude in its Annual Conference Report:

"These decisions are appreciated as a generous gesture on the part of the National Coal Board and are earnest of its desire from the outset to secure friendly and cooperative relationships
Consultative Committees were established at National Divisional, Area and Colliery levels, and all were linked together. At the collieries the committees were designed to take the place of existing Pit Production Committees, but with additional functions. By May, 1947, the National and Divisional Committees were already in operation and committees were in the process of formation at Area and Colliery levels. All of them were designed to cover a wide range of subjects, all of which would have, it was believed, "a most important bearing on the general conditions of employment and health and safety provisions". Direct links were to be established between individual collieries, the areas, the divisions and the National Committee, with representatives of the NCB present throughout the various stages.

At the 1947 Conference, the Executive Council of the S. Wales miners declared its satisfaction with the progress which the NCB had been making towards fulfilling the main provisions of the Miners' Charter. They were especially pleased with the haste with which the Board and the Government had tackled the questions of hours of employment and holidays, for, by May, 1947, the five-day week and layout for statutory holidays had been realised. The union had also been promised by the Government priority for the building of houses in the mining areas.

The operation of the Five Day Week began on the first working day following the S. Wales Conference (May 5th, 1947) and was
regarded as a reform of major importance and one that had been earnestly desired for many years. It provided that without any reduction in wages the period of employment in each week should be five shifts instead of six: the aggregate hours to be reduced to a maximum of 42½ per week. These conditions were familiar to the S. Wales coalfield as they had for many years been in operation there in relation to the afternoon and nightshifts - the only coalfield in the country where the principle of five shifts worked for six days' pay had been applied hitherto.

The Area Executive Council allowed itself and its union's members a modicum of self-congratulation that their example, in defending this "privilege", had possibly helped other coalfields secure the same benefit: the six-for-five principle had been "... retained for many years", declared the author of the 1947 Annual Conference Report, "notwithstanding the strenuous efforts made by the Coalowners for its abolition during the several crises we have experienced". 12

The "generosity" was far from being one-sided however, for amongst the more painful sacrifices which the workforce made in return for the new concessions was recognition of the fact that a number of mines should have to close and their employees re-deployed in more efficient collieries. This physical contraction of the coal industry was to prove to be probably the most traumatic of all post-war developments in South Wales. Its course between 1947 and 1967 is illustrated, below, in Figs. 1-3, pp. 8, 9 & 10.

It can be seen quite clearly that the years of greatest con-
traction on the S. Wales coalfield were those immediately following upon nationalisation and those which followed the downturn in market demand during the late 'Fifties. The worst single years were 1948, 1949 and 1959, during which a combined total of no less than 36 collieries ceased production. (See Fig. 3 p. 10) In terms of numbers of collieries closed as a proportion of the total situated in any coalfield, S. Wales along with Scotland and Durham, suffered badly. Within the Welsh Division itself, the Area hardest hit by closures was that of Swansea/Neath, closely followed by those of Monmouth and the Rhondda. (See Fig. 2 p. 9b) The Areas which fared best between 1947 and 1957 were Maesteg, Aberdare and Rhymney. These closures resulted, in the long term, in great reductions both of the numbers of miners employed and of the tonnages of coal produced. Figure 4, p. 11, charts the total saleable tonnage produced by individual Divisions from 1947 to 1974 and illustrates the general decline in production of all the Divisions charted. It can be seen that the initial closures had little obvious effect upon overall production which rose generally until stagnation became evident during the mid-'Fifties. By 1957, however, production totals everywhere were falling and nowhere faster than in S. Wales, where colliery closures once again began to gather a momentum which they maintained right through the 'Sixties. Figures 5 - 9, pp. 13-17, illustrate the fact that this decline in overall production totals was paralleled by what was, until the late 1950s, a very moderate increase in output per manshift but which became, during the 1960s, an increase of spectacular proportions and one which reflected itself most clearly in
FIG. 1  NUMBER OF PRODUCING COLLIERIES (BY DIVISION)

1947-1974

- DURHAM AND NORTHUMBERLAND
- SCOTLAND
- SOUTH WALES
- YORKSHIRE
- EAST MIDLANDS
- WEST MIDLANDS

(1967-74 FIGURES INCL. N. DERBY, N. & S. NOTTS. + S. MIDLANDS AREAS ONLY AFTER REORGANIZATION)

- SOUTHWALES
- DURHAM AND NORTHUMBERLAND
- WEST MIDLANDS (STAFFORDSHIRE ONLY AFTER 1967 REORGANIZATION)
FIG. 2

FIG. 3  NUMBERS OF NCB COLLIERIES CLOSED
ANNUALLY IN THE SOUTH WALES AREA,
increased production per manshift at the coal-face.

(See Figs. 5 and 6)

Figures 7, 8 and 9 show that, apart from S. Wales which suffered the most severe bout of early colliery closures, the NCB Divisions managed to retain, for the most part, their 1947 quotas of employees. Enforced redundancies through colliery closures were largely offset by redeployment of personnel, and coal output increased by 13% between 1947 and 1957, from 197 to 224 million tons overall. Most of the increase took place between 1947 and 1949 with an output level of 215 million tons being achieved in the latter year. In S. Wales, overall productivity rose quite sharply until 1950 and stagnated to 1957.

This "stagnation" belied the fact, however, that productivity was rising rapidly in the highly mechanized and well seams pits and that this was largely offset by "low and falling productivity in the poorer, older pits". In S. Wales, the contrast between the more productive pits and those which were poorer and/or older was quite startling. It was a contrast which reflected itself clearly in the productivity returns of the individual Areas, or administrative sub-regions, of the Division.

The Area Differences

Neither the size nor the manpower distributions of the individual Areas of the South Western Division of the NCB were equal. The Monmouthshire Area, for example, employed over
27,000 colliery workers who were deployed across a good part of the country, whereas the Aberdare Area, comprising of the Cynon Valley, part of the Merthyr Valley and also of the northern end of Rhondda Fach, employed just over 12,000.\(^\text{15}\) The workforce of the Rhondda Area 'proper' in 1947 stood at just over seventeen and a half thousand; Maesteg, just over thirteen thousand; Rhymney, just under fourteen thousand; and Swansea employed 22,128.

The sizes of the collieries, both in terms of manpower and output, varied quite dramatically. In the Monmouthshire Area for instance, the 440,000 tons per year Oakdale pit was operating in 1947 within five miles of the 6,000 tons per year Erskine colliery near Aberbeeg.\(^\text{16}\) In the environs of Clydach in the Swansea Area, the Mynydd Newydd colliery employed just one hundred men and operated alongside the Clydach-Merthyr colliery with its six-hundred and thirty employees.\(^\text{17}\)

The average manpower-figure per colliery for the whole division in 1947 was 573.\(^\text{18}\) This figure is, however, largely meaningless when the size-range of individual collieries within any area is taken into consideration. There was a wide difference in-average colliery sizes even between the designated Areas themselves. They ranged from 350 men per colliery in the Swansea Area to 715 men per colliery in the Rhymney Area.\(^\text{19}\)
FIG. 5

OUTPUT PER MANSHEF WORKED AT THE
COALFACE: 1946-1971/12.
FIG. 6

OUTPUT PER MANSIFT WORKED
FIG. 7. MANPOWER / PRODUCTIVITY: YORKSHIRE + SOUTH WALES 1947 - 1974

- MANPOWER
- SOUTH WESTERN DIVISION (SOUTH WALES)
- YORKSHIRE
- NORTH EASTERN DIVISION (YORKSHIRE)
- MANPOWER
- PRODUCTIVITY
- GONDIZER AREA
- MINE - 50%
FIG. 9. MANPOWER/PRODUCTIVITY: SCOTLAND + NORTH WESTERN
1947-1974
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Total Manpower</th>
<th>Average Colliery Manpower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B/ground. A/ground. All</td>
<td>B/ground. A/ground. All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swansea</td>
<td>16,600 5,528 22,128</td>
<td>263 87 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maesteg</td>
<td>11,019 2,080 13,099</td>
<td>444 83 524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhondda</td>
<td>14,478 3,199 17,677</td>
<td>467 103 569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdare</td>
<td>9,871 2,243 12,114</td>
<td>429 98 527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhymney</td>
<td>11,565 2,401 13,966</td>
<td>642 133 775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmouthshire</td>
<td>27,204 4,414 27,204</td>
<td>584 113 697</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Figures calculated from Colliery Lists, taken from Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory, 1947.

These differences in pit size tended to reflect themselves in the annual productivity returns, though there was no hard and fast rule here. Thus, the approximate annual production per employee in the Aberdare Area in 1947 was just over 271 tons which compared very favourably with the 199 tons and 196 tons achieved in the same year in the Swansea and Monmouthshire Areas respectively. The approximate annual production of the "average" mineworker in each of the six S. Wales Areas in 1947 was as follows:

- Swansea: 199.2 tons per annum
- Maesteg: 259.5 tons per annum
- Rhondda: 238.9 tons per annum
- Aberdare: 271.2 tons per annum
- Rhymney: 308.0 tons per annum
- Monmouth: 196.5 tons per annum
- Average (all): 245.5 tons per annum

* This rough figure is based on the returns registered in the C.Y.B. & C.T.D. for the year 1947. It takes into account only the tonnage produced at each Area and Colliery, and the manpower it took to produce that tonnage. None of the other vitally important variables, such as manshifts-worked, have been taken into account. Great care should be taken in using these figures as anything other...
than the most approximate guide to productivity-ratings.

** Ibid.**

More accurate returns from individual Areas were compiled by the Board in 1949 and released by the NUM in 1950. They illustrate very clearly the disparities which existed between Areas within the coalfield. Table 2 charts the numbers of collieries situated within weekly tonnage categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Tonnage</th>
<th>Area No.1</th>
<th>Area No.2</th>
<th>Area No.3</th>
<th>Area No.4</th>
<th>Area No.5</th>
<th>Area No.6</th>
<th>Area No.7</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7,000 tons and over</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 to 7,000 tons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 to 5,000 tons</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 to 3,000 tons</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 to 2,000 tons</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1,000 tons</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area No.1 also referred to as the Swansea, or Anthracite Area.

Area No.2 also referred to as the Maesteg Area.

Area No.3 also referred to as the Rhondda Area.

Area No.4 also referred to as the Aberdare Area.

Area No.5 also referred to as the Rhymney Area.

Area No.6 also referred to as the Monmouthshire Area.

Area No.7 also referred to as the Severn, or F. of Dean & Somerset Area.

An analysis of these figures reveals that, in the Swansea Area, only in one undertaking did the average production exceed 1,000 tons per day, whilst in approximately 79 per cent. of the undertakings the average output per day was below 600 tons. The Maesteg Area fared little better with only two undertakings averaging 1,000 tons per day and 55 per cent. of its pits producing less than an average of 600 tons per day. In the Rhondda Area, in 3 or approximately 30 per cent. of the undertakings the average production exceeded 1,000 tons per day whilst 50 per cent. of its pits produced an average daily output of less than 600 tons. Monmouthshire, also, returned poor figures with only 30 per cent. of its undertakings producing more than an average of 1,000 tons per day and approximately 50 per cent. producing an average of below 600 tons per day.

Easily the two most productive Areas were the oldest strongholds of the Powell Duffryn Company: in the Aberdare Area, production exceeded 1,000 tons per day in 9, or 56 per cent. of the undertakings. In only 32 per cent. of the Area's undertakings did the output produced per day fall below 600 tons. In the Rhymney Area, production exceeded 1,000 tons per day in 11, or 69 per
cent. of the undertakings and in only 12.5 per cent. of the Area's pits was production averaging below 600 tons per day.

In the Severn Area production was below 1,000 tons per day at all six collieries. In 80% of the collieries the output ranged between 400 and 800 tons per day.²¹

Less than 25 per cent. of the undertakings of the S. Western Division produced 1,000 tons or more daily in 1949 whilst 53.5 per cent. produced an average of 600 tons and less per day. The standard attained in mining practice in this Division can also be gauged by the relationship between the output produced and length of coal face exposed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Length of coal face exposed</th>
<th>Output per annum in tons 1949</th>
<th>Output per yard of coal face per annum</th>
<th>Output per yard of coal face per day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swansea</td>
<td>25,439 Yards 14.4 Miles</td>
<td>4,376,611</td>
<td>171.9 Tons</td>
<td>13.8 Cwts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maesteg</td>
<td>13,245 Yards 7.5 Miles</td>
<td>3,042,160</td>
<td>229.5 Tons</td>
<td>18.5 Cwts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhondda</td>
<td>21,422 Yards 12.1 Miles</td>
<td>4,753,962</td>
<td>221.9 Tons</td>
<td>17.9 Cwts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdare</td>
<td>9.916 Yards 5.6 Miles</td>
<td>3,700,555</td>
<td>373.2 Tons</td>
<td>30.0 Cwts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhymney</td>
<td>13,406 Yards 7.6 Miles</td>
<td>5,312,484</td>
<td>396.2 Tons</td>
<td>31.9 Cwts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmouth</td>
<td>33,171 Yards 18.8 Miles</td>
<td>6,099,926</td>
<td>180.8 Tons</td>
<td>14.6 Cwts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. of Dean</td>
<td>2,396 Yards 1.3 Miles</td>
<td>759,349</td>
<td>316.9 Tons</td>
<td>25.5 Cwts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>4,464 Yards 2.7 Miles</td>
<td>662,805</td>
<td>126.0 Tons</td>
<td>10.1 Cwts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>123,488 Yards 70.0 Miles</td>
<td>28,704,852</td>
<td>224.3 Tons</td>
<td>18.1 Cwts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The S. Wales Area NUM Annual Report of 1950 informed its readers that these anomalies existed between Areas despite the fact that its author (i.e. the Exec. Council) had been "... assured that by and large the sections of the seams worked in all areas are somewhat similar", and that these figures revealed "... great disparities in the standard of mining technique in the several areas in the Division". They categorised the average standards of mine mechanisation for the whole Division as follows:

1. Percentage of Coal Produced by undermentioned methods of Mining:
   
   (a) Hand Cut/Hand Filled ....... 18 per cent.
   (b) Machine Cut/Conveyor Filled .. 42 per cent.
   (c) Hand Cut/Conveyor Filled ...... 38 per cent.
   (d) Machine Cut/Hand Filled ...... 2 per cent.

2. Percentage of Conveyor Faces with Coal Gtter OMS of:
   
   (a) Under five tons ............... 34 per cent.
   (b) Five tons to ten tons .......... 55 per cent.
   (c) Ten tons and over ............. 11 per cent.

3. Percentage of Conveyor Faces working:
   
   (a) 24-hour cycle .................. 35 per cent.
   (b) 48-hour cycle .................. 47 per cent.
   (c) Over 48-hour cycle ............. 18 per cent.

4. Percentage of Conveyor Faces:
   
   (a) 100 yards and over ............ 62 per cent.
   (b) Under 100 yards ............... 38 per cent.
These figures illustrate the general backwardness of the coalfield as far as the introduction of mechanised mining methods were concerned. As early as 1939, 58% of Britain's coal output was conveyed mechanically at the coal-face and 61% cut by machine. And it must be remembered that these figures were themselves kept low by the poor results achieved in S. Wales where only 48% of coal was mechanically conveyed at the face in 1939 as compared with 93% in N. Staffs, 82% in N. Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, and 79% in S. Derby, Leicester, Lancashire and Cheshire. The proportion of coal mechanically cut in S. Wales (26% in 1939) provided an even more dismal comparison with the achievements of other fields. N. Staffs, for example, machine-cut 95% of its saleable output, Northumberland 92%, S. Derby and Leicestershire 89%, Scotland 80% and N. Derby and Notts. 80%.25 As we have seen in Chapter 7, Part Two, there were still further anomalies evident in the productivity returns obtained within the S. Wales Division itself. It was well-known, for example, that the low over-all productivity rating of the pits in the Swansea (anthracite) Area was largely responsible for the poor productivity showing of the S. Wales coalfield in general. There were, however, within the anthracite area itself, several units which compared well in terms of output-per-manshift with steam-coal pits further to the east and which provided sharp contrasts to most other units on the anthracite field. Thus we find that, in 1948, though not a single anthracite pit managed to break even - let alone make a profit - nevertheless, colliers at the Onllwyn No.3, Varteg and Mount mines managing to produce around 17½ cwt.s. per manshift: 5 cwt.s., more than the average for the anthracite area as a whole26 and almost twice
as much per manshift as their comrades managed to produce at Gelliceidrim, Gwaun-cae-gurwen (East, Steer and Maordy pits), Ammanford and Pontyberem where the figures never reached or exceeded 9 cwts., a relatively meagre total which nevertheless looked flattering when compared with the 5 cwts., per manshift achieved at the Tareni anthracite mine in the same year.27

The relationship between productivity and pit-size in the Swansea Area is set out in Table 4, p.26, which lists (a) the eight anthracite collieries with the highest productivity and (b) the eight with the lowest during 1947/8:

It can be seen quite clearly that there are no hard and fast sets of rules available to account for the disparities evident in the productivity ratings - despite the fact that, on average, the eight anthracite mines with the highest OMS were over one-third as large again as the eight mines with the lowest OMS.

For included in the top eight are two mines - Varteg and Mount - which were small even in comparison with those included in the lower eight. Conversely, there are four mines in the lower eight which bear comparison in size with four in the top eight: East, Tareni, Gelliceidrim and Saron all had manpower totals of over 330 which is a figure only just below the average for colliery manpower in the Swansea Area as a whole in 1947/48.

Tareni, East and Gelliceidrim were well above the average and yet still managed to achieve OMS figures markedly lower than the Area average of 12.6 cwts. There are a number of ways in which it is possible to set about accounting for these anomalies.

Firstly, the geology of pits will, quite obviously, have a great influence on the ease with which coal can be got, and the anthracite
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average (approx) for</th>
<th>Average (approx) for</th>
<th>Average (approx) for</th>
<th>Average (approx) for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Bev Ins</td>
<td>Resident (own case)</td>
<td>Resident (own case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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zone, as we have seen earlier, was geologically, a highly unpredictable and notoriously disrupted coalfield. Secondly, efficient production is greatly dependent on a vast range of primary considerations which are mainly centred around the availability of machinery and skilled labour. Thirdly, it is essential that both machinery and labour, once procured, are maintained in the best possible condition, for ramshackle machinery and old and tired workmen are not conducive to the achievement of high levels of output. Fourthly, it is essential, if indeed high output is to be achieved, that good management and good workmanship prevail without interruption from whatever source - be it shortage of capital or poor industrial relations.

In the anthracite area, neither sophisticated machinery nor young miners were readily available after 1947. Indeed, this was generally true right across the S. Wales coalfield. As late as 1957, only approximately 5 per cent. of the field's output was obtained from fully mechanised faces, whereas by 1967/68, this percentage had risen to 72.5% (i.e. 76.0% in East Wales and 69.0% in West Wales). In 1946 the delegates at the Area NUM’s annual conference were informed that "Several power-loading machines have been tried in this Division, but so far have not been a conspicuous success. Conditions in S. Wales are different to other coalfields, and careful thought will have to be given to the type of machine to employ".

By May, 1947, it seemed to many that a little too much "careful thought" and not enough action was paralysing development on the field. Even the NUM's Annual Report - the most optimistic of
documents — placed a question mark against the Coal Board's apparent lack of concrete development proposals:

".... the backwardness of the industry", it argued, "is largely the legacy handed down to the Divisional Coal Board from the ex-Coalowners.

"The efforts of the Board in re-organising the industry are mainly connected with the projects at Llanharan, Pfaudau, Cwm, Nantgarw, Mardy and Cefn Coed Collieries.

Most of these undertakings involve the utilisation of huge capital sums, but we feel that the progress made at the other collieries is far from satisfactory".30

The position of development projects within the Anthracite Area was non-existent apart from the Cefn Coed project and a series of uncompleted plans. The Area NUM's Executive Council, sensing a mood of dissatisfaction and frustration with this state of affairs, announced that it was,

".... pressing for a comprehensive blueprint of the intended developments in this Division over the next 5-10 years, realising that the road to survival in this coalfield rests upon the complete re-organisation of the industry".31

It also rested upon the ability of the mining industry to retain its most vital and productive workers and to attract youngsters who would, in turn, become the next generation of trained miners. As early as 1947, however, it was clear to everyone concerned that there were great problems in this respect. The average age of the S. Wales mining workforce was over 40 and rising, though nothing like as quickly as it was to rise after the downturn in the demand
FIG. 10. AVERAGE AGE OF WAGE EARNERS ON COLLIERY BOOKS (N.C.B. ONLY)

1946 - 1968
for coal during the late 1950s. (See Fig. 10) Contemporary observers noted that there was taking place a dramatic decline in the number of school-leavers making themselves available for pit-work in the immediate post-war years:

"From the village school in the olden days", notes Zweig in his study "Men in the Pits" in 1947/48, "out of roughly ninety lads who left at least sixty or seventy went down the pit. Now the number of lads who are leaving school has fallen to fifty, and out of this number three or four choose the pits, and these are the least intelligent boys, whose fathers can't fix them up in other jobs".32

The causes of this reluctance to enter mining as a career are not difficult to fathom. Zweig lists some of the most potent:

"If other jobs are available", he writes, "practically no-one takes up mining, apart from the very few who really feel a calling for the mines. The fathers discourage their lads as much as possible, and I often heard vows that their lads should never go down. The fathers are frequently very bitter about the pits, which have "sucked their blood and twisted their spine", and are determined that at least their sons shall be spared from the devouring arms of the octopus. "They will never get my lad", they say, or "He is not going down, if I can help it; I had enough of this in my life".33

Such sentiments of discouragement were accompanied by the knowledge that job prospects for youngsters in the mining towns were a great deal brighter and more varied than they had been during the
1930s. Many of the Royal Ordnance Factories were converted from the production of ammunition to the production of a whole range of consumer goods. The work was lighter than that encountered in the pits; it was performed in what were normally incomparably more congenial surroundings and the earnings were as good and often better than those obtained by juveniles for pit work.34

Low earnings comprised the greatest stumbling block encountered by management in its attempts, not only to attract youngsters to the industry, but also to retain its most able employees. At the May, 1947 NUM Area Conference, the S. Wales President, Alf Davies, declared that the existing minimum wage of £5 per week for underground workers and £4-10s. for surface workers was wholly inadequate.35

A miner working below ground in S. Wales in 1947 would have received an average gross wage of £6-12-1d. per week and a surface worker £5-13-11d.36 The wage system was based on the needs of an industry which was manpower-intensive and it revolved, consequently, around a piecework system which was regulated by pit negotiations and which took account of local influences and pit peculiarities. It was possible, therefore, for underground workers in a consistently-seamed coalfield to earn considerably more than those working unpredictable and disrupted seams. Thus, underground workers in the Leicester Area of the East Midlands Division collected average weekly earnings of over one-third again higher than those collected by their counterparts in S. Wales. Fig. 44 below, illustrates the average Divisional weekly earnings from 1947 to 1957:
Statistics obtained from NCB Annual Reports, 1947-57.

* Average Weekly Earnings, 1947: (Shillings)

Leicester E. Midlands Northern Warwick Durham Kent
All underground 177/5d. 165/7d. 157/10d 155/3d 151/11d 145/4d.
Scotland Yorkshire W. Midlands N. Western South Wales
All underground 147/11d. 144/8d. 142/5d. 142/2d. 132/1d.

Equally inconsistent were the methods adopted by different coalfields and colliery companies for calculating the payment of piecework, "compensatory" awards and special bonuses. The onset of nationalisation and the (earlier) consolidation of a single, national miners' union, gave encouragement to those within the industry who wished to bring some measure of order to this extreme regionalism and fragmentation. Pressure came, especially from South Wales, for the principle of "Equal Pay for Equal Work", but as David Gidwell has pointed out, the Coal Board had inherited a situation where,

"Superimposed upon differences in ownership, location, economic and geological character of coalfields and degree of mechanisation were local differences in bargaining strength and differing ideas about standards of work and earnings. There was no generally accepted idea of what constituted a fair day's work or a fair day's pay".  

To many of those searching for the best methods of applying "standard" rates for similar tasks on a national basis, it seemed that the most likely catalyst for such a development would be the impending widespread introduction of mechanised mining techniques. This, so the argument ran, would force both managers and men to review systems of job evaluation; for a miner operating, let us say, a Meco Moore power-loader at a face in Scotland would, theoretically, be required to perform virtually identical tasks to those performed by a miner operating a similar machine in South Wales. But, as we have seen, British coalmining remained relatively unmechanised right up to the end of the 1950s. Indeed, as late as 1965/66, less than 57 per cent. of the total output of S. Wales was power loaded and even that figure disguised the con-
tinuing backwardness of mechanisation in the Western (or anthracite) section of the field where only 51.4 per cent. of total output was power-loaded as compared with 62.8 per cent. in the Eastern (or steam-coal) section.  

The first big step towards regulating job values at national level was not taken until 1955 with the introduction of the Daywage Agreement (the so-called "Black Book") but even this failed to spark off any revolutionary changes in the over-all wages structure and, consequently, the piecework system prevailed more or less intact. It was not until the introduction of the National Power Loading Agreement in 1966 that the replacement occurred of pit and district agreements and even then there was no immediate introduction of a national rate of pay, only a commitment that there would be one uniform national rate by 31st December 1971.  

Throughout the whole of the first decade of nationalisation, therefore, the industry continued to be plagued by the myriad idiosyncrasies of a wages system which it had inherited from its former private masters. The pithead money wrangles which had occurred with such monotonous regularity before Vesting Day occurred with equal regularity after that date and served only to emphasise to the workers involved how many important areas of pit-life had emerged virtually unaffected by the act of nationalisation. It promoted within their minds a sense of continuity which tended to militate against the sermons for industrial harmony which were being preached by the Labour Government, the Miners' Leaders and the National Coal Board.
The result was the creation within the South Wales NUM of quite remarkable tensions: colliery lodge quarrelled one with another, factions emerged inside individual lodges and, most significantly perhaps, there occurred a new and vigorous growth of "combine committees" of the pre-war type which proceeded to set themselves up, often quite openly, as unofficial rivals to a union leadership which, they felt, had become bound hand and mouth to the coat-tails of the Labour Government.
2. An Uncertain Beginning

Administrative solutions to the labour disputes which occurred during the first years of public ownership were made no easier to achieve by the political climate in which they were floated. For these were also the years which witnessed the most speedy development of the Cold War with its resultant polarisation within trade unions of factions pro- and anti-Soviet Union. Such trends were especially significant inside the miners' union where there was, of course, an important Communist influence.

For the best part of two years, the new Labour Government enjoyed an unprecedented measure of support from the British Communist Party. Indeed, Palme Dutt had gone so far as to describe the Labour victory as "This glorious political leap forward..." By 1947 however, affections had withered a good deal and a new hostility crept into the air as old suspicions and accusations were once more dusted off and placed on public display.

Within the National Union of Mineworkers, the new atmosphere manifested itself most clearly in the controversy surrounding Arthur Horner's unilateral defence of the French miners' strike of Oct/Nov 1948. His alleged crime was that he had encouraged the Frenchmen without first consulting his fellow NUM Executive members and that he had done so because he was more concerned with supporting Moscow than with supporting the decisions of his union. He was condemned, not only by the press and the Government for his pledge of support to the strikers, but also by his fellow
Executives on the NUM - the majority of whom were, of course, lifelong supporters of the Labour Party and, by implication, supporters of the Labour Government's foreign and economic policies - both of which were designed, at the time of the French strike, to convince the United States of Britain's pro-American intentions and thereby to secure Marshall Aid for this country. The Government feared that the American bankers, with their traditional hostility to organised labour, would interpret British support of a Communist-led French miners' strike as evidence of widespread political subversion inside some of Britain's most powerful institutions - namely, her trade unions.44 Horner described what he saw as the reasons for the subsequent polarisation of opinion within the NUM: "In many ways", he wrote, "this incident over the French strike crystallized the differences which had existed between me and my colleagues in the Labour Party throughout my lifetime. It was not just a question of my being a member of the Communist Party. It was rather that I saw the class struggle as something inevitable and I could not believe that it was in the interests of the miners or of the working class, whom we as trade unionists represented, to make alliances with the capitalists against our own people. I saw the interference of the Americans, not only the American Government but also the American Federation of Labour, in the affairs of the European trade unions as an attack on the working class".42 In S. Wales, Horner's stronghold, the issue dragged out into the open evidence of political schism within the lodges of the NUM -
evidence which indicated a revival of the kind of open hostility between Labour and Communist members which had last manifested itself during the first 20 months of the Second World War.43

The public recriminations which accompanied this hostility resembled the cut and thrust of the political witch-hunts which were soon to follow in the Western democracies. Thus, as Horner recorded, the right wing of the NUM were very quick to take up his "anti-Marshall Aid" statements as evidence of a much larger Communist-led plot to prevent the post-war recovery of Western Europe: 44

".... the right wing believed that those of us who opposed this policy were also opposing the measures taken by the Labour Government to improve conditions in the country and particularly the measures taken to improve conditions in the coalfields."45

The waves of "sectional" strikes, and stay-downs which gained impetus during the early months of 1948 were cited as examples of a deliberate and concerted attempt by the Cominform to wreck the achievements of the Labour Party and thus to totally discredit the creed of Social Democracy. In a report prepared by the Executive of the NUM in December, 1948, for example, the organisation declared that the NUM

".... will strongly resent every attempt to treat the British mineworkers as tools of the Cominform."46

It is the aim of the following sections to show that the strikes which occurred in S. Wales between late 1947 and 1950 were no more
the work of agents of the Cominform than were those which had preceded them from 1944 to 1947, and that, on the contrary, those accused of being the prime mining "agents" of the Cominform in Britain (namely, Horner and the C.P. members of the various miners' executives) were, in fact, instrumental in combatting these much-publicised unofficial disputes. This is not to argue however, that changes had not occurred by 1948 in the attitude of the C.P., and of its individual members, towards the Labour Government, for, quite obviously, they had. Relations between the two unequal bodies had soured markedly - largely of course, as a result of the Government's increasingly pro-American stance on questions of foreign affairs. Neither is it to argue that individual Communists did not involve themselves as leaders of unofficial strikes and ginger groups on the coalfield. As King Street moved quickly away from the foot of Labour's bed, where it had sat fawning but never quite managing to clamber between the sheets during the post-1945 honeymoon, so Communists within the NUM felt themselves increasingly less constrained to hide their frustration with the terms of the post-war industrial "truce". Newspapers and radio began to talk of "minority movements" and "subversives", and nowhere did the media and the Right-wing trade union leaders find more numerous examples of such organisations and individuals than on the South Wales coalfield.

The unofficial strikes and stay-downs which were to cause so much heated comment in 1948 had their immediate roots firmly entangled around problems which had been apparent both to mine-workers and management since the outbreak of the Second World War. They centred, firstly, on the obvious and critical need to cent-
ralize and rationalize production methods and systems of payment, and, secondly, on the conflicts which arose as miners felt themselves unable to respond adequately to the calls for increased productivity made upon them by government, management and union. In addition, outbreaks of industrial strife were made even more likely from the middle of 1947 onwards by the widespread presence amongst the workforce of a sense of hostility and disappointment concerning the structure and composition of the new Coal Board, with its alleged lack of imaginative managerial change and its "top-heavy" and undemocratic administration.

In December, 1946, shortly before Vesting Day, S. Wales miners meeting at a special conference in Cardiff, declared a vote of "no confidence" in the Chairman and Vice Chairman of their Regional Coal Board, Lieut. General Sir A. Godwin-Austen and Mr. G. Aeron-Thomas respectively. A resolution to this effect went forward to the NUM national executive from the S. Wales NUM Area executive council. In the same week, D.A. Hann, Director of Production of Powell Duffryn, resigned his recent appointment as production director of the South Western (i.e. S. Wales and West Country) Coal Board and thus delivered the second of two heavy blows at the prototype heart of the new administration. Hann's decision was in line with the Coal Owners' last-minute policy of non-cooperation with the emerging Coal Board - a policy which threatened to rob the Board of the coalfield's best-known, if not best-loved, executive engineers and industrial directors. In the event, the Coal Board was probably saved a good deal of the opprobrium which would have accompanied the appointment of a member of the Hann family to the highest of the
directorial positions, for the name Hann was synonymous with the title "Powell Duffryn", and there were already too many Area Representative posts occupied by ex-Powell Duffryn agents for the liking of a good many NUM members.

The motion of "no-confidence" in the new Chairman and Vice Chairman promised little in the way of harmonious labour relations in the future however. Godwin-Austen, especially, was generally considered both by existing management and workforce on the coalfield to be almost entirely unsuited to the tasks which soon were to be set before him. Bill Paynter, later President of the S. Wales miners, described him as

".... some kind of general who had spent all his time in the Himalayas climbing mountains. Either him or his father had a mountain named after him. He had no mining background and we all considered that he knew nothing about coalmining".

Aeron-Thoatas, on the other hand, was a prominent coal-mine owner and timber merchant from the Gwendraeth Valley, probably more acceptable as a Vice Chairman than was his superior as Chairman, but a man whose appointment was nevertheless viewed with a distinct lack of enthusiasm by the Area NUM. Matters were little improved when the Coal Board, searching around for a replacement for Douglas Hann, appointed a Yorkshireman, T.S. Charlton, as Director of Production. Charlton was to receive what was generally believed (by Bill Paynter and others) to have been the highest salary of any Director of Production on any of the Divisional Boards in Great Britain - a fact which would probably have irked both his
subordinates and union opposites less had he not been, in Paynter's words, "too lazy to spit". Indeed, the Divisional Board generally, soon earned the reputation of being "top-heavy" - a charge which was levelled at it regularly by the workforce for the next couple of years. In May, 1947, for instance, the S. Wales Area office of the NUM issued a statement to its members to the effect that

"... there was no justification for complaints from 11 miners' lodges that the Coal Board was being overloaded with appointments and that jobs were being found for superfluous people. What was happening was that technicians and other key men already in the employment of colliery units were being appointed to the centralised organisation, but in most cases they were doing the same work as they had been doing all along."  

The union had been persuaded into adopting such a conciliatory line only after a great deal of coaxing by Hornner and Lawther and there was never, during Godwin-Austen's period as Chairman of the Divisional NCB, much conviction in the cooperative statements issued by the Miners' Executive. By June, 1947, the Divisional NUM's Executive Council expressed "... dissatisfaction and disappointment with the administration of the S. Wales Divisional Coal Board" and decided to institute an "immediate enquiry through the miners' lodges" into "fundamental matters of administration". The Council also objected to the appointment of Iestyn Williams, the former spokesman and negotiator of the Coalowners, as Chief Executive Officer of the Labour Relations Department of the NCB.

The very fact, however, that the NUM Executive felt itself constrained in the first place to issue a statement condemning those
amongst the union's members who publicly criticised the newly-created managerial structures indicates just how earnestly the Executive approached its new relationship with the NCB. It also indicates that the Executive members were aware of the risks associated with this new relationship. The self-inflicted burdens of "responsibility" were heavier than many of them had imagined. Any resentment generated amongst the rank-and-file by the nature of the Coal Board's appointments or by allegations of the creation of "jobs for the boys" was aggravated by the teething problems faced by the new administration as it attempted to impose upon the coalfield novel systems of centralised organisation of production and manpower as well as to make operative to everyone's satisfaction the Five Day Week. The old problems associated with wages, conditions and production were not banished from the pits with bold strokes of NUM/NCB pens. On the contrary, despite marked improvements in certain important sectors, in others the problems appeared to multiply as new joint agreements were brought into force and the new possibilities associated with centralised administration began to provoke open debate within the industry. For example, whole workforces seem to have become aware after 1947 of such issues as that which centred upon the allocation of material resources inside the industry as a whole. The workmen of Celliceidrim colliery in the Amman Valley, for example, announced in May, 1947 that their mine was "starved of adequate equipment" and that as a result it was suffering retarded production. This claim was to prove only the first of a spate of such protests on the coalfield, the effects of which continued to reverberate even into the late 1970s, maintaining an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity amongst both lower management and
workers. The comparatively low rate of investment by the Board in its Welsh pits added fuel to suspicions, widely held amongst managers and men alike, on the coalfield, that S. Wales was being "starved" of capital and machines, not only because of the technical and organisational problems involved in winning mineral from difficult seams, but also in retaliation for the continuously "militant" line adopted by the coalfield in the past.55

Such allegations became popular currency at a time of particularly severe crisis for the Coal Board and the union. In May of 1947, the NUM made an agreement with the NCB for the change-over to the five day week, without loss of pay, on the understanding that the union would cooperate with the employers to ".... promote every possible and reasonable means of ensuring that the maximum output of coal is produced."56 The union specifically pledged itself to cooperate with the management in persuading the workers to accept re-assessments of work which would mean in many cases cutting down the number of men required for a particular piece of work. The union undertook that it would ".... not countenance any restriction of effort by workmen resulting in failure to perform the work so assessed."57

The dangers of an agreement which bound the union to help the employers bring pressure on its own members were obvious. There is, however, much evidence to show that the miners' executive went into it without fully realising what they were accepting. Attempting to explain this apparent "lapse" (in the most charitable fashion possible) one could surmise that it resulted at least partly from a temporary lack of contact between the members and
the Executive due to the recent changeover from a federation of county associations to a centralised national union. In addition, it was almost certainly due to the close tie-up between the national officials of the union and the Attlee Government, which, in the opinion of some miners, resulted in the former imagining that it was their job to give orders to their members rather than take them. A comment in the "Manchester Guardian" at the time of the Grimethorpe strike highlighted this "problem":

The Union leaders took a great risk in giving the Government the assurances they did without being sure that the miners were really willing to attend regularly and to do a full shift's work. It will not do to put all the blame on a minority of 'bad' miners. A little slacking has to be taken into account in any calculation. Either the union officials misjudged the temper of their men or they did not do as much as they knew to be necessary to explain what the five-day week meant. This failure is not surprising. The NUM's constant concern with the handling of national policy in Downing Street and Whitehall has left its leaders with little time for the details of affairs in the pits .... The Union will have to make a bold effort now to regain the full confidence of the miners. Like the National Coal Board it will not do that unless it can restore the close touch with local problems that has to some extent been lost by its conversion to a centralised organisation".

The spectacle of NUM leaders denouncing their own members in terms that the former coal-owners would have shied away from became commonplace. Lawther, the NUM President, told the Grimethorpe strikers, for example, that they were "acting as criminals at this time of the nation's peril". He actually invited the
Coal Board to prosecute: "Let them issue summonses against these men, no matter how many there may be. I would say that even though there were 100,000 on strike". Arthur Horner was quoted as regarding the Grimethorpe strikers and others like them as "... an alien force" and argued that they should be treated as "as enemy of the true interests of the majority of the miners in this country". A letter published by the "Daily Worker" pointed out how closely Horner's phrases resembled those which the Communists used to denounce J.H. Thomas a couple of decades earlier.

Though this is not the place to discuss the merits of the claims forwarded by the strikers of Grimethorpe, it is nevertheless well worth restating some of the facts of the dispute - as they were understood by those on strike. The following statement by a Daily Herald reporter outlined the main complaints:

"The real point of their grievance", it read, "seems to be that in the general reorganisation of work underground involved by the change, men may be put on to other jobs at which they earn less money. A joint committee of miners' delegates and representatives of the Coal Board decided on the increased stint. The Grimethorpe men complain now that they had no representative on this joint committee, and that the decision to increase the stint came as a bombshell .... They also complain that the divisional Coal Board officials are the same officials they had before the Government took over".

The grievances were further underlined by a "Daily Mirror" report which (typically) squeezed every last drop of human drama out of the situation: "How they hate the Divisional Officers of the Board!"
"One miner remarked /What do these **** know about it? They couldn't get themselves enough coal to boil an egg". Homer, in his autobiography, summed up the reasons for the bitterness of the Grimethorpe dispute in the following way:

"The inevitable grievances, which had been kept in perspective, because the men saw the overall advantages of nationalisation, came to the forefront".

Here were all the ingredients for a stew of internecine conflict: on the one hand, a small army of NUM officers enthusiastic to show the British public and the world what a success a major nationalised industry could be made to be; on the other hand, an impatient but often eloquent clutch of rank-and-file who were apparently unwilling to accept promises of an eventual deliverance to the promised land of high wages and lightened tasks. The same recipe was evident on the S. Wales coalfield where, by August, 1947, the Miners' Executive deemed it necessary to issue a public statement reaffirming the wholehearted support of the Area NUM for the endeavours of the Coal Board:

"The South Wales executive council decided unanimously to pledge its fullest support and the cooperation of all the miners in the S. Wales area in whatever steps may be decided upon as the most effective means of ensuring immediately a substantial increase in coal production".

Despite the grand promises pledged on behalf of all of the coal-
field's miners however, a stay-down strike occurred within two days of their publication. In the two months prior to their publication, unofficial strikes had disrupted production at the collieries of Pwllbach, Abercynon, Risca, Marine and Llanbradach. The Pwllbach and Marine disputes are especially interesting in this context because they were directly related to combined attempts by the NCB and NUM to introduce controversial schemes designed to boost production.

The Pwllbach strike was the first to occur in the previously much-troubled Swansea Valley since Vesting Day, six months earlier. The strikers were objecting to the introduction by the Board of a scheme whereby new entrants to the industry would be trained by working positions at the coal face which, the strikers alleged, were previously worked by regular miners. This, they argued, constituted a threat to their ubiquitous Seniority Rule and was thus viewed as being little more than an attempt by management to destroy "custom and practice" by slipping-in reform under the back door.

At the Marine colliery near Ebbw Vale, nearly one and a half thousand miners struck work on July 2nd., as a protest against the deduction of bonuses from the pay of men judged not to have worked diligently. The men refused to return until the bonuses had been paid and the strike lasted for five days. This dispute, like that at Pwllbach, illustrates the difficulties with which the NCB/NUM were confronted when they attempted to fulfill pledges of the kind issued by the NUM Exec in August. Here, at Marine, the workforce had quite clearly formulated its...
theories as to what constituted, or did not constitute, "diligent" effort. Few issues were to create more bitterness during the subsequent decade than this one, for the nature of coalmining itself in South Wales militated against the blanket imposition of any standard scale against which work might be assessed objectively as "good" or "bad". As we have seen, the geological idiosyncracies of the Welsh seams could entail considerable disparities in the earning potentials of men of equal productive ability working at the same face. In the place of such a scale there existed literally hundreds of varieties of special payments for working in excessively damp, difficult or dangerous places where production was likely to be impeded. These special payments were very often awarded at the discretion of an overseer, timekeeper, under-manager or manager and, as we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, they frequently were held back either as punitive measures or for purposes of financial retrenchment. The Marine workforce attributed to similar motivation the measures adopted by their manager. It was as if these miners were stating their refusal to believe that management could ever change its spots, and theirs was not an isolated statement; there were a great many amongst the coalfield's workforce who feared that a surrender of traditional "rights" and customs would result, not in the fraternal industrial embrace promised by the combined tribunes of the NUM/NCB, but in a managerial bear-hug which would effectively sap away the mine-worker's bargaining power.

The sentiments expressed at Marine were in stark contrast to the mood of extreme optimism and triumph which pervaded the coalfield's first post-nationalisation union conference. Few at that Summer
No hint was given that the phrase "... for the direct benefit of the people", could, and of course did, mean "... for the direct benefit of private industry" as well as for the rest of that undefined body, the "people". Indeed, very little was made of the distinct probability that profits from the unpaid labour of miners might still find their way into the pockets of the capitalist class as a result of the Board's declared intention of selling what was essentially underpriced coal to the rest of British industry - thereby shoving-up private profit margins at the expense of income from coal sales. And surprisingly little,
also, was made of the fact that the NCB was obliged to pay interest on the bonds given the old owners as compensation or purchased by new investors. Indeed, the "Annual Report" reserved its main energies for the happy task of eulogising the new spirit of industrial democracy which would, it predicted, abolish the alienation and enmity which had characterised work and labour relations within the industry for so many years. Nationalisation, declared the authors of the Report,

".... will establish proper relationships between those responsible for management at the collieries and the men employed. All the material improvements which are so vitally necessary will in themselves not give the desired results unless the human relationship is satisfactory. This can be brought about only by the recognition of authority, rights, responsibilities and just treatment one to the other, in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence in carrying out a common purpose.

Evidence to hand already indicates encouraging signs of improved relationships being exercised in many directions, and this is particularly appreciated in connection with negotiations with the National and Divisional Coal Boards. Whilst questions have to be examined on their merits, and points of view may be at variance, our experience is that in endeavouring to secure agreement, we are able to do so in an atmosphere more wholesome and helpful than ever obtained under the old regime....

The security for the future lies in the face that the industry is now established on the basis of socialist principles; that the necessary capital will be available for reconstructing and re-equipping; that conditions of employment will be attractive. The Industry will be controlled and
directed in a manner free from the inherent vices of private ownership, so that those employed will thus be enabled to give freely the best of their skill and experience, whether as planners, technicians or workmen, in the knowledge that they do so unhindered for the benefit of the country." 72

Almost exactly ten years after the publication of this optimistic passage, Bill Paynter was reported as informing the delegates of the S. Wales Miners' Conference that

"... ten years' nationalisation had shattered illusions that the workers would exercise a decisive control in running the industry. Nationalisation changed the form of control for the better, but fundamentally the industry remained a source of profit for the previous owners and big business generally. Participation of the workers in control and direction of the industry was non-existent, and consultation was superficial and largely window-dressing.

Miners' wages and conditions had not improved to the measure that could be reasonably expected. Nationalisation had been deliberately used to provide coal to big industry at low prices to enhance their profits. It had also been exploited by the State in meeting financial burdens that legitimately were liabilities for the Exchequer.

Nationalisation is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end. Its role and function today reveals the "end" as being a cheap product for capitalist industry to strengthen and perpetuate capitalism". 73

Any attempt to explain the reasons for this gradual disillusionment would have to start by observing that it began at the bottom -
literally at pit bottom - and percolated upwards until it found "official" expression through the incumbents of NUM Headquarters, Euston Road. This is not to argue that Horner and Paynter were unaware, as union leaders, of its early existence or that they were insensitive to the contradictions which arose as the disillusionment percolated through the workforce. There is, on the contrary, ample evidence that they tried repeatedly and energetically to come to terms with these problems but that, inevitably, they found themselves unable to resolve them with any lasting success.

Their tasks were made no easier by their personal political affiliations. Both of them were forced to defend nationalisation as long as its defence was agreed upon by a majority of the national executive of their union and they faced, and sometimes suffered, alienation from fellow Communists who aligned themselves with the pit militants' expression of disillusionment. For Horner, during the 1947 controversy over his speech to the striking French miners, the contradictions must have been especially painful. After suffering the arrows of the militants since 1944 as a result of his impeccably "responsible" behaviour as the major propagandist for the cause of increased productivity, he found himself the butt for a mass of criticism from his temporary and grudging allies on the Right. At no time during the post-war period, save perhaps during the worst years of colliery closures, was a leading NUM officer placed in such an invidious position as was Horner during these months. It nevertheless must have afforded him, as it should have afforded all subsequent observers, an unrivalled insight into the sectional and confused nature of Britain's
post-war Labour Movement. It must have served, also, to dispel, for any in whom it needed dispelling, the hackneyed image of the South Wales mining workforce as a single-minded proletarian army united with touching simplicity behind its fiery and trusted leaders.
Chapter 10 - Footnotes.

1. P.R.O., Coal 21.
2. i.e. The administrative division which comprised South Wales, the Forest of Dean and the Bristol and Somerset coalfields.
3. All of the following figures relating to output, wages, numbers of collieries etc., are taken from the NCB Annual Reports and Accounts, 1947-1958.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p.37.
7. Ibid., p.38.
8. Ibid.
9. Its main provisions fell under the following headings:
   1. Technical reorganization of the industry.
   2. Adequate and careful training of youth.
   3. Safety and Health conditions.
   5. Wages, hours of employment, holidays and pensions.
   6. Housing, transport, social and pit welfare.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p.41.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
21. Ibid., pp. 76-77.
22. Ibid., p. 78.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., pp. 78-79.
25. Report of the Technical Advisory Committee, 1945, HMSO, Cond. 6610, Table 1, p.11.
26. NCB/NUM Correspondence: Strikes and Disputes, 1947/48 Envelope, Coalfield Archive, UCS.
27. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 1947, p. 79.
31. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 28.
34. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
35. C.G., 9.5.47.
36. NCB Annual Report and Accounts (A.A.R.), 1948. Controversy currently surrounds the practising of citing the "average wage" in the nationalised coal mining industry. Arthur
Scargill, at the Llafur/NUM Weekend School in April, 1977, alleged that the miner's "average wage" was calculated by taking into account earnings of all personnel, both management and employees, including top executives and office staff. Thus, argued the Yorkshire President, the "average wage" cited is always an inflated figure.

43. See above, Chapter 7.
45. Ibid., p. 187.
46. C.C., 23.12.48.
47. Ibid., 13.12.48.
50. Ibid., Charlton had been weaned away from the highest-paid executive post in the Yorkshire coal industry and was thus able to bargain from a very strong position when negotiating his salary with the NCB.
51. C.C., 30.5.47.
52. Ibid., 23.12.46.
53. Ibid., 13.6.47.
54. Ibid., 13.6.47.
57. Ibid.
60. Daily Mail, 29.8.47.
61. Ibid.
63. Daily Worker, 13.9.47.
64. Daily Herald, 30.8.47.
65. Daily Mirror, 6.9.47.
67. C.C., 15.8.47.
68. Ibid., 13.6.47: 350 miners involved.
69. Ibid., 11.7.47.
70. SWNUM, A.C.R., 1947, p. 34.
71. Reid, Allen and Harries, op. cit., pp. 63-64:
"Between 1947 and 1957, profits were secured on colliery operations, before interest payment, in every year except 1947. The average annual profit of about £1.5 million on an annual turnover from coal-mining of around £600 million...
There can be no doubt, given the market conditions of the
time, that the NCB could have secured considerably greater
profits if it had had a free hand in its pricing policy.
Instead the Board had a "gentleman's agreement" with the
Government and the latter was extremely reluctant to agree
to any price increases for fear that this might lead to
serious rises in other prices. The Government even required
the Board to finance losses totalling over £70 million on
imported coal between 1951 and 1957. Even more serious,
the NCB was encouraged to meet its capital requirements by
Exchequer borrowing rather than through price increases and
self-financing, and by 1956 the Board had added £260 million
to its capital liabilities. Interest payments on this
capital were to prove particularly heavy when the market
for coal turned downwards in the latter part of the 1950s
and competition from other fuels intensified".
See also M. Barratt-Brown, "Coal as a Nationalised Industry"
in "Studies in the British Coal Industry". (D.M. Kelly and
73. Manchester Guardian, 7.5.57.
Chapter 11

Errata pp. 156, 157 have been omitted
Chapter 11

Divided Welshmen: Marshall Aid and the Strikes of 1947-50

"It is difficult to understand the psychology of the South Wales coalminer, who seems to cherish a delusion that he is sole heir to a priceless estate, and free to enjoy all the emoluments, without much effort on his part".


1. Some Problems with Social Democracy.

In May, 1947, the Labour Member for Neath, D.J. Williams, reminded the delegates at the Annual Conference of the S. Wales Miners that the Labour Government was as he put it "faced with tremendous problems". At the root of these problems, he argued, was the desperate need of the country for plentiful supplies of coal: "On the way we solve the coal problem depends the future of the Labour Government and the future of Democratic Socialism in Britain".

The SWNUM Annual Report and Agenda, which carried Williams' words also carried the following resolution from the largest colliery Lodge on the coalfield, that of Parc and Dare in the Rhondda. It called upon Annual Conference to condemn the foreign policy of the Labour Government, "... as a result of which a large peace-time Army is being retained for the protection of Imperialist interests abroad. "We are of the opinion", it continued, "that it would be sounder policy if these British workmen were demobilised and brought home to help in the economic reconstruction of our country and in the establishment of a new social order. We are

convinced that we cannot have "Socialism in our Time" by the importation of foreign labour, much of it pro-fascist in outlook".  

This view was supported by a resolution from the Rhigos Lodge which urged the S. Wales Area Council to ".... press upon the NUM the need to call upon the TUC to convene a special conference in order to review last year's decision to support Bevin's foreign policy. In our opinion", the resolution continued, "the home policy of the Government - including Nationalisation - will have no meaning unless this disastrous policy is ended".

Both resolutions communicated very clearly the increasing distaste expressed by some of the coalfield's leading militants for the Labour Government's apparent determination to align itself and the country with the political and economic ambitions of the U.S.A. In turn, this criticism drew upon its initiators fresh condemnation from groups and agencies loyal to the Government and its pro-American allies. Communists found themselves attacked once more, as "saboteurs" and potential wreckers of social democracy. C.P. members were undoubtedly involved in the planning and drafting of resolutions critical of the Labour Government's foreign policy; the Parc and Dare and Rhigos resolutions, for example, were written and composed in a language which appeared, to loyal Labourites at least, to symbolize the Communists' intransigence and their lack of will to cooperate in any meaningful sense. Indeed, the authors of the two resolutions were far from being what might have been termed "ordinary" rank-and-filers. Rhigos had long been known as a lodge with a penchant for issuing

2. Ibid., Res.3.
3. Ibid.
left-wing resolutions and Communists from other lodges joked
that the Parc-and-Dare men considered themselves "the conscience
of the coalfiel".  

The Parc-and-Dare lodge included upon its committee one former
International Brigader (George Baker who had served in an anti-
tank company in Spain and who was a lifelong member of the Comm-
unist Party) and at least four other Communists, including William.
Whitehead who was later to become President of the S. Wales NUM.
They were led by Eddie Lloyd, known throughout the Rhondda as
the "Uncrowned King of Parc and Dare" - a Communist who had
played a leading role in the successful eradication of company
unionism from the Parc and Dare pits over a decade earlier.  

Similarly, the Rhigos Lodge included on its committee at least
one outstanding Communist and ex-International Brigade volunteer,
Hywel Davey Williams, who was a close friend of one of S. Wales' 
most renowned Communist propagandists, T.E. Nicholas, the poet
and "Christian Communist".  With such authors it is hardly
surprising that resolutions expressing criticism of the Attlee
Government's "backsliding" (as they saw it) should have gone for-
ward to Conference. This is not to argue, however, that these
same authors were guilty of the charges made against them by

* Like Nicholas, H.D. Williams was also something of a "Christian
Communist". He was the deacon of a chapel in Rhigos at which
Nicholas preached many lessons including one in November, 1957, on
the day upon which the world's first artificial satellite - the
Soviet "Sputnik" - had been launched. At the climax of his oration,
it is recorded, Nicholas likened the Sputnik to the Star of Bethlehem
-an analogy which was received with rapturous applause by the con-
gregation.

Williams, though he had volunteered for, and been accepted by, the
International Brigade, never saw active service in Spain. He reached
Paris on his way south only to be captured by the French police and
deported WwW WwW to Britain. (Hywel Francis unpublished thesis,
"Welsh Miners and the Spanish Civil War").

those on their political right. They were, on the contrary, far from unwilling to cooperate with the officials of the Coal Board and they argued that their resolutions were aimed at warning the Labour Government of the danger which it faced of losing its grass-roots support on the coalfield should it continue to instigate anti-Left policies. Nowhere was this better illustrated than during the controversy which provoked the two resolutions in question: namely that caused by the proposed influx into British collieries of refugee Polish mineworkers.

The scheme to introduce Poles had first been communicated with any degree of urgency to the NUM leadership during the early Summer of 1946. The national E.C. of the union had, at first, been very wary of the Government's proposals; Lawther, for example, announced in late June of that year that the Ministry of Fuel had approached the union to take in approximately 1,000 Poles, and that the executive had decided to postpone consideration of the question until more information was available. He expressed the hope that "... industry was not so bereft of enterprise that we must go forward to the day on which the only British workers in the pits would be the gaffers."6

Even this lukewarm reception to the Government's proposals was reached by a majority of only two on the executive council. One of the members, G.H. Jones, expressing the minority view, asked if the union was so weak that it could not protect its members against the influx of 1,000 Poles, and his fellow council member, Glyn Williams, went further and attempted to obtain from Lawther a clear explanation of his position in regard to this and other

6. C.C., 28.6.46.
outstanding grievances. He demanded to know if the executive were "disagreeing with the introduction of foreign workers on principle or saying 'Give us our charter'". He asked that the Ministry's letter should be read. ⁷

The letter, which was read, stated that definite proposals for a large-scale influx could not be made for a month or two, but that in the event of the numbers available and the needs of the industry appearing to justify further steps to secure their absorption in British mines, further consultation with the union would be necessary before any decision was reached. The union's Agreement to any larger-scale introduction of foreign labour into the mines, said Lawther, would be dependent on the satisfactory outcome of the discussions then in progress with regard to the five-day week, but he added that, "in the meantime and as a matter of urgency, approximately 900 Poles must either be placed in British mines within the next few weeks or go elsewhere". He assured his Executive that the Ministry had undertaken to instruct every Polish worker involved to join the NUM and that in the event of redundancy Polish workers would be the "first to go" and that no Polish workers would be introduced in any pit without prior consultation and agreement. ⁸

Jim Bowman, apparently disturbed at the haste with which the whole question was being considered, warned Lawther and the Executive that those who wanted to take in the Poles were "playing with dynamite". Let them "see how many young men at the shaft bottom, on haulage, on timber loading, (were) willing, under nationalisation, to be trained and upgraded", he said. He was

⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid.
confident that there were thousands of men on the surface who
would be willing to go down the pits.  

Bowman's reading of the situation was a good deal nearer that of
the majority of the workforce - especially as regards the miners
of S. Wales. By the Summer of 1946, shadows of the hungry 30's
appeared to be creeping once more across the Valleys. Speaking
at Aberaman in July, Horner declared that it was a "scandal"
that there were more than 75,000 unemployed at that moment in
S. Wales, ".... and a similar number in Scotland". The Govern-
ment's promise to establish ten new factories in S. Wales to
employ victims of pneumoconiosis had to be expedited, he said
and added that, with the existing high rate of certification,
"many more than ten factories (would) be needed".  

He was backed up a month later by a meeting of Welsh miners' leaders
and Welsh M.P's at which a resolution was passed expressing "the
strongest dissatisfaction with the rate of progress (of factory
building) to date". In September, the urban authorities of
Aberdare, Mount Ash and Merthyr Tydfil issued a joint appeal to
the S. Wales Council of Labour to ".... discuss the whole un-
employment problem in S. Wales".  

This was hardly the most propitious moment upon which to attempt
the introduction into British pits of a large body of Polish
workers - the very image of which was clearly associated in the
minds of many colliers with a potential army of "blacklegs" made
even more powerful than they might have been by the prospect of
continued high unemployment. The controversy growled on into the
eve of Vesting Day when it was publicly announced that George

9. Ibid., See also SWNUM., A.C.R., 1947, Appendix XII, p.135.
10. Ibid., 19.7.46. (C.G.)
11. Ibid., 23.8.46.
12. Abertare Lender. 6.9.46.
Isaacs, Atlee's Minister of Labour, "expected" that union officials would be prepared to accept 20,000 Poles for the mines if a five-day working week for British miners was guaranteed by the following May.\textsuperscript{13}

The first Poles arrived for training at the Oakdale mining centre in March, 1947, and they were followed by a regular stream of their compatriots throughout the Spring and Summer. Their reception by local miners was mixed. It reflected itself in the Annual Conference Agenda in May. Anti-Polish resolutions were opposed by amendments welcoming the influx. These, in turn, were opposed by counter-amendments; thus, a resolution from the Fernhill and Cambrian Lodges of the Rhondda Valley which demanded "That the S. Wales Area of the NUM oppose the employment of Poles and displaced persons in British Mines until such time as the Miners' Charter has been implemented", was subjected to an amendment from the traditionally less radical Combine of Tredegar (Mon.) Lodges which suggested that Conference delete "oppose", insert "welcomes" and delete all after "Mines". This was countered by yet another amendment from Cwm Cynon Lodge which served to harden the initial Rhondda resolution by suggesting that it should stand intact except for the deletion of all words after "Mines".\textsuperscript{14}

These differences were echoed within the coalfield's administrative Areas. In the Aberdare Valley, for instance, the Lodge most adamantly opposed to the influx of foreign labour was that of one of its most productive pits, Tower, which was situated at the northwestern boundary of the dry steam section of the field and directly adjacent to the anthracite section. The reasons for

\textsuperscript{13} C.G., 20.12.46.
\textsuperscript{14} SWNUM., A.C.R., Res.28, Clause 1 plus Amendments.
Tower's intransigence were complex. Underlying them all was a shifting, brooding suspicion concerning management's motives. It was a suspicion which, like the fears of a renewal of mass unemployment, lingered on from the 1930s. After all, little at the pit itself had changed since the pre-war years. The colliery's Powell Duffryn-trained manager, G.B. Barling, remained within his old office - albeit with a new NCB insignia upon his door - and he was responsible to an immediate superior who was himself a former Powell Duffryn Agent for the pits of the Area, G.S. Morgan.15

Lying heavily upon this basic suspicion were a host of grievances and hostilities, the list of which reads like a recipe for an arbitrator's nightmare. They comprised the inheritance of decades of anarchic pay structures and pricing anomalies - an inheritance made all the more unwelcome by the palpable failure of nationalisation to instigate the kinds of immediate and fundamental changes which many amongst the rank-and-file anticipated regarding earnings, managerial techniques and extensions of industrial democracy. Such "details" were, however, largely ignored both by the Government and the press which preferred, instead, to interpret opposition to the Poles such as that displayed by the Tower Lodge as indicating little more than tribal hostility. The miners were chided for their parochialism - justifiably it might have seemed to someone unfamiliar with the recent history of Welsh coalmining - and wide publicity was given to a number of cases of young Welshmen provoking dancehall fights with their Polish counterparts. But the underlying causes had rather less to do with parochialism than with a legacy of economic insecurity. The convenient "racialist" theory does not hold up to examination.

For, putting aside for a moment the internationalist aspirations and traditions of the South Wales miners' political and industrial organisations, the Valleys had never been racially isolated - at least, not the Valleys to the east of the Dulais. They had been a veritable melting pot into which had gravitated Spaniards, Chinese, Belgians, Irishmen, Italians, Scots and, above all in terms of numbers, the English. In addition, the latter years of the war had seen the billeting within these communities of thousands of American G.I's, both black and white, and although dancehall fights involving these newcomers abounded, the Americans were never subjected to the kind of political hostility suffered (initially at least) by the Poles.

The reasons for this are at once both simple and complex. To begin with, the Americans were not perceived by the locals as constituting a potential threat to jobs; (although they were seen as a threat to local women - thus the dancehall fights) they came equipped with seemingly boundless wealth and, if locals are to be believed, easy-going, though highly ostentatious, life-styles. They were also, of course, Western Europe's potential liberators. The Poles, on the other hand, arrived during one of Britain's worst periods of rationing and austerity and were, for the most part, less well-off than were even the Welsh. They had fled from a defeated nation which was, at that moment, experiencing a second occupation by their erstwhile liberators.

They were, nonetheless, the recipients of a great deal of public sympathy and admiration, for had not 200,000 of their countrymen given away their lives in the bloody uprising at Warsaw just three
years earlier? And the newcomers were, after all, industrial comrades: miners like those whom they wished to work beside in the Welsh pits.

A possible "political" explanation for their hostile reception serves to supplement the vastly more important "economic" explanation which will follow. It was provided by an Aberdare General Practitioner who, when asked about the local hostility, recalled that it lasted only as long as it took the Welsh miners to learn that the Poles could be as fine a set of workmates and as solid a body of trade-unionists as any other on the coalfield. The initial hostility, he declared, was the result of a suspicion that some of the Poles were supporters of the anti-Soviet Pole, General Anders, and of his so-called "Polish Corps".16

Although subjective recollections of this nature are difficult, if not impossible, to confirm some thirty years after the event, it would explain the inclusion within the Rhondda resolution (cited above) of the allegation that much of the imported foreign labour was "pro-fascist in outlook". It also goes some way towards explaining the extraordinary response of the Aberdare public to the news, in the Summer of 1947, that one of the new Polish immigrants had been brutally slain in an apparently motiveless knife attack in the town's park.

Despite the sophisticated, not to say distinguished, investigations of Fabian of the Yard, the case remained unsolved and resulted in an unprecedented blossoming of local theory and gossip regarding the possible motives of the murderer. Of the dozens which sub-

sequently emerged, easily the most popular was a theory which attributed the gruesome deed to a settling of old political scores. It was a theory which could be, and was, modified endlessly to suit the political complexion of its declaimer so that whilst certain local individuals believed him to have been a Soviet agent, there were others who were convinced that he was a bloodthirsty Polish fascist.

Whether or not the murderer was, in fact, any one of these exotic animals is not at issue here. What is important is our interpretation of the public's response. We have to recognise that the locals perceived of the Poles in a manner which took cognizance of recent Polish politics. Their overall "suspicion" of the immigrants was, in fact, firmly based upon grounds other than racialism and parochialism. It was based, firstly, upon a long and bitter industrial experience which tended to reject the prospect of freely allowing the arrival upon the coalfield of a potential "blackleg" army and, secondly, upon a less important, but still significant, revulsion towards the anti-Soviet sentiment which was then circulating the more rarified regions of British political life.

By the Summer of 1947, however, most NUM officers appear to have been won over to the "official" position of supporting the Government's plan to alleviate the pit manpower shortage with Poles. Their union's executive had accepted the Government's promises of swift implementation of the Miner's Charter and of the Five Day Week in particular. There were, however, Lodges which remained implacably opposed to the idea and which were prepared,
not only to reject the allegations of "racialism" levelled at them in the press, but also to reject the advice of their elected leaders – including that of such long-trusted individuals as Dai Dan Evans and Arthur Horner: both of whom were, of course, Communists, and both of whom initially were hostile to the Polish scheme. Indeed, here was a classic prototype of the kind of internal union conflict which was to plague the industry for the next decade. Like the conflicts which were to follow it, it tended to cut right across political Party Lines. Thus, we find rank-and-file members of both the Labour and Communist Parties expressing opinions at pit-level which were totally at odds with those officially adopted by their elected Party leaders and which were frequently at odds with the declared policies of the NUM executive which was itself normally made up of leading members of the Labour and Communist Parties. The opposition to the Poles was a good deal less dramatic than were several other, more publicised, contemporary industrial actions – notably the Grimethorpe dispute – but it served, nonetheless, to highlight the continuing sense of alienation experienced by large numbers of rank-and-file from their elected leaders.

At Tower Colliery, for example, the workforce rejected Dai Dan Evans' advice (that the Lodge should allow an influx of Polish workers) on the grounds that "This would not benefit the miner financially, and would not guarantee any increase in coal production", a blanket assertion which disguised a much more complex set of

17. Aberdare Leader, 20.9.47.
grievances peculiar in the first instance to Tower, but reflected in similar claims by Lodges throughout the coalfield. A letter to the local newspaper explained in detail the reasons for Tower's intransigence. It provides us with a rare summary of the kinds of continuing dissatisfactions and frustrations which, in some Areas, were succeeding in souring the industrial atmosphere during the early months of nationalisation. The author was the Treasurer of the Tower Lodge, D.W. Davies, a man described as being a "political creature long before, and after, he was a trade unionist". A Communist from 1944 onwards, Davies wrote his letter in October 1947, "Seriously concerned", as he put it, "with our economic plight and gravely perturbed by our men rejecting the Poles". His stated intention was to "... shed some light on the causes underlying their action":

"The policy of the Tory Governments between the wars", he wrote "was to keep many workers on the dole in order to use them as a weapon against the employed. This had an especially bad reaction on Tower men because there was no price list in operation at the colliery. And in consequence, the scandalously low wages were paid for a very high output. Bearing this in mind it is no wonder that the price-list negotiated a few years ago was not very favourable to the men. The nine-foot seam had been ruthlessly exploited with competitive labour.

Geographically, Tower is situated on the edge of the anthracite coalfield, where relative to a given output, wages are much higher.

Bitterness and a feeling of frustration exist as a result of this inequality.

18. Recording of Alistair Wilson, op. cit.
19. Aberdare Leader, 25.10.47.
Quite a good deal has been heard and said about modernisation and mechanisation, and the concentration of man-power at the most efficient pits, etc., but I would stress this:

Here we have the absurd position of men leaving the colliery with a high output per manshift to go to collieries where there is a low output per manshift, to earn higher wages! Talk about the dog in the manger and the horse!

I would most strongly disagree with any lowering of standards in the "West" (i.e. the anthracite field) but surely our men at Tower should be on a par with them. Fully aware that there is a new wages structure for the industry, pending, whereby, we shall have greater uniformity and skill and effort are suitably rewarded. I am very much afraid that while the grass is growing the horse is starving.

"(3) The geological conditions at Tower are very good with a wonderful seam of coal being worked and the roof strata fairly satisfactory on the whole. As a result of this, the proportion of highly skilled labour in relation to unskilled labour is not so pronounced as in collieries where conditions are really bad. Such conditions obtaining, it is possible, by enlarging "green" or semi-skilled labour, to maintain a fairly high output, although our own men are constantly leaving. Perhaps the connection between the Tory Policy of the inter-war years and what now goes on at Tower Colliery is apparent, and the men are not allowed to appreciate this factor.

While not suggesting that this is a predetermined policy, the result is the same, however, so can we really wonder at the men using a weapon, though reluctantly, which was denied them during the war.

From my own experience of 16 years at Tower, the
number of really good men that have signed on, and then left through sheer discontent, is astounding. But what causes greatest concern if anything, is that the trend is increasing. How far the position can be relieved by a more progressive approach remains to be seen.

But when the country is suffering from a grave economic crisis, and coal is our very life-blood then surely coal production policy should be one of expansion, not a static or contractive one.

I personally believe that given a certain reasonable degree of satisfaction (and thereby halting the drift from Tower), the coal weekly output could be increased to a great extent and would only be limited by haulage difficulties. Remove the discontent, upgrade our own men, and I feel that a great deal of "green" labour (including Poles) could be absorbed at Tower.

(4) Perhaps one could dwell on the political line regarding the Poles, but I would assert, as I did at a general meeting at Hirwaun, that it should be the duty of each and all of us whenever necessary, to lead them to our way of democratic thought and life. 20.

By the late Autumn of 1947, public expression of anti-Polish sentiment had largely subsided. This was not the case, however, with the expression of dissatisfaction concerning the perpetuation of problems such as those highlighted by the Tower Treasurer's letter. By Christmas, 1947, it must have appeared to the local officials of the Coal Board that, no matter in which direction their labours took them, they could do no right in the eyes of the coalfield's workforce. For they were accused, at one and the same time, of dragging their feet on the questions of reform of work practice, pay and conditions whilst instigating other changes which were considered by some lodges to be too sweeping.

Thus, whilst Tower bemoaned what it regarded as a total lack of meaningful change, 5,000 Monmouthshire miners struck work in late October accusing the Board of applying the operation of the 5-Day week "too vigorously" and in such a way that "privileges long enjoyed" were being taken away from them.\[^{21}\] The strike lasted five days and the men returned barely in time to begin working the newly-agreed Saturday shift of $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours. A crisis measure designed by the Government with NUM backing to overcome a severe fuel shortage, this new shift was subjected to a mixed reception by the coalfield's workforce. There were a great many miners who welcomed it as a chance to boost their basic rates with additional bonus. Others saw it as a betrayal of the long struggle to achieve a five-day week.

\[^{21}\] C.G., 31.10.47.
Once again, it proved impossible to separate industrial considerations from the political. The Government and the union leaders argued that the Five-Day week was vital if Britain was to survive a particularly harsh winter - let alone continue her post-war economic reconstruction. To oppose such a cause was to be identified with those shadowy and subversive elements who wished the country, and the Labour Government in particular, no good.

Nothing, however, was further from reality. When the proposal was put that a Saturday shift be worked in the pits of the Aberdare Valley, the initial response was surprising. Of the twelve pits involved, eight voted in favour of working the Saturday shift and, of the four which voted against, the most vocal was Abercynon - a relatively large and productive pit whose workers consistently had beaten their output target during the four months prior to the ballot. They rejected their union's recommendation that they accept the extra shift on the grounds that they saw "no useful purpose (being) served by either extra work at the end of each day or Saturday shifts". In line with all other colliery lodges, however, Abercynon accepted the majority coalfield decision and began Saturday working. The practice did not, nevertheless, become a routine to be accepted passively. At Abercynon, and at many other pits, it became a focus, or rather a vehicle, for the expression of a whole range of existing grievances.

The Abercynon men, for example, used their dissatisfaction with the new arrangements to register their discontent with the auto-

22. Aberdare Leader, 25.10.47. The vote was taken at a meeting at which there was a "large attendance" and at which the Lodge Committee recommended acceptance of the Area executive's recommendations. Abercynon had never been known as a "militant" pit. On the contrary, it was regarded by the union's area officials as being one of the least effective of the Powell Duffryn lodges.
cratic style of management which had continued at the pit from its recent Powell Duffryn past. At Parc and Dare colliery in the Rhondda, the Saturday shift was used with tremendous tactical expertise by the Lodge Committee as a means of emphasising its disgust with the new joint proposals for a pay increase being floated by the Coal Board and the NUM. The pit's 1,720 workers struck in protest on the Tuesday (Nov. 26th), only to turn up en masse, and amidst much publicity, the following Saturday announcing with a great deal of self-righteousness that they were sacrificing their weekend in order that they might make up for the loss of output which had resulted from their midweek strike.

The Saturday shift issue took its place alongside a dozen other main bones of contention which lay in an untidy heap at the feet of the officials of the NCB and NUM. Most were leftovers from the

23. The Aberdare Leader reported that, on the morning of Friday, Nov. 14th, 1947, a notice stating that there would be work for all colliers on the next day, but work "only by invitation" in the case of day wage men, both surface and underground. The lodge committee argued that the notice was contrary to the agreement reached at the area conference which had been held to discuss the subject of Saturday work where it had been agreed that all workmen were guaranteed their wages for the first and second Saturdays of the month. The manager informed the Lodge Secretary that he was "acting on instructions from higher authority" and, when the day-wage men duly reported for work the following morning, he invited a small number to work and turned away some 200 others. A.L., 22.11.47.

This action seems to have provoked a considerable degree of general dissatisfaction amongst the men. A previously quiescent workforce, they appear, by December, to be in the forefront of militancy in the Aberdare group of pits. During the first week of that month, they rejected the Board's - NUM's proposals for a wage increase on the grounds that it would benefit some workers more than it would others. A.L., 6.12.47.

private days but were not necessarily treated as such. Like the protests over the temporary abandonment of the five-day week, the strikes and go-slows provoked by unsuccessful wage claims, intransigent managerial profiles, insufficient bonus payments and the erosion of pit customs and practices were condemned by the Government as the thoughtless acts of ungrateful individuals, or, worse still, as conscious subversion on the part of certain politically-motivated tendencies within the NUM. It was this latter allegation which caused most discomfort amongst the leadership of the grouping most likely to have been cited in this respect, the Communist Party. Consequently, Arthur Horner went out of his way to disassociate himself and his Party from such actions.

So much was this the case, that he came near, on several occasions, to forfeiting much of the grass-roots adoration which, for so long, he had enjoyed on the coalfield. It soon became obvious, in fact, that although rank-and-file Communists were involved in these unwelcomed strikes and go-slows, they were not necessarily the exclusive leaders. Far from being politically motivated, most strikes were provoked by the miners' dissatisfaction with their pay and conditions. They became political issues because everything associated with the nationalised industry was discussed in the press and in Parliament in political terms. Everyone on the left, inside and outside Parliament, revealed themselves as being ultra sensitive on the issues and none were more sensitive than the Communists who were attempting with some success to expand their influence within the trade union movement as a whole. Under no circumstances did they wish the general public to regard them as a gang of "wreckers". 
The avenues of action open to them were limited, however, for if King Street was to enable itself to maintain whatever was left of its wartime image of "responsibility", it needed first to curb the activities of the more strike prone amongst its rank-and-file members. This posed a number of serious problems, in as much as these members represented, very often, the Party's most vital link with the mining workforce. What was more, they often owed their popularity amongst the non-Communist workforce to their readiness to involve themselves in the leadership of unofficial strikes and go-slows.

As we have seen earlier, this dilemma had been amongst the most central to the Party in S. Wales since Arthur Horner had signed the 1937 Coalfield Agreement. It had become intensified during the war years and especially so after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June, 1941. The winter of 1947 merely pushed the problem back into the limelight where it remained for the following three decades. The paradoxes which it created were made doubly acute by the fact that the winter of 1947 witnessed, not only a marked sharpening of local conflicts in Welsh pits but also the spectacle afforded by a Labour Government apparently keen to align itself with the prime defender of world capitalism in the face of what it perceived as a red threat from the East.

The winter brought with it a rash of stay-down strikes which were provoked by a wide range of grievances. It witnessed the first stay-down directed against a proposed pit closure, (Maindy Colliery, late December and again in February) as well as the first serious post-war dispute at that old trouble centre, Gwaum-cae-gurwen. By
February, the S. Wales Area of the NUM felt obliged to convene a conference at which the unofficial actions were loudly condemned as being responsible for the kinds of "sectional difficulties" which in previous years had "allowed the coalowners to divide and conquer". The conference expressed its determination to prevent a recurrence of the stoppages "at a period when the country is passing through a serious crisis".

The warning proved to be an effective one; the numbers of strikes fell and the Spring brought with it a period of relative peace within the industry. Trouble, when it occurred, was confined largely to the anthracite area. Indeed, Gomer Evans, the NCB's divisional labour director, told a conference of managers, miners' representatives and officials of the Divisional NCB that there had to be "big changes" in the anthracite area as there had been more stoppages there, he alleged, than in the whole of the Division. After listening to Evans and discussing his information, area NUM officials issued a statement attributing low production to bad planning, lack of machinery, and in some instances to a "lack of cooperation between workers and pit managers and unnecessary unofficial strikes". This assessment of the situation was almost certainly the correct one, for to over-emphasise the importance of strikes would have been a serious mistake. The dilapidated condition of many anthracite mines was common knowledge and there was much resentment concerning the apparent unwillingness of the NCB to come to terms with this fact. Resolutions from the Lodges criticising the NCB's methods of administration were

25. Ibid., 27.2.48.
26. Ibid.
27. SWNUM. Special Conference Reports, March 1948.
strongly represented amongst those which went forward to the Area Conference of the NUM in May[28] at which the President of the S.W.NUM, Alf Davies, alleged that many Welsh mines were "technically inefficient".[29]

His remedies for this backwardness did not please all of the delegates however. He warned his audience that there would have to be enforced closures of the most inefficient pits and that these would have to be offset by the payment of adequate compensation to men made redundant or forced to travel long distances to work.[30] This admission by the union (that there was a valid case for pit closures) provided observers with further proof, if they needed it, that the miners' leaders were genuine when they expressed their "cooperative" sentiments. It was accompanied by a demand for increased consultation between management and miners on questions of technical reorganisation - an issue about which a great many amongst the conference delegates felt strongly. Even here, however, their Communist President warned them that though they knew that they were not being given enough information, they nevertheless should refrain from adopting "an attitude of cynicism" and fight, instead, "for the right to be treated as responsible partners in the industry".[31]

These were not the words of an obvious subversive. Indeed, they reflected the Communist Party's conciliatory line on the whole question of industrial relations within the nationalised coal industry. Horner recalled in his autobiography how much he had admired the new Coal Board with its trade-union members:

30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
"If I had become a member of the Board I don't think I should have done a better job for the miners than Ebby Edwards, Walter Citrine, or Billy Sales, or Jim Bowman. I might have reached the point when as a member of the Board I had to do something which I disbelieved, and I would then have been obliged to throw up the job or break my heart. It may seem a contradiction because I supported the nationalization of the mines and I believed that the scheme drawn up in 1945 ... was the only possible way of tackling the job at the time. I am convinced that the men from the trade union movement who went on to the Board, men like Ebby Edwards, Citrine and Jim Bowman, in particular, did an amazingly good job. They made possible agreements which not only put the mining industry on its feet, but ensured that the miners got the square deal that they deserved."  

Horner, along with the Moffatt brothers, was the C.P.'s most direct link with the central executive of the miners' union and, despite his somewhat renegade past - with its sins of "Hornerism", his influence was undoubtedly very strong at King Street. It was at least as strong as was Bill Paynter's in later years, and Paynter's was sufficiently strong to cause the Party to call off its rank-and-file militants when they were in full cry in the mid-fifties. 

As we have seen, Horner believed that Nationalisation, despite the fact that it was occurring within the context of a capitalist society, was nevertheless a progressive move in the construction of a Socialist Society in Britain. His view was shared by a great many others amongst the industry's rank and file. And there, in all certainty, lies the key to understanding the peculiar nature of the conflicts and tensions which built up during the late 1940's.

and early '50s.

There existed an obvious paradox between coalmining's nationalised image and its everyday reality which, in turn, produced what might best be termed "double think" amongst a great many of the coalfield's miners. Often fiercely proud of their newly-nationalised status, they nevertheless found it impossible to overcome, or even to modify, a great many of their old reflex actions when confronted with managerial initiatives. Consequently, strikes and go-slows occurred which were provoked by issues which appeared to outside observers as relatively trivial in nature. It is important to note that the "outsiders" in this case can be taken to mean all those not directly involved in the dispute or in disputes like it; this category could, and did, include officials both of the Coal Board and the NUM as well as the Government and the media.

The criticism and tensions which resulted were amplified by the Government, Coal Board and media during the harsh winter of 1947/1948. Much publicity was devoted, in particular, to the events which surrounded the conflict at that old anthracite trouble-centre, Gwaun-cae-gurwen. The pits of Gwaun-cae-gurwen were the most strike-prone on the coalfield. They had been throughout the 1930s and were to remain so during most of the first decade of nationalisation. The strikes and go-slows which occurred there during this later period came to epitomize what the officials, both of the NCB and NUM, regarded as the most sectionalistic and destructive of rank-and-file industrial actions. Consequently, the Gwaun-cae-gurwen workforce found itself the target for regular go-slows.

35. See, above, Chpt. 7, Table 1, for the strike-records of pits in the Gwaun-cae-gurwen area, 1927-39. The pits to look for are Steer, Maerdy, East, Cwmgorse, Cwmllynfell and Gelliceidrim; the first four being most associated with G.c.g., itself.
attacks from the more "responsible" sections of its own Area union as well as from the officials of the Coal Board. In the face of this criticism, the workforce's alleged intransigence in its defence of custom and practice became notorious and its apparent unwillingness, or inability, to toe the official union line earned it a reputation as being a haven of latter-day Welsh Luddism.

The history of the workforce's drawn-out conflict with the Coal Board can be seen, however, as constituting a compressed history of the coalfield as a whole after the First World War. Having survived the inter-war depression in surprisingly good condition, the Gwaun-cae-gurwen lodges were, in many ways, one of the more obvious of the remaining bastions of that "syndicalist" spirit which had been so evident on certain parts of the coalfield until the traumatic defeats of the 1920s. Like the private coalowners before them, the Coal Board objected to the workforce's attitudes and practices and sought to overcome them. The members of the Board enjoyed a distinct advantage over their private predecessors in this respect however, in as much as they received the support, rather than the opposition, of the miners' union which was itself extremely unhappy with the situation at Gwaun-cae-gurwen after 1947. The executive of the union was dedicated to the construction of an united and disciplined organisation of the kind which had no place within its ranks for such maverick lodges as those which represented the Gwaun-cae-gurwen men.

Sited near the sources of the Afan and Clydach rivers, the mines previously had been owned by the Amalgamated Anthracite combine
and their lodges had formed a highly militant and active section of the A.A. Workmen’s Combine Committee. The first year following nationalisation had proved however, to be a relatively quiet one as far as labour relations at the mines was concerned. A stay-down at the nearby Gelliceidrim drift in August, 1947, brought no significant response from the Gwaun-cae-gurwen lodges and it was not until early February, 1948, that a serious stoppage occurred at any of the four mines in question.* The February strike involved 1,490 miners from the East and Steer pits and was called in sympathy with the Maerdy men who had been transferred to these two pits when their own had been closed by the Coal Board which planned to work the Maerdy coal from Steer.

Though short-lived, the dispute appears to have sparked off a whole chain of strikes, most of which took place in the nearby Swansea Valley in support of a lengthy stay-in strike at Tarenhi where the men were demanding that the NCB should not interfere with custom and practice … "particularly in relation to wages, nor interfere with managerial administration". 36

In May, 1,600 miners employed at the Steer, East and Maerdy mines, Gwaun-cae-gurwen, returned to work after a two-day strike called in protest against a pronouncement that house-coal allocations to compensate men formerly employed at the recently-closed Maerdy pit would be cut. (By May, Maerdy was worked only by a salvage and maintenance crew). They returned only after an undertaking

* The strictly Gwaun-cae-gurwen mines were those of Maerdy, East, Steer and Cwmgorse, though nearby Cwmllynfell and Gelliceidrim often acted in unison with them.

36. C.G., 13.2.48. See, also, Chpt. 8 above, for a similar dispute at Tarenih.
had been given by an NCB official that negotiations on house-coal allocations to the sick and aged miners of Maerdy would be reopened.

This was a theme which was to remain central to the Gwaun-cae-gurwen troubles. A high rate of pneumoconiosis victims in the locality and a high accident rate generally across the anthracite area ensured that the question of compensation payments was never far from the men's minds. Their resolve - that justice must be done in this respect - undoubtedly received macabre nourishment from the news, issued the following month, that of the 4,383 new cases of pneumoconiosis registered in Britain during the previous twelve months, 3,765 had been registered in South Wales. 37

Both the Coal Board and the Union argued however, that such questions should be dealt with through normal channels of negotiation and they condemned the Gwaun-cae-gurwen strikers for displaying an extreme unwillingness to cooperate in utilizing the proper negotiated procedures. In mid-June, the Coal Board warned the anthracite miners in general of the acute need for sustained production. The Board alleged that it had been "... well known that there have been some grave losses on anthracite for some years, some putting it as high as £2 to £3 a ton in some places". 38

It was claimed that virtually no pit in the area was making a profit and the anthracite miners were told bluntly that they were "a drag on the rest of the field, .... largely responsible for the national loss .... on the first year of nationalisation". 39

37. Ibid., 18.6.48.
38. Ibid., 25.6.48.
39. Ibid.
The Board made it clear that it was highly reluctant to sink £20 million-worth of new mines in the area until it was sure of better cooperation from the workforce. The NUM responded by calling a special conference at which the problems of the anthracite field were discussed at length. It was decided to recommend that ways be found to improve the economic position of all of the collieries in question by reviewing a whole range of customs and practices which the union executive believed were retarding the efficiency of production. The executive issued a clear warning to its members that only by raising production would it prove possible to avoid widespread mine closures.

This constituted the most unequivocal of the union's statements concerning its attitude towards restrictive practices. It is evident however, that the union executive was itself divided over the issues: as distinguished a member as Dai Dan Evans, for example, remained for a long time unconvinced of the merits of the case for dismantling many of the old customs and practices which were operated in the upper-Swansea Valley from whence he had been elected. Though a Communist himself, and an enthusiastic supporter of the principle of nationalisation, he yet held back from attacking the so-called "sectionalists" as vociferously as had some of his comrades on the executive. His reticence was only temporary, however, and the executive succeeded in communicating to the rank-and-file an image of unanimous opposition to restrictive practices.⁴⁰

For its part, the NCB prosecuted those whom it considered guilty of practising "ca'canny" and rewarded those who displayed the most Stakhanovite tendencies. Thus, in the space of eight days at the end of June, three Cefneithin miners were charged with restricting their output by 30 to 40 per cent at their place of work and two Pontypridd miners were awarded money prizes for having cut and filled over 50 tons each during the previous working week. 41

At a national level, Ebby Edwards, the Board's labour relations member and ex-NUM General Secretary, asked all Divisional Boards for detailed evidence of all restrictive practices that were still being carried out ".... in spite of the clauses in the five-day week agreement that they should be given up". 42 Edwards was a member of a committee set up with the NUM in June to investigate reasons why restrictive practices continued. The publicity which surrounded its formation was eclipsed however, by a controversy which threatened to boil over and to stain the NUM's public image of itself as representing a model of trade union responsibility and disciplined power.

It manifested itself most clearly at the NUM's Margate Conference in August, 1948, when it became clear that there was widespread discontent with the level of industrial democracy achieved inside the nationalised industry. A large number of resolutions dealing with this theme were tabled. So seriously did the miners' leaders

41. C.G., 9.7.48. The Pontypridd men were awarded their prizes on the stage of the Odeon Cinema in Cardiff by the city's Lord Mayor.
42. Ibid., 6.8.48.
approach this problem that one observer declared that the demand for an extension of "workers power" had come to represent a possible "substitute" for cash advancements. Despite the fact that the policy of the Labour Party, the TUC and the NUM had hitherto been that nationalised industries should be controlled by independent boards containing a due proportion of members nominated by the trade unions, but that they should act as individuals and not as direct representatives of the unions, the executive of the NUM was forced to move a resolution that, "... as workers' participation can only be achieved by a radical change in the composition of the machinery at all levels," there should be a provision for "greater representation from the Labour and trade-union movement".

In the course of his Presidential address however, Will Lawther declared that the function of the union in the coal industry should be "to remain free and independent", adding that they did not "subscribe to the doctrine that either the union or the officials should be at one and the same time part of the structure for running and owning the industry".

There was obviously some considerable confusion here. Lawther's analysis, in the words of the Colliery Guardian's editor, sounded like "a voice from the past" and, indeed, the NUM President later implied that perhaps the events of the two years prior to the Margate conference had required a change of attitude.

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44. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1948.
45. Ibid., "Presidential Address".
47. Ibid.
Guardian editorial made the most of this confusion by declaring that neither the union nor the general public must forget that

"for the greater part of this century the mining unions preached the doctrine of "the mines for the miners". Nevertheless the fundamental principle that wages and prices must run in harness, even where the State owns an industry, seems to impose some checks upon uncompromising ambition and rapacity, just as it imposes increased responsibilities upon the unions to promote high production and assist in the abolition of practices which militate against it". 48

Here was summarised a very basic contradiction and one which remained unsolved even in the mind of the NUM's chief officer. It was patently clear that the NUM had neither thought through, nor adequately discussed in public, the questions surrounding the nature of its relationship with the Coal Board. This is, undoubtedly, an important reason for the existence of so many obvious disparities in the behaviour of various sections of S. Wales miners in their dealings with nationalised management. As we have seen, different groups of workers had differing levels of expectation. The "co-operative" line of the NUM might have been acceptable to the previously disorganised and largely dispirited workers of, say, the Rhymney and Merthyr Valleys but that did not mean that it was acceptable to the men of Gwaun-cae-gurwen who had inherited a legacy of relatively extensive job control. To them the controversy over industrial democracy was, in a barely disguised sense, central to their conflict with the Coal Board and the executive of the NUM. For it could be argued that what the union described as "sectionalism" was, in fact, a degree of local job control and trade union

48. Ibid.
autonomy which both the Coal Board and the NUM executive found unacceptable. It was an example of the old trade-union problem of how best to subordinate local organisation to national organisation - a problem greatly complicated after 1946/47 by the hybrid nature of the relationship which was instituted between the NUM and the NCB.

Anthracite miners looked eastwards and noted how favourably their own positions compared (in terms of wages and task-requirements) with those of their brothers in the dry-steam and bituminous areas. They could be forgiven for suspecting that, should they surrender their old defences upon the orders of an executive which obviously was confused over the nature of its proper role in a nationalised industry, that they too, might soon find themselves reduced to a level of industrial subservience comparable to that which they suspected to be in existence amongst the former employees of the Powell Duffryn company. *

By October 1948, the Gwaun-cae-gurwen (G.c.g.) men were back in the news, following their refusal to utilize appropriate channels for the settling of local disputes. Their behaviour contrasted dramatically with that of the Rhondda miners who, at the same time as the Gwaun-cae-gurwen men were issuing threats, endorsed a recent decision of a coalfield conference to work every other Saturday and to do "all possible to increase production". 49

* See, for example, the Tower Lodge Treasurer's letter, pp. 67-69 which compared the unhappy position of the dry-steam coal miner with that of his anthracite neighbour.

49. Ibid., 28.10.48.
In mid-October about 1,050 miners (out of 1,608) employed at the Steer and East pits, Gwaun-cae-gurwen tendered 14 days' strike notices owing to a proposed revision of a price list. It was alleged that by so doing they had been "disloyal to an award of umpires to whom was submitted a claim by the Regional Coal Board for a revision of the list". The Regional Coal Board, commenting on the men's attitude, declared that pieceworkers, for many years, had enjoyed exceptional wages which often had been entirely unrelated to their effort, and it insisted on a revision of the price list in order to ensure that wages paid were commensurate with the work performed. The anthracite coalfield, it claimed, had been working at a serious economic loss and the Board was convinced that one way of reducing this loss lay in the revision of price lists at certain pits in the Area:

"In not accepting the award of the umpires and in handing in notices the men are violating the whole principle of conciliation in the coalfield and rendering the machinery of industrial relationship ineffective".

It is quite clear that it was the Coal Board's intention either to bump up production on the assumption that the Gwaun-cae-gurwen men would not countenance a reduction in their take-home pay or else to reduce that pay if production remained at its existing level. Either way, it constituted a very definite attack upon the standards which had been achieved by the men under their previous contracts with Amalgamated Anthracite and would almost certainly have confirmed their worst fears concerning the possibility that they might have their earnings reduced to a level similar to that suffered by

50. Ibid.  
51. Ibid.
their steam-coal colleagues to the east.

At the end of October, the Regional Coal Board announced its intention to shut down the Steer and East pits. It alleged that during the week prior to its reaching its decision, production at the two pits had declined from the "intolerably low" figure of 11.67 cwt. of saleable coal per manshift to 6.5 cwt. per man and it went on to stress that both pits had been running at a heavy loss since Vesting Day and earlier. The cost of wages alone at the pits during the 18 months prior to October had been 68s., a ton, compared with a realisation of 58s. 1d., a ton of the saleable coal produced. They, the Divisional Board members, had, they said, given repeated warnings of the consequences which would arrive from the lack of any material improvement and they had "reluctantly come to the conclusion in view of the most recent events that the operations at Gwaun-cae-gurwen are imposing an impossible burden on the industry as a whole and are contrary to the best interests of those engaged in it and the community at large."53

The Coal Board made special mention of the fact that its three umpires, after very wide and extensive deliberations, came up with an award which established a basis of wage rates which would "permit the men to earn good wages for reasonable effort". In the past, it was noted,

52. NCR Annual Returns and Accounts, 1947, 1948. This represents a very big loss, though not startling when compared with the loss per ton for the South Wales coalfield as a whole in 1947. For the 12 months, Jan-Dec., 1947, the loss was 9s. 7d., per ton overall, and for the same 12 months in 1948 the loss was 4s. 9d., per ton overall. The loss at G.c.g. appears to have remained large when that of the rest of the field improved.

53. C.G., 4.11.48.
"a system of allowances supplementary to piece-rates had operated, which enabled most colliers to receive as much as, or up to, £5 per week irrespective of the work done, in addition to earnings related to the tonnage handled.\textsuperscript{54}

The new wage rates substituted for those piece-rates and allowances over-all rates which have been approved in other collieries with similar seams and conditions and which enable men to earn good wages of between 40s., and 50s., a shift per day for reasonable effort".\textsuperscript{55}

The Coal Board's ultimatum was backed up by an emphatic recommendation from the SWNUM that the Gwaun-cae-gurwen strike notices be withdrawn. On Monday, Nov. 7th, however, 1,050 Steer and East employees struck work, the men having refused to accept their executive's advice. In retaliation, the executive announced their refusal to intervene in the dispute - despite the Board's closure of the pits - until the men expressed a readiness to return to work and to accept the umpires' award.

Within a matter of days, Gwaun-cae-gurwen witnessed the arrival of four miners' M.P's, including James Griffiths, the Labour Minister of National Insurance, all of whom urged the strikers to accept their union's recommendations. They were successful in as much as the massed meeting of strikers agreed to hold a

\textsuperscript{54} This compares with average gross weekly earnings for all working below in S. Wales in 1948 of £8. NCB Annual Returns & Accounts, 1948.

\textsuperscript{55} Although face-workers' earnings are not available in NCB returns before 1952, the estimate of "40s and 50s" does seem a little generous. The average gross earnings per manshift at the face in 1952 were 45/6d. The 50s quote probably reflects the higher earning capacity of colliers in the anthracite field as compared with the steam-coal area.
secret ballot on the 17th of November. The result was a clear, though not overwhelming, decision to return to work - or at least, to implore the Coal Board to re-open the mines. *

At once, all of the decisive negotiatory power slipped away from the Lodge committees of East and Steer and fell into the laps of the Cardiff-based miners' executive. For, although the main benefactors of the ballot result were the members of the Coal Board, the miners' executive had demonstrated that they could counteract even the most "sectionalist" indiscipline on the coalfield. The strike-leaders at Gwaun-cae-gurwen had suffered a defeat and found that they were now dependent upon the negotiatory skills of their central executive to win for them the best possible terms for a resumption of work.

By early December, those terms were announced and the mines re-opened. A great deal of stress was placed upon the need to transform the idiosyncratic methods of payment at the pits into systems compatible with those operating elsewhere, although it was also emphasised that the pits would only reopen if workmen agreed to "submit to the discipline of the management and carry out all reasonable requests in the course of operations" and if it was agreed that all restrictive practices be abolished and that the five-day week be "practised in all respects".56 In late January,

* The result of the secret ballot was as follows:
  For the withdrawal of strike notices: 665 votes
  Against the withdrawal of strike notices: 485 votes. C.G., 25.11.48.

56. The other conditions were as follows:
(a) That the umpires' award be accepted in respect of the conveyor method of working.
(b) That joint application be made to the umpires to decide prices.
(c) All contract and special rates to continue as before.
(d) All colliers must equip themselves with a full set of tools.

SWMUM Minutes of Executive Council, 1948.
the miners of East and Steer were publicly accused by the Board of not sticking to their re-opening agreement; output per manshift was down to 9.9 cwt., at East and 4.9cwt., at Steer! A new closure threat brought a promise from the men that they would "revert to normal working", but few amongst the membership of either the Coal Board or the miners' executive could have retained much faith in such a promise.

The temporary closure of Gwaun-cae-gurwen brought with it a host of theories which sought to explain the Board's action in political terms. The mines located in that area were repeatedly referred to in newspapers as "stormcentres" of unofficial industrial action and it was widely felt that the Board would be far happier, from both a financial and a managerial point of view, to see the pits closed. Identical theories were used to explain the Board's proposed closure of Tareni Colliery in the Swansea Valley. In both cases, the closures were interpreted as constituting "punishment" for the political sins of these anthracite workers. It is an interpretation which has entered the militant miner's vocabulary and is used to support the widespread allegation that, because of its reputation as a haven for left-wingers and unofficial strikers, the whole coalfield has been systematically "starved" of investment by the Coal Board. *

This is, in many ways, a crude and inaccurate analysis and one which is employed both by men and management but for widely diff-


57. C.G., 27.1.49.
ering purposes. The men cite it as proof of the way in which the Coal Board and successive Governments have sought to destroy their most effective centres of trade-union power; the managers cite it as proof that the decline of the South Wales coalfield is due in great part to the misdeeds of its industrial and political activists. Used either way, it constitutes a powerful and resilient argument and one which warrants careful analysis.

As early as November, 1947, loud complaints began to emanate from the workforce over the lack of adequate mining equipment and personnel. At a mass meeting of 1,800 miners at Bridgend, for example, a protest was lodged concerning what was described as "sabotage" (on the part of Coal Board officials) of the Government's attempts to increase coal production. Their grievances centred upon an alleged lack of surface workers, repairers, fitters and personnel responsible for safety during the voluntary Saturday shifts. Two months later, the stay-down strikers at Maindy Colliery blamed the proposed closure of their pit on the fact that they and their colleagues had been starved of equipment.

A less obvious protest in this direction was made during the following July at Elliots Colliery in the Rhymney Valley when 1,200 miners were made idle because of a strike by 62 colliers over the fact that one of them had found that the padlock of his tool bar had been broken - hardly, at first sight, a direct result of the lack of Coal Board investment in its Welsh pits. But the incident concealed a deep-seated resentment which, the men considered, had unjustly been ignored by the Coal Board.

58. Western Mail, 8.11.47.
Bill Paynter, who at that time was the Miners' Agent for the Rhy hymney, persuaded the strikers to return to work only after he publicly had made it clear that the problem of tools was an acute one in all pits. Workmen, he said, were compelled to purchase their own and if these tools were lost or stolen then it was up to the men to replace them. The cost of a set he reckoned to be around £1., which was roughly the average gross weekly wage for an underground worker. Modern mining, he explained, made it imperative that underground workmen be mobile, and it was not always practicable to carry heavy tools. Consequently, men frequently were finding that their tool bars had been opened in their absence and the tools mislaid or broken. New tools had to be bought or the old ones repaired; either way it entailed considerable expense, and Paynter argued that the only practical solution would be for the Coal Board to be responsible for providing all workmen's tools and for maintaining them under proper supervision. 59 He received wide support, for no fewer than thirteen lodges had urged, in a joint resolution at the Area annual conference, that tools, clothing for protective purposes and explosives should be provided free of cost to the mine workers.

The Board's alleged skimping on these relatively small expenditures was interpreted by the workforce as indicating a more general reluctance on the part of their employer to invest in the reconstruction of the South Wales coalfield. In August, 1948, Horner articulated this interpretation when he appealed to the Coal Board to put its plans for reorganisation before the union.

59. C.G., 2.7.48.
He claimed that he and his members were dissatisfied with the speed of reorganisation and argued that the time for "alibis and excuses" was passed. Unless reorganisation was proceeded with quickly, he continued, the miners' union would disclaim responsibility for continued losses:

"If reorganisation is held up for political or other reasons", he warned, ".... the financial responsibility must be upon the shoulders of those who make the decisions".60

When the plans were announced however, they proved extremely uncongenial to many amongst the anthracite miners. Almost inevitably, the Board announced that Tareni and a number of other "troublesome" pits in that Area should close as part of the general reorganisation.

Tareni had long been unsure of its fate. By January, 1949, it employed just 300 men with its production workers concentrated on one remaining conveyor face. Management cited ventilation difficulties as constituting the main reason why two more faces could not be opened. Tareni had been scheduled for reorganisation long before nationalisation and about £250,000 had been spent on development, most of it having gone in wages. Its coal seams slipped away badly and general geological difficulties made the original scheme for redevelopment apparently unworkable, 61 so much so in fact, that the main seam would have to be tapped from another direction. There was however, abundant high grade anthracite in

60. Ibid., 20.8.48; see, also, Aberdare Leader, 21.8.48: Horner declared that mines had been allowed to fall into a "shameful technical condition" and he condemned those who, as he put it, sought to solve this problem by creating a new pool of unemployed which might be used to aid the "archaic" solution of wage-cutting.
61. C.S., 6.1.49.
the pit and it was this, more than any other single consideration, which caused the NUM to adopt a policy of advocating major re-organisation in order that the pit's output could be revived once again. There was however, another consideration which could not be ignored and that was the widespread worry in many of the mining areas of S. Wales (and especially in the Swansea Valley) concerning the employment situation and the whole future of the coal industry in the light of plans for large-scale colliery closures. The Tareni closure announcement provoked the calling of a conference of local authorities from neighbouring communities to discuss the position with representatives of anthracite miners' lodges. Similar meetings took place in Aberdare where the town council had gone as far as sending a delegation to London to meet the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, Mr. George Belcher, to discuss the growing problem of unemployment. Aberdare, like the Swansea Valley, was feeling the effects of the first of many post-nationalisation closures.

As early as the first two years of nationalisation, the NUM executive was made aware of the paradoxical position in which it found itself in relation to pit closures. Pledged to cooperate in reorganising the industry, it nevertheless proved impossible for the union to ignore the fact that there existed widespread

62. The deputation was extremely dissatisfied with their reception by Belcher. Councillor Sam Wilcox reported that members of the deputation, having travelled 200 miles to put forward Aberdare's case, were granted only ½ hour by Belcher himself, who talked for half an hour - "as if he knew Aberdare better than they did" - "If he had talked less, we could have told him a lot, for we were not a meek and mild deputation". Aberdare Leader, 4.9.48.

63. In 1948, the Aberdare Valley lost Cwmneol Colliery; in 1949 it lost Cwm Cynon, Werfa Dare and Penrhiwceiber No. 3.
fear within the mining communities that the closures might be heralding a return of mass-unemployment. The union's executive was confronted regularly with petitions and deputations pleading the case of one or other of the collieries on the closure list. For their part, the elected officers examined each case with extreme care. They were fully aware of the fact that, of all of the gloomy shadows hanging over the coalfield, none caused as much trepidation amongst the mining communities as the prospect of unemployment. If the union's membership tended to dramatise this particular situation somewhat, it was perfectly understandable in the light of its pre-war experience.

The miners' executive therefore, began to oppose closures wherever there was the slightest possibility that jobs might profitably be saved. In this respect, they were often at variance with their counterparts on the Coal Board who favoured a much more radical approach. The proposed closure of Tareni was a case in point, in as much as the Board advocated a complete shut-down whilst the union favoured developing new points of access to proven reserves of high-grade anthracite. And although the union's opposition to complete closure lacked any great conviction, it nevertheless provided the Tareni rank-and-file with a legitimate article of defence which they proceeded to develop into a cohesive argument for the need for the application of imagination and daring by the coal planners.

_A Colliery Guardian_ editorial commented that this was a typical example of the apparent inability of the S. Wales' collier to come to terms with reality: the closure of Tareni, it reported,
... has been obstructed by the workmen by every means in their power. Notwithstanding a strong demand for Welsh anthracite from all parts of the world, the position of the industry has been a hapless one for many years. Profits have been low and costs extravagant, largely the result, it must be admitted, of egregious mismanagement rather than of natural difficulties. In 1947 the Swansea area made a loss of 22s. 6d., on every ton of coal sold. At some of the pits the losses were as high as £10 to £12 per ton.

The Regional Survey Report in 1946 considered that the position in the anthracite area clearly called for a full and detailed examination into the ways and means of working and development on an economic basis. A salient factor was that the majority of the collieries had been in production for periods varying from 40 to 100 years and the Committee stated that urgent and drastic measures needed to be taken to bring these collieries into line with recent improvements in practice for the economical working of their remaining reserves.

Few changes had taken place by the end of 1948 (indeed, the Board had closed only three anthracite mines in the first two years of public ownership) but, in January, 1949, it was proposed that at least twelve pits in the area should close - a decision which provoked the local authorities to take up arms and to demand the alternative course of reconstruction. The editor of the Colliery Guardian observed how significant it was that Alf Davies, the

64. An interesting admission this, in the light of the C.G.'s many previous defences of the Amalgamated Anthracite Company and of its chairman, Szarvasy.
65. C.G., 20.1.49.
Communist President of the S. Wales miners', had gone so far as to declare that "30 of the 42 anthracite pits should be shut down".  

The choice which faced the Board was a difficult one. It could choose either to push ahead with its rationalising plans and, in so doing, to sweep aside local objections, or else it could adopt what might best be called a "defeatist" attitude which contented itself with a low pitch of efficiency rather than risk an immediate return to pre-war-style unemployment.

The question of closing down uneconomic pits and utilizing the man-power so released in more profitable undertakings became increasingly urgent as the Board's development plans matured. It cropped up in other coalfields less embarrassed financially than S. Wales. In Lanarkshire, for example, several thousand pitworkers and their families found their sources of employment closed and responded by moving to fresh areas. The miners' union was forced, in such situations, to fulfil its previous promises concerning cooperation with the Coal Board, but it was one thing for leaders like Alf Davies to voice "progressive" theories regarding the need for colliery rationalisation, and quite another to convince dozens of mining communities that they should pull up their roots and move to wherever the manpower shortage existed in more productive mines.

It was not, of course, a new problem. The whole period after 1920 had seen marked changes in the attitude of the entrepreneur towards the unprofitable undertaking. It had long been the case that it was not necessarily profit and loss which provided the

67. C.G., 20.1.49.
test by which it was decided that a mine remained open or closed. Various inter-war marketing schemes made it possible to guarantee a minimum profit to the poor undertaking, in order, it was argued, to assure to the successful undertaking an additional margin of profit.

Under nationalisation, the problem had acquired a new aspect. It seemed imperative that the Board should make an over-all profit, but an even more important objective was increased production. Once again, there were many influential voices prompting indecisive Board members as to the best means of achieving these objectives. The editor of the Colliery Guardian remarked confidently that .... "With a secure financial position", the Board could "solve both problems by weeding out the unprofitable unit and concentrating effort upon new undertakings in which the coal can be won at a lower tonnage cost". The loss of capital involved could, he argued, be covered by the gains received from increased productivity.68

He was also very forthright in his advice to the Board as to how its members should regard the protest strikes of the soon-to-be displaced rank-and-file at the collieries in question:

"The association of the unofficial strike with these basic discussions is a dangerous portent. It is all the more menacing when, instead of being aimed at the extraction of higher wages from a thriving public or semi-public service, it is employed as a means of draining blood from a moribund carcass, a not unfair description of S. Wales coalmining at the present time".69

68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
The carcass refused to revive, no matter how many inquiries poked around in it and no matter how many indignant articles were written about it. At Steer pit, Gwaun-cae-gurwen, for example, a comparison was made between "effort and wages" for the Holiday Pay Week (Bull Week) for 1948 and 1949 - the one week during the year in which it was unlikely that ca'canny would be employed during production. It was found that, although the overall OMS had dropped by almost 50%, the OMS at the coalface had dropped by only a fraction. The explanation was a simple one: namely, that well over a third of the number of skilled colliers working at the coal-face in 1948 had left by the Summer of 1949, whilst the numbers of workers employed on "non-productive" jobs at the pit had remained fairly constant. The number of collier-shifts worked had therefore dropped whilst the number of shifts worked by others underground had increased.

What was particularly worrying about this situation was the fact that it had worsened as a result of the Coal Board's reorganisation of Steer, (this took place during the early months of 1949). Colliers appear simply to have left the pit rather than face an inevitable decrease in earnings - and, indeed, the decrease was a considerable one for all grades of workers below ground:
Comparison between effort and wages for the Holiday Pay Week
(Bull Week) for 1948 and 1949

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>16th July 1949</th>
<th>24th July 1948</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Colliers</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Others U/G</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Surface</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>692</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Collier Shifts</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>1752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Others U/G Shifts</td>
<td>1787</td>
<td>1688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2726</td>
<td>3440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Output</td>
<td>2119 tons</td>
<td>3973 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMS Colliers</td>
<td>45.1 cwts</td>
<td>45.3 cwts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMS Colliers &amp; other U/G</td>
<td>15.5 cwts</td>
<td>23.1 cwts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMS Colliers Surface only</td>
<td>47.2 cwts</td>
<td>78.2 cwts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall OMS</td>
<td>11.69 cwts</td>
<td>16.6 cwts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Average Wage

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colliers</td>
<td>38/4</td>
<td>54/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Others U/G</td>
<td>35/9</td>
<td>50/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface</td>
<td>21/4</td>
<td>23/11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Comparison obtained from undated, typed sheet found in the
Gwaun-cae-gurwen Correspondence Envelope; Coalfield Collection,
University of Swansea.

The differences in average wages were as follows:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colliers</td>
<td>15s.11d. per shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colliers &amp; Other U/G</td>
<td>14s.10d. per shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface</td>
<td>12s. 7d. per shift</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70. The document contained the warning that, "Overall effort decreased from 3,440 tons (23.1 cwts) to 2,119 tons (15.5 cwts) and the change in number of colliers, with daywage near similar, plus Heading and Stalls on ca-canny must be kept in mind. "Same evidence must be taken note of when approaching average wages. Figures for colliers contain (sio) Heading and Stalls on W.W."
Although the average wages per manshift for faceworkers across the coalfield as a whole are not available, those for all workers below ground are, and a comparison of those obtaining at Steer with the coalfield average shows quite clearly that, even though it was "Bull Week" at Steer, potential earnings at that pit were comparatively high until reorganisation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coalfield Average</th>
<th>Steer Average (Bull Week)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948 Colliers &amp; Other U/G</td>
<td>31s. 10.4d.</td>
<td>50s. 7d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949 Colliers &amp; Others U/G</td>
<td>33s. 0.2d.</td>
<td>35s. 9d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking into account the fact that the Steer wages for 1949 were the result of Bull Week efforts, the decline in attraction of coalface work at the pit for a healthy and productive collier becomes startlingly obvious. It is also obvious that reorganisation had worsened, rather than improved, an already poor productivity record. Few, if any, comparisons of this sort are available for other reorganised pits at this time - a great pity, for it would be exceedingly interesting to see if the Steer experience is repeated elsewhere; for what appeared to happen at that pit was that a fundamentally unproductive system of work and payment was modified rather than transformed - a crucial difference in terms of the way in which the Board's motives were perceived by the anthracite workforce which was well aware of the rich deposits of anthracite coal lying within the catchment areas of both the Gwaun-cae-gurwen and Tareni collieries. The cost of transformation would, of course, have been a great deal higher than would that of making limited modifications, and it is very

71. NCB Annual Report and Accounts, 1948/49.
possible that the Board's reluctance to pour capital into pits with such unsatisfactory records of labour relations was interpreted (rightly) by the workforces as constituting a political decision. This interpretation was reinforced in August, 1949, when the Board, apparently frustrated by further go-slows and ca'canny at Steer, closed the pit for a further eighteen months.

The Board chose also to close Gelliceidrim colliery at nearby Ammanford after a deliberate go-slow policy had resulted in a steady decrease in production. The 400 miners thus made redundant were not offered alternative jobs at other pits - a development which was not unnaturally interpreted by some as meaning that the Board did not wish Gelliceidrim "troublemakers" to upset labour relations at other anthracite mines.⁷²

Gelliceidrim reopened in late August and 350 miners were informed that they would be "reabsorbed" back into the pit in stages over the following nine weeks. The NCB and NUM announced jointly that the colliery would reopen on a new mechanised basis. The attempts at isolating the Gelliceidrim workers from neighbouring pits was repeated during and after August at Steer. Of the 700 workmen formerly employed at that pit, few, if any, were offered positions in other collieries. 200 of them were sent by the Ministry of Labour to other types of work in the area, including labouring.⁷³ The Board's action can be interpreted in two ways: either it had no vacancies for skilled miners in other pits (the accuracy of this would depend very much upon precise localities

⁷². C.G., 19.5.49.
⁷³. Ibid., 3.11.49.
and times) or else it was aware that, at some later date, it would re-open the colliery and would thus need a reserve workforce.

There are probably elements of truth in both explanations but it is undoubtedly the case that it was the latter which held most attraction for the men themselves and for their sympathisers at other collieries. They saw themselves as being "punished" for their militancy - an interpretation which assumed that the Coal Board recognised them as being in the vanguard of unofficial opposition to what the Steer and Gelliceidrim men saw as managerial attempts to diminish the power of the union at the place of work.

Such interpretations were, even at their point of creation, often highly emotive and very much dependent upon the economic, if not political, perspective of those doing the interpreting. The accounts which survive, therefore, are not surprisingly, of an extremely partisan nature. Separate events and incidents have congealed together to form an impressionistic whole: the closure of Tareni became interwoven with the events surrounding the closure of Steer and East. Low productivity was explained away by offhand references to the unwillingness of the Board to invest in new techniques for mining in these difficult seams. The unwillingness or inability of the Board to re-allocate the workforces of Steer and Gelliceidrim became examples of managerial attempts to "pick-off" the more militant workforces, and so on and so forth. The role of the NUM varied with the situation and the interpretation. Thus, at Tareni, its support for the men was

a case of "too little, too late"; at Steer and Gelliceidrim, the NUM officials were accused by many of being "collaborators" and, indeed, the over-all impression which one gains from these events is that the workforces considered that the central executive was tying itself too closely to the Board by adhering as strictly as it did to its declared policy of providing maximum cooperation in all matters affecting reorganisation.

What emerged, in other words, was a version of a series of highly complicated developments which depended at least as much upon preconceived political and industrial perspectives as it did upon accurate and cool observation. The new developments were tailored to fit an old pattern and the process was made that much easier by the fact that so little had changed in terms of managerial personnel and industrial practice since the instigation of public ownership.

These problems of transition - as they might euphemistically be called - were by no means limited to the anthracite workforce; they were very much in evidence in the dry-steam and bituminous areas to the east and they also affected leaders of the calibre of Horner.

No one in the higher echelons of the NUM had responded to the Coal Board's request for cooperation more energetically than he had, but an incident which occurred in Paris on October 12th, 1948, threatened his good works with the stigma of insincerity and opportunism in as much as it appeared that Horner was willing to cooperate with the Coal Board and with the Labour Government
only for as long as it suited the British Communist Party (of which he was a member) to do so. The controversy began when Horner, who was by this time, the General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, attended the congress in Paris of the Communist-dominated French General Confederation of Labour.

Whilst Horner was travelling to the conference, the French miners struck work and immediately received the verbal support of the S. Wales miners' executive which passed a resolution "expressing solidarity with the French miners in their present struggle and protesting against the export of coal from this country to France while the miners are on strike".75

Addressing the French conference, Horner said that no British miner would want to speak against the French miners' strike. Miners in England who were aware of the conditions facing French miners would, he argued, be ready to support their action for they would have done the same thing had they had to suffer similar conditions.76 He then addressed those amongst the critics of the French miners who interpreted the strike in political terms:

"In 1926 it was declared that the British coal strike was not an economic strike but a political strike. The people who said that were wrong, as they are wrong in saying that the French miners are striking for political ends..."

and he went on, somewhat mysteriously, to comment that Soviet support for the French miners' strike in 1948 had found an earlier parallel in Britain in 1926 when the U.S.S.R. had sent more than

75. Daily Worker, 12.10.48
76. C.S., 21.10.48.
£1,000,000 to support British miners during their strike. Will Homer's gesture of support was immediately repudiated by the President of the NUM, Will Lawther, and the members of the S. Wales Miners' executive found themselves similarly criticized by a number of Lodges.

Will Lawther defended the NUM's policy of cooperation with the Coal Board by reminding his members that the 1921 and 1926 strikes had ended in defeat for the British miners and they had been forced to accept lower wages and longer hours. The democratic method of settling industrial disputes by conciliation and arbitration that had been adopted since 1926 had proved superior, he argued, and his advice to the French miners was to adopt similar tactics and not follow the methods advocated by the Communists. He added later that it was because he did not want the French miners to be gulled by resolutions passed by certain British areas (S. Wales and Scotland) into thinking that they were to get support from British miners that he thought it was his "plain and honourable duty", both to the French and British miners, to let them know the "terrible truth", that these resolutions of support were meaningless. Driving the knife deeper into Horner and his left-wing supporters in the coalfields, Lawther added that Horner's action in assuring French strikers of British support was to be considered by the executive of the NUM. Horner, he alleged, had been sent to Paris as a fraternal delegate and it was expected that any statement made by him would be in line with NUM policy.

77. C.G., 21.10.48.
78. Ibid.
Homer, in Paris, reaffirmed his position and told reporters that he was a Communist and that nothing would change him from that position. He was a Communist when he was elected secretary of the NUM and his position would be decided by the miners. International working class solidarity, he said, was more important than his position and he emphasised this by alleging that he had had two offers to become a member of the Coal Board at a salary of £5,000 per year.79.

Homer's speech signalled the start of an extraordinary public debate between the Communist groupings within the NUM and their Labour counterparts. What is immediately surprising is that Homer - "that miniature Machiavelli", as the editor of the Colliery Guardian dubbed him - chose to stake his popularity with the British miners upon so frail an issue. In his autobiography he claims that it was because he was distressed at the way in which the British Trade Union Movement, and the NUM in particular, had chosen to support right-wing European trade union organisations, amongst them the Force Ouvriere which was a breakaway, anti-Communist group of unions set up in opposition to the C.G.T. and including amongst its ranks a miners' section to which the executive of the NUM decided to hand over £5,000. He recalls that

"At that time we were in the old building of the Seamen's Union .... So when I made my protest I waved my arm around the room and I said, 'It was in this very building that Havelock Wilson gave ten thousand pounds to

79. Ibid.
Spencer, to form scab unions in Nottingham and Wales, and here you are doing the same thing to the French miners." \(^{80}\)

Horner alleged that he heard, shortly before he made his French speech, that there had taken place talks between British Trade Union leaders and General Marshall, the American Foreign Secretary, and it was these talks, he believed, which caused Lawther to condemn the French miners' strike. \(^{81}\)

Arriving back in London, he recalls that he was met "by an army of reporters, photographers and press cameras. I really let myself go and told them what I thought about the whole business. I said that there were people preparing for war and thought it would be very inconvenient to imprison me if, at that time, I was in the position of General Secretary of the Miners' Union. I suggested that the British miners would find themselves under similar attacks to those in France and I added that there were certain circles in Britain who would like to return control of the coal industry into the hands of divisional dictators, instead of the divisional boards which had been set up under the Nationalisation Act." \(^{82}\)

This was an extraordinary statement to make and it is unclear as to how it was that he managed to piece together sufficient information to allow him to make it. He appears to have had no doubt that these "dictatorships" were being floated as serious proposals:

\(^{80}\) A. Horner, *op.cit.*, pp.184-185

\(^{81}\) Ibid., p.185
"They all denied it at the time", he wrote later, "but the truth came out when Alfred Robens, the successor to Jim Bowman as Chairman of the Board, addressed the Press Gallery. He, of all people, announced his support for de-centralisation. It is one thing to ensure that officers at district level have power to take decisions, but I fear that this is the thin end of the wedge to set one district against another".83

His allegations had split wide open the packaged image of "unity" which surrounded the elected leadership of the NUM. A special committee was set up to investigate his allegations and a delegate conference called in South Wales to test his support in his old stronghold. Predictably, both events turned into dogfights between Communists and Labourites.84 In S. Wales, Horner experienced the indignity of finding himself censored by lodge delegates at the Cory Hall - despite the fact that his Communist supporters (including six of the thirteen members of the S. Wales' Miners' executive) had gone to considerable lengths to marshall pro-Horner support. Labour took the day as they almost always did when the political chips were down.85

83. A. Horner, op. cit., p. 186.
84. The sub-committee set up to prepare a statement on the union's policy consisted of Abe Moffat, president of the Scottish miners, a Communist; Sam Watson, Durham, vice-chairman of the Labour Party; Ernest Jones, Yorkshire, Labour; Will Arthur, S. Wales, Labour; and Joe Kitta, Derby. Lawther, Horner and Bowman, the NUM vice-president, were ex-officio members of all such sub-committees. Source: NUM Executive Council Minutes, 1948.
At a meeting of the NUM executive on November 30th a point-by-point reply was issued by the special committee in answer to Horner's statements. It had been accepted by a majority on the executive of 18 to 7 and copies of the report sent to all miners' lodges. Its contents emphasised the hostility which existed between Horner and the majority of his colleagues in the NUM executive. His plea that his Paris and London airport statements were made in a personal capacity were brushed aside with the comment that the executive had no interest in Horner's statements except if they were made in his capacity as secretary of the NUM. His charges that NUM officials and the Government were trying to get rid of him were refuted and strong objection was taken to his use of the first person singular in the remarks which he had made concerning the negotiatory achievements of the NUM since 1947. In a concluding section the report stated that the NUM would strongly resent every attempt to treat the British miners as tools of the Cominform.

The body of the report is worth examining in detail, in as much as it tells us a good deal about the way in which the executive viewed its relationship with the Labour Government and the Coal Board as well with its General Secretary.

It countered Horner's allegation that British coal was being used to break the French miners' strike by pointing out that imports of coal into France from Poland "were likely to have a far greater prejudicial effect on the situation in France than imports from the United Kingdom. Of the total solid

86. NUM Executive Council Minutes, 1948.
fuel imports into France during the period January-June, 1948, 4\% came from this country, whilst 11\% came from Poland. During the period July-September only 2\% was imported from this country, but imports from Poland remained at between 10\% and 11\%. During the period of the strike, however, Poland actually increased its exports to France to a level which was higher than at any time during the year 1948. During the first month of the strike, i.e., October, the imports of coal and briquettes into France from Poland represented more than 15\% of the total; the imports from the U.K., however, were only 4.4\% of the total". 87

With a great deal of justification, the report explained this anomaly in political terms:

"Did the Communist leaders of the French C.G.T. and the Communist Party in this country, in seeking support for the French strike .... make a strategical error in concerning themselves with the comparatively small amount of imports from this country instead of making their appeals to the Polish miners? The committee believe not. The French and British Communist Parties are far more concerned with creating the greatest possible amount of confusion and chaos with a view to sabotaging the efforts of the Governments of Western Europe towards recovery than they are with the conditions of French mine workers". 88

After pointing out that it would be quite wrong to regard the French strike as a strike aimed at improving the standards of French miners, the committee developed the argument that the

87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
strike was part of the Communist's efforts to weaken the Marshall Plan. If Horner was so concerned with the plight of the French miners, it argued, why then was he not equally concerned with the dismal plight of their comrades in Poland where underground workers were alleged to work a 45 hour week for an average wage of £3 and where

"thousands of German prisoners of war (were) employed for 8 or 9 hours each day without pay, their only consolation being that they receive(d) full army rations, which (were) considerably higher than the rations of Polish civilians".89

The main part of the report concluded with a statement of union policy which recorded that

"It is to the credit of the Labour Government that, within six months of assuming office, it introduced a Parliamentary measure, the object of which was to transfer the coal mining industry to public ownership. The details of the scheme embodied in the Parliamentary Bill were in full accord with the scheme which had been drafted by representatives of the NUM, the TUC and the Labour Party prior to the election".90

It went on to record how the union had agreed to offer complete cooperation in return for the promise of implementation of the so-called Miners' Charter and how, by the end of 1948, the Government and the Coal Board had done much to fulfil that promise:

"Through the recognised procedure of negotiations within the industry we have obtained, at a cost to the industry of more than £65 million per annum, the following reforms and improvements since the appointment of the National Coal Board:

89. Ibid., their emphasis.
90. Ibid.
"A five-day working week.
Substantially increased wages.
Increased overtime rates.
A scheme for supplementary compensation payments.
Statutory holiday payments.
Improved welfare facilities (including maintenance of pithead baths) and improved medical services.
Improved training facilities and an extension of technical education facilities.
"We submit that never before in the history of the industry have such advances been made in the standards of workers over such a short period .... and although .... the NCB has introduced new machinery to the value of not less than £20 million, the greatest possible effort on the part of every workman is necessary (to aid major reorganization of the industry and thus to help implement the remaining reforms of the Charter)".

The report went on to stress the vital importance to the nation of increased coal production and it utilized Horner's own words to do so. It stated that the Labour movement had

"accepted the principle that nationalised industries must be financially self-reliant: the nationalised industry must, to use the words of Mr. Horner, "pay for itself in the long run"; any suggestion of its being subsidised "is inconceivable".... The logic of that argument has, until recent weeks, been accepted by the Communist Party which now seeks to place a brake on production.

"In an attempt to incite the membership of the union to sabotage the efforts of the Government towards recovery, the Communist Party claims that the Government's policy of higher production, a policy which is backed by the TUC as well as the NUM, is opposed to the best interests of the workers ...."
"It is a simple economic fact that the living standards of the people must, in the long run, be governed by the rate of production. You cannot enjoy more wealth than you are prepared to produce. Why should it be wrong, therefore, for us, for the TUC and for the Labour Government, to exhort our people to produce more? .... Increased production is an investment and a guarantee that the living standards of the mining community will be maintained and improved as the general economic difficulties are eased."

As a parting shot, the report reiterated the fact that the NUM, affiliated as it was to the Labour Party, had "rejected, as recently as 1946, any suggestion that the Communist Party should be accepted as an affiliated body of the Labour Party".

Horner, and the Left on the national executive, took a severe battering. They complained at the time, and even more-so later, that Lawther and the Right had been "bought off" by the financial promises of General Marshall but such complaints only reflected the growing antagonism evident in Communist circles generally for what the members perceived as a marked shift to the right in Labour Party policies. As early as December, 1947, Harry Pollitt delivered a special report to the Executive of the British Communist Party which declared:

"When the world is clearly divided into an imperialist and an anti-imperialist camp, with a Labour Government as an active partner in the imperialist camp, and carrying through a capitalist solution of the crisis, it is necessary that important changes in the policy of the Communist Party to meet this situation should be made."

As Henry Pelling notes, among the changes was to be the “abandonment of Communist support for increased production. This policy, which had been 'absolutely correct' in the past, would now 'only result in trailing behind the Government's reactionary policy'. With these words Pollitt steered the party firmly into a policy almost as sectarian as that of 'Class Against Class' in 1929-32".

The TUC responded with various appeals to the major unions to "Defend Democracy" and suitable cries of "witch-hunt" rose from the ranks of Communist Trade Unionists right across the country. Few "witches" were burned within the miners' union, however, despite the publicity given to the rift within the executive. A slightly more frigid atmosphere may have descended upon union meetings but it seems to have had little effect upon the intimate relationships which had long existed between Communists and non-Communists within the S. Wales NUM and indeed, within the NUM in general. Bill Paynter, for example, recalls that Horner and Lawther remained firm drinking partners even during the most acrimonious periods of their public argument. At pit level, there was much the same response - despite the occasional example of a particularly well-defined Labour Lodge going out of its way to censure Horner for one of his more outspoken observations on Labour policy. For his part, Horner betrayed few signs of wishing to repent. Instead, he did what he always did when in trouble - he listened with more sensitivity than any amongst his fellow executive members to the most general

93. Ibid., p. 142.
94. The title of the TUC statement to the unions inviting them to consider whether they should take action to prevent Communists from occupying key union posts and from acting as union delegates. H. Pelling, op. cit., p. 154.
grievances of miners in the coalfields and then proceeded to articulate those grievances as no-one else could (or would). By doing so, he inevitably succeeded in identifying himself with rank-and-file opinion and thus managed to hold tenaciously to that central body of union support which he might otherwise so easily have lost in the mist of Party sectarianism.

Speaking at Aberfan in June, 1949 for example, he seized upon some recent managerial statements concerning an alleged lack of effort by the workforce and used them brilliantly to outline a whole list of ongoing grievances. Replying to the Coal Board chiefs and colliery managers who had made the allegations at a managers' conference in Cardiff, he remarked that it had become "easy to discern a change in the open attitude of Coal Board leaders and managers". He recalled that one of the Coal Board's production members, Sir Eric Young, had alleged that managers were "not in a position to make any more concessions to the miners", and accused some of them of having "worked out a scientific scheme to avoid work and be as well off as if they worked full time", while Dr. William Reid, production member of the Scottish Regional Board, had declared that the present bonus shift had been a failure and as a result, he had said, the Board could not secure a fair day's work. He was, he said, "missing the traditions" of the old mining companies to "spur men on" and he was backed up by a colliery manager who had declared at the Cardiff conference that someone had to be found to say "No" to the continuing demands of the mineworkers. One of them, Horner alleged, had even said it was time to abandon "soft psychology" and, calling for more

95. C.C., 7.7.49
authority, had "callously" said "You may have a few strikes, but let the colliery managers get over that - they solved the strikes in the old days". 96

"Who are these people?" asked Horner. Sir Eric Young was the man responsible for production and Dr. Wm. Reid was the son of Sir Charles Reid. 97

"They are men paid higher salaries than miners because of their skill in technique in coal production and for their ability to manage men. But are attacks on the miners the best way to go about it? Their statements, if true, are a measure of their own failure. Why do they come into the open with these attacks now? Is it because the General Election is in the air, are they looking for a Tory victory? Are they seeking to establish that they are tough men who should be given control if full employment passes away and we see unemployment which will be the inevitable result of the return of a Tory Government to power?"

Were they, he asked, banking on unemployment to retrieve lost power? Leaving the question hang, he answered it rhetorically by observing that Sir Eric Young had said that he had made his statements "believing that the press was not present at the meeting". "That", observed Horner, "only makes it worse".

96. Ibid.
They could forgive Dr. Wm. Reid: "It is his father's voice that is speaking". Sir Charles Reid had

"run away from the Coal Board to work against its policy; the son does it from within. Is this the way to secure amicable relations? Is this the way of cooperation in the interests of that higher production of which the nation stands in such need?"

The colliery managers, admitted Homer, had salary complaints, but why blame the miners for their failure? He cited figures to prove that production had increased quite markedly during the previous half-year and argued that absenteeism had dropped, not increased. He hammered home this point by examining the complaints which had been made concerning an alleged increase in involuntary absenteeism:

"For face workers, in 1948, it was 6.0% and this year to date it had been 8.0%, while for all workers it had gone up from 11 to 12.5%.

98. He argued that, in the 23 weeks to June 11th, deep-mined output was 90,457,500 tons and open cast production 5,344,200 tons, a total of 95,807,700 tons. The increase in deep-mined output for the first half of 1949 had been 2,356,200 tons over the total for the same period in 1948 - an increase of 2.6%. OMS at the coalface during the first half of 1949 had been 3 cwt., as against 2.91 cwt., the previous year, and over-all output had been 23 cwt., against 22 cwt., in 1948. The increase of over 5 million tons had been achieved despite the fact that the effective number of face workers had fallen from the 1948 level of 271,000 to 270,000 and all workers had gone down from 676,700 to 663,100; the effective shifts worked in 1949 had been 4.90 as against 4.86 in 1948 and shifts by all workers had advanced from 5.14 to 5.20. Miners, he argued, were thus working not only more shifts, but producing more with a lower volume of labour. "Why not give them credit for that?"

Colliery Guardian, 23.6.49.
Sir Eric Young complains that this is due to miners who sustain minor accidents having worked out a scientific scheme to go on compensation and get allowances and tax repayments which leave them as well off as if they worked five or six shifts a week ....

Horner suggested that this might be due to the fact that men who were previously injured were forced by sheer economic circumstances to return to work before they were fit, whereas under present social service improvements they were able to secure reasonable sustenance to enable them to make themselves properly fit before going back to the mines. Surely, he argued, that was in the interests not only of the health of the miner but also of the nation. Fit men were the most efficient and he thought that a great case could be made for financial anxiety being removed from the mind of a sick and injured man.

The greater danger to the nation's fuel supplies, he warned, was lack of manpower ....

"The country should note the words of those who are, by their indiscretions, discouraging men from filling the ranks - the Youngs and the Reids who come out with open criticisms".

For, he argued, it was in the light of this discouraging manpower situation that the leaders of the men sought so hard to improve the conditions of the industry that they might attract and hold men: "So far, we have had to negotiate and fight for reforms", but he and his fellow executive members did not seek, as they were accused, "to make the miner the aristocrat of labour"; they sought only to achieve reforms which would attract sufficient labour in a period of full employment. The miners, he argued,
were "ready and eager to continue wholehearted cooperation with the Coal Board", but they would seek to "eliminate all those who fail to develop and apply new techniques in management in keeping with the new age, and who yearn to return to the impetus of the traditions of the past". The time had come, he told his audience, for the nation to say to the miners and the nationalised industries, "You have done well despite the enemies of nationalisation within the gates". Those who yearned after the past were "futile ignoramuses". The miners and their leaders would correct their faults and those of the NCB, but they would "never return to the bad old days".

Good popularist stuff it may have been, but such speeches indicate just how thoroughly the spell of nationalisation had been broken. The contrast between this abrasive attack upon the "Old Gang" and Horner's recent pleas for Stakhanovite efforts from his membership could hardly be greater. The pleas became rarer as the attacks grew in number. The changes were made obvious at the NUM's Annual Conference in July, 1949, where a clearly definable split emerged over several important issues. It was a split which sheared mainly along political lines and which left the Communist-influenced areas of South Wales and Scotland ranged against the "Labourite" rest. Sir William Lawther (for he had been knighted by this time - presumably as a result of his patriotic stand on the Marshall Aid issue) set the tone of the conference by declaring that the miners should accept the fact that they must produce more coal or accept a reduced standard of living. No word-spinning, he said, would get over that problem:

99. Ibid.
"We have to make a break with sheer political opportunism in dealing with the problem that confronts us", he said. "I have no doubt it would be very popular to put up a series of demands without caring how they could be obtained. I prefer to take what I believe to be the honest way of indicating that your efforts and good behaviour are of more consequence than any sparring for the moon".

He condemned unofficial stoppages by claiming that they had "brought more joy to our political opponents than if they had won every by-election they lost".\textsuperscript{100}

He emphasised the indebtedness, as he saw it, of the miners to the Coal Board; they had done more for the miners than had ever been done before. The great majority of the miners faced up to their responsibilities, he claimed; it was up to them to teach the minority. Asking the miners to be honest in their criticisms of the Board in rejecting some of the union's recent demands, he stated that they had accepted the principle that the revenue of a nationalised industry must, in the long run, be sufficient to cover all costs and charges.\textsuperscript{101}

This was obviously directed as much at Horner and the Left on the executive as it was at the dissident "minority" to which Lawther referred. A curiously defeatist speech, in as much as it implied that the NUM's demands on the Board were unjustified, it brought forth a reply from South Wales and Scotland which declared in no uncertain terms that questions concerning profitability and wage allocations were by no means as cut and dried as Lawther was.

\textsuperscript{100} NUM., Annual Conference Report, 1949
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
The Welsh and Scottish delegates had intended putting forward resolutions which expressed concern at the policy of the Board in determining that no further increase should be made in prices or a subsidy sought for the industry. The resolution from S. Wales originally called for a reduction, suspension or spread-over of compensation to former owners, and demanded that wages and conditions should be the first charge. Scotland had advocated, in its resolution, a readjustment of compensation and a substantial reduction in interest.

The executive announced that it would oppose these resolutions and a more cautiously worded one was passed instructing the executive in conjunction with the TUC and the executive of the Labour Party to consider the effects of the present policy and to examine the possibilities of review. Alf Davies, the Welsh miners' president, declared that his members did not intend to depart from the accepted principle of compensation, but Abe Moffat, the Scottish president, who moved the amended composite resolution, declared that total compensation payments with which the industry would be shackled, including yet undecided compensation for ancilliaries, would cost £400 million in an industry which had been

"brought to the verge of ruin by private enterprise .... Are any of us so optimistic as to believe that with that heavy burden it is possible to make this industry a financial success in its present situation?" he asked. "If we are going to solve this problem we shall need not a

102. Ibid.
board of technicians or administrators
but a board of magicians". 103

It was shortly after Davies and Moffat had thrown this particular spanner into the cooperative machine that Herbert Morrison rose to his feet and exhorted the miners "to lay the ghost of past grievances" and appealed to them for more "team-work" between the miners and the Board and said that unless a fresh start were made the miners would be "unhappy for nothing, and the trust of the nation would be betrayed". A new spirit was needed, he declared, or socialisation, of itself, would fail. More important than the physical reorganisation of the industry, he argued, was the transformation of men's minds.

"Men must go to their offices, to the pits, conscious that they are working for the nation". 104

He was followed to the rostrum the following day by Viscount Hyndley, former P.D. director and Chairman of the National Coal Board, who urged the miners to increase production and cut down costs - sentiments which were shared by the next "name" speaker, Hugh Gaitskell, who asked for "a holiday from blaming other people and finding alibis for ourselves". He asked "How can any of us defend those who, week after week, are content to work four shifts only?" and, referring to the criticisms made against management by Horner and others, he argued that,

"Though some, perhaps quite a lot of managers, are opposed to nationalisation, this does not mean that they will not do their job properly. On the contrary, I am convinced that the overwhelming majority have accepted the fact that nationalisation has come to stay and want to make a success of their jobs both for personal reasons and because they are loyal to the industry". 105

103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
Gaitskell's confidence was not shared, however; by a great many of the coalfield's Labour voters. The workforce's distrust of management did not cease overnight, any more than did those unofficial strikes criticised by Lawther. Indeed, events upon the S. Wales coalfield during the next twelve months indicate that these tendencies were stimulated, rather than subdued, by the debate at the Conference rostrum. Unofficial strikes and go-slows proliferated - despite the pleas and warnings of Government officials and union leaders. And it was actions such as these which lent a remarkable air of continuity to industrial relations on the field. They were provoked by familiar grievances: price list disagreements, alleged incursions into custom and practice, allowances withdrawn, bad conditions and refusals to do alternative work: grievances which warrant close examination, not merely because they continued to be expressed years after the introduction of public ownership, but because they were used as a foci for a much wider range of dissatisfactions - amongst the foremost of which was a display of general mistrust by large sections of the workforce towards the kinds of "reorganisation" measures which had been welcomed with such enthusiasm by the union's elected leaders.
3. Pit Problems.

Whilst the public slanging matches between Lawther and Homer captured the newspaper headlines, the dissatisfied rumblings from the pits were largely ignored - despite the fact that Horner undoubtedly interpreted them as signifying widespread support for his belated criticisms of the overly-cozy relationship existing between the Government, the Coal Board and the union. But opposition amongst the workforce to the Board's policies (especially those concerned with reorganisation) is a difficult thing to gauge for it is necessary first to differentiate between workers striking or "going-slow" over a long-term grievance (or a grievance which has arisen independent of reorganisation procedure) and workers striking over a grievance as a means of registering their dissatisfaction with the terms of reorganisation per se. Sometimes, for example, it is obvious that although members of a given workforce may have been in favour of reorganisation in principle, they nevertheless opposed a particular feature of it when they perceived that feature as constituting a possible threat either to their earnings capacity or to recognised custom and practice at their pit.

To define such a strike as "economic" rather than "political" is to lift the event out of its historical context for, by the joint reckoning of the Coal Board and the miners' union, all strikes within the nationalised industry were political in as much as they involved the strikers in arriving at a conscious decision to ignore recognised channels of conciliation and arbitration. At least
one Communist observer argued at the time that such unofficial
strikes as these were no less than the inarticulate expression
of rank-and-file frustration with the shortfalls of industrial
democracy inside the pits and the divisional and national board-
rooms. 106

Such an interpretation appears somewhat generous, however, when
the strikes in question are examined closely. Most were "section-
alist" in character; that is, they were perpetrated usually by a
relatively small number of workers (in a particular face or road-
way) whose action would often succeed in disrupting production in
the rest of the pit. In turn, these strikes sometimes provoked
a "tit-for-tat" response from those miners in other parts of the
pit who found their earnings impaired through enforced lay-offs.
Clearly, there is no obvious link between this kind of strike and
the allegedly democratic aspirations attributed to the militants
by left-wing observers. Such an interpretation would appear, at
first glance, to be a false one: a simple economic grievance
dressed up in political wolf's clothing.

But if, in fact, the outward character of the unofficial strikes
appeared non-political, the same could not be said for their spirit.
It was variously described by those who condemned the strikes as
anarchic, subversive and communist, and it found its most clear
mode of expression in the revived Unofficial Movement and so-
called Minority Movements which, by the early 50s, had prospered

106. W. Paynter, op.cit., p.130
to such a degree that they were alleged by at least one miners' president to have posed a serious threat to the unity of the South Wales Miners' Union itself. In other words, the unofficial strikes were symptomatic of a malaise which caused a good deal more disquiet in the minds of Labour leaders than did the mere frequency of the strikes themselves. It led them to suspect that amongst the ranks of miners there were many who were profoundly disappointed with the new achievements and still others who were prepared to act as if no change whatsoever had occurred - as if it were Powell Duffryn proper, and not ex-Powell Duffryn agents, running the South Wales coal industry.

The strikes were seen, therefore, as constituting a barely disguised public criticism of one hugely important aspect of what was portrayed as the most spectacular British socialist advance of the 20th century; and the wrath of those who had helped secure that advance was great indeed; for it appeared almost as if they considered that it was they and not the Coal Board suffering criticism. They communicated a sense of injured pride - as if each unofficial strike had been a lump of anthracite thrown at them by those very same hands which they themselves had so lately liberated from private exploitation.

The Incidence of Strikes

The National Coal Board Annual Report includes a section entitled "Estimated Tonnage lost through Disputes" which includes figures for each coalfield-area of the British Isles. By adding these estimated tonnages-lost to the total tonnages actually produced we arrive at the total which, it was estimated, should have been

107. Ibid.
produced in any year.

The Estimated Tonnage lost through Disputes can then be measured as a percentage of this total. The result is a kind of "Aggravation" chart which, when graphed up, illustrates the frequency and seriousness of disputes - as they affected coal production - from nationalisation onwards.

The following charts graph out the percentage tonnage lost through disputes for all the areas under the jurisdiction of the NCB from 1946/47 to 1973/74. They are based upon percentages-lost calculated from NCB Annual Reports. The coalfield's percentage-lost columns are as follows:
Table 1
Percentage-Lost of Total Estimated Tonnage in NCB Areas
1946-1974

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Northern</th>
<th>Yorkshire</th>
<th>North-Western</th>
<th>East-Midlands</th>
<th>W.Midlands</th>
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<td>0.46</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.61*0.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973/74</td>
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<td>13.34</td>
<td>20.05</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>15.28</td>
<td>19.90</td>
<td>21.25</td>
<td>31.37</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Barnsley after reorganisation 1966/67

North Nottinghamshire after reorganisation 1966/67

*East West after reorganisation 1966/67

*Due to NCB re-organisation of Districts in 1966/67 certain of the old titles were changed as the boundaries changed. (see maps.)

It has been necessary to include new areas which are as close as possible to the average for the new areas from the old.
The total estimated tonnages lost through disputes between 1947 and 1973/74 for the country as a whole is shown in Fig. 1, below, and for individual areas, in Figs. 2-10, below, pp. 132-141.

The patterns of serious disputes (as far as these disputes affected production) displayed in the following graphs varies quite dramatically from area to area. Compare, for instance, the relative calm of the line describing the percentage tonnage-lost in the East Midlands area of Northern area with that of Yorkshire, Scotland, or South Wales. Not only is the line continuously pitched lower in the East Midlands and Northern areas, but it is also evident that when disruptions did occur, as in 1950, 1956, 1961 and 1966/67 in the East Midlands, they had much less effect upon output than similar, sometimes parallel, stoppages and other disputes in Yorkshire, Scotland, and South Wales.

Along with Kent, these three areas have constantly been the source of the most serious disruptions to production for the Board. In the year 1957, the areas of Scotland, Yorkshire and South Wales employed 47% of the coal industry's manpower, produced 43% of the total saleable output, were responsible for 87% of strikes and restrictions and 83% of tonnage lost through such actions during that year. 108

This had been the pattern from the first months of nationalisation. In 1947, Yorkshire and South Wales, along with Scotland, were singled out in the Board's first Annual Report for special condemnation. 109

108. Ibid.
109. Ibid., 1948.
ESTIMATED TONNAGE LOST ANNUALLY THROUGH DISPUTES:
PERCENTAGE OF ESTIMATED TOTAL TONNAGE LOST THROUGH DISPUTES:
SOUTH WALES (OLD SOUTH-WESTERN AREA),
1946 - 1973/74.

FIG. 2
PERCENTAGE OF ESTIMATED TOTAL TONNAGE LOST THROUGH DISPUTES:
NORTH EASTERN, 1946 - 1965/66 (YORKSHIRE)
PERCENTAGE OF ESTIMATED TOTAL Tonnage
Lost Through Disputes: Scottish, 1946-1973/74

(North) 1966/67/73/74

1946-1973/74
PERCENTAGE OF ESTIMATED TOTAL TONNAGE LOST THROUGH DISPUTES

EAST MIDLANDS, 1946-1966/67
NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, 1967-73

FIG. 7
FIG. 8

PERCENTAGE OF ESTIMATED TOTAL TONNAGE
LOST THROUGH DISPUTES: NORTH WESTERN AREA,
1946 - 1973/74
PERCENTAGE OF ESTIMATED TOTAL TONNAGE
LOST THROUGH DISPUTES: DURHAM
1950-1973/74

FIG. 9

ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE LOST THROUGH DISPUTES
1946-1973/74
1948 saw a great many small disputes, mainly in Scotland and Yorkshire, over the re-assessment of tasks which resulted from the imposition of the Five Day Week, over questions of gradings amongst lower officials, and because of alleged "uprooting" of certain production workers from their usual places of work as a result of the imposition of reorganisation schemes. 110

The 1949 dispute over "Concessionary Coal" temporarily shifted the centre of attention to the Lancashire field, but disputes involving "oncost" workers in Scotland, and disruptive action by Yorkshire members of the breakaway Colliery Winders' Association ensured that tonnage-lost totals in both areas remained consistently high. 111 The 1951 Annual Report calculated that Scotland, Yorkshire and South Wales accounted, between them, for 85\% of the tonnage lost during that year. This figure rose to 90\% in 1952 - most disruptions arising from disputes concerning pay and conditions for under-officials, and the Yorkshire Colliery Winders' Association's attempts to obtain parity with winders in other Divisions. The Annual Report for 1952 blamed "Ten areas" within the Districts of Scotland, Yorkshire and South Wales for causing vastly disproportionate losses of tonnage through disputes. Four were situated in Yorkshire, three in Scotland, and three in South Wales.

The relatively high loss of tonnage incurred in 1955 resulted mainly from a dispute concerning piece-rates and allowances paid to fillers at the face. It began at Markham Main Colliery, and in the Doncaster area in general; it became a question of whether

110. Ibid., 1949.
111. Ibid., 1961.
unconstitutional action should be allowed to supersede the agreed conciliation procedure laid down by the Board. Eighty thousand men became involved in the dispute, and the loss of tonnage exceeded three millions for the first time since nationalisation.

1956 was also a year of relatively high loss - caused mainly by unofficial action started by officials in the East Midlands area but which soon spread north to Yorkshire and west to Lancashire and South Wales. The years 1957 to 1961 were relatively peaceful when compared with 1955. In 1961 there was a drop in estimated tonnage-lost through disputes in South Wales, (where 1960 had been a high year for losses), but there was an increase in Scotland and a very large increase in Yorkshire where 69 collieries took part in widespread stoppages over the question of pieceworkers' price lists. 61,300 men became involved in the dispute nationally, and 804,000 tons were lost out of a national total for the year of over two million tons.¹¹²

The variation in loss-percentages from field to field is illustrated by the graph movements during the years 1963/64, '64/65 and '65/66. For whilst both the Scottish and Yorkshire 'lost' totals fell during '64/65, South Wales achieved a new post-nationalisation "high". On the national chart (Fig. 1), 1965/66 looks a relatively quiet year, but it might be seen as the year in which the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS) replaced the rank and file (if only temporarily) as the "dispute leaders" of the coal industry.

¹¹² C.C., 20.1.49.
The 1965/66 trouble began at Deep Duffryn colliery in South Wales after an incident involving some disagreement over the use of "foul language" being exchanged between a member of NACODS and a mining apprentice. The NACODS members struck work, causing 31,000 men to be made wholly or partly idle, and 500,000 tons of coal to be lost. The total losses for the year ran to almost one million two hundred thousand tons - half a million tons less than the results of the disputes which occurred the following year when an official ban by NACODS on weekend working and an inter-union dispute between the Yorkshire Winding Enginemen's Association and the NUM pushed up the estimated-tonnage-lost total to its highest point for almost five years.

There then followed two years of relative peace, during which time the tonnages-lost fell to their lowest point since nationalisation. The National Power-Loading Agreement was signed in June 1966, and by the end of March, 1968, the agreement applied to 80% of all mechanized faces.

There were no major disputes during the year with the lowest 'losses' on record - 1968/69; indeed, it appears as if the workforce was gathering its breath for the dramatic five years which were to follow. The specific causes of these disputes are set out, below, in Table 2 and Figure 11 (pp. 145-146). Not surprisingly, problems concerned with payment dominate the picture. They account for the highest number of stoppages as well as for the largest loss of tonnage. It is interesting, however, to note that the numbers of stoppages caused by disputes concerning methods of working and colliery organisation, (number 5 category
<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>1943</th>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures include number of disputes under Section 12 for 1947.

1946 Total: 1,329 strikes

Coal Concessions

Bonuses and allowances

Support and sympathy

Suspended work

Distracted or displaced

Refusal to work

Sanctioned break

Report a match

Draft for service
in Table 2) whilst not precipitating such a loss of tonnage as wage disputes were, nevertheless, very high and continued to be so even during the fifth year of nationalisation. This indicates, clearly, that the problems experienced by the "private" managers, when they attempted to modify and rationalise production methods, continued to dog similar efforts by nationalised management. Attempts at rationalisation caused problems which were compounded by the often-suspicious and antagonistic response of large sections of the workforce to the introduction of the 5-Day Week, or, rather, to the anomalies created by its introduction. Allied to this are three other listed categories: that concerned with disputes provoked by the re-grading of jobs which occurred as a result of the nationalisation of production methods, and those concerned with changes in the allocation of allowances, bonuses and concessionary coal.

Added together, the tonnage lost through these "reorganisation" disputes totalled 2,322,900 - a figure a good deal closer to that provoked by disputes of payment than would appear by a listing of its fragmented constituents. In S. Wales, the loss of production stemming from reorganisation was especially high. The editor of the Colliery Guardian complained for example, in January, 1949, that attempts at reorganisation had been met in some cases by sit-down strikes - "the most foolish of all modes of resistance", and he quoted the example of a strike at Bedwas colliery where 2,000 miners downed tools over a grievance concerning re-grading and promotion:
"The men objected because the manager promoted two men to carry out development work without asking for nominations from the workmen. This is a usurpation of the functions of management which cannot be tolerated, even if we should have been prepared for such developments by the joint committee system. But the folly becomes all the more stark when we find that the striking miners are callously indifferent to the fact that their own future is being seriously prejudiced by the stoppage of ventilation and repair work, owing to the deliberate withdrawal of the safety men." 113

It was quite obvious, even as early as 1949, that such responses were not going to disappear simply of their own accord, for the source of provocation - "reorganisation" - was likely to become more, rather than less, troublesome as the question of closing down uneconomic pits and utilising the man-power so released in more profitable undertakings became increasingly urgent as the Board's development plans matured.

Reorganisation of work-methods, work-places and systems of payment were not the only developments to arouse the workforce's antagonism, however. The men's sense of grievance on these scores was further aggravated by their jaundiced view of developments within the organisation of Coal Board management. Old suspicions were revived in 1949 concerning the alleged practice amongst management of creating "jobs for the boys". At Fernhill Colliery in the Rhondda, for example, the Lodge Committee publicly criticized the number of inspection officials of the Regional Coal Board and declared that there was a duplication of managerial tasks.

113. Rhondda Leader, 24.3.49.
with the result they alleged, that costs were being inflated and that this was detrimental to moves by the miners themselves to secure the cost-of-living bonus. At the time of the allegation, March, 1949, Fernhill employed 1,150 men and efforts were made by the Lodge to secure the support of miners in the Upper Rhondda in a proposal to tender strike notices in protest against the growth of the numbers of officials. There developed at the mine a grouping amongst the men which became known as the "Anti-Spiv Movement" - an organisation which appears, somewhat paradoxically, to have devoted most of its energies to castigating what it saw as a surfeit of mines inspectors, although this obsession with such an unlikely target almost certainly indicates the men's surprise at sighting more than one inspector at a time - such had been the rarity of the species prior to the Second World War.

Neither were the men alone in their criticisms of the organisation of the Coal Board. Colliery managers too, were dismayed at the apparent lack of concern amongst higher managerial echelons for the financial plight of local management. One spokesman of the British Association of Colliery Managers informed the S. Wales branch of the organisation that the "niggardly" attitude of the NCB had caused a deterioration in the relationship with the Association:

114. Ibid., 31.3.49.
115. C.C., 31.3.49.
"It is difficult to explain where the NCB are going", he said. "We are suffering from the Old Gang mentality and also from the new bureaucracy. I think it is entirely wrong to be squabbling and haggling over the management's wage rates".116

The alleged increase in high-managerial bureaucracy threatened to sour even the relationship which existed between the Board and the miners' elected leaders. There was a feeling prevalent that the Board was becoming remote and insensitive - that its officers were becoming too much identified with monolithic, national considerations. Thus, in April 1949, the Executive Council of the S. Wales NUM condemned the NCB's decision to ban aged and infirm ex-miners from picking over coal and odd timber on slag-heaps: a concession that the miners had had from the coalowners for 50 years.117 On a much larger scale, the S. Wales NUM Annual Conference condemned the Board's "arrogant and highhanded" approach to the delicate problem of coalfield reorganisation - especially in respect of the anthracite area.118

Within the pits, the strains imposed by reorganisation manifested themselves in many different guises. At Fernhill in January 1949, for example, 34 miners began a restriction of output as a result of their dissatisfaction with the existing price list. The action was not, however, motivated purely by straightforward financial considerations. Problems with reorganisation were very evident.

118. Letter, dated 29.1.49, from Jones to W. Arthur; SWNUM Correspondence UCS.
The NUM Agent for the Rhondda District, Jack Jones, informed his Area Union's secretary, Will Arthur, that the action stemmed from a complaint of long standing. The men, he said, had responded to the NUM's request that they work on a yardage, rather than a tonnage, basis and that their Lodge Committee had put forward a proposal that they be paid 2/3d., a yard at 3' 0".

The management offered 1/7d., but amended the offer to give the same as obtained at the Cambrian Colliery further down the Valley, i.e., 1/9d. Eventually, the workmen came down to 1/10½d., but the Board continued to refuse and, as a compromise, the men announced that they would accept the price if there was a Minimum Section payment at 3' 0". 119

Jones added that during the period of negotiation,

".... in fact, from the commencement, the workmen were deprived of a lucrative item of standing cogs in the job. In addition flats of extra length were introduced. Each time I spoke to the workmen about the reduced output, they contended the coal is stiff, holes bored for firing, and many of their numbers are used to carry timber and other jobs, and the reduction is not so great as alleged". 120

Similar complications attended the onset of a dispute at the Cambrian Colliery in the same valley during August. Will Arthur was informed that 32 men were carrying on a "go-slow" at the pit and promptly ordered Jack Jones to sort it out and persuade the men to resume full production. Jones' report was highly critical

119. Ibid. The problem was resolved when the Board upped its offer to 1/10d.
120. Letter, dated 25.8.49, Jones to Arthur; SWNUM Corr., UCS.
of the approach adopted by the Cambrian management — despite an admission on his part that the 32 colliers could indeed have increased their output. He reported that he had visited the coal face in question and discovered that the Bute Conveyor Hand Cut Price List had not operated "for years, certainly before (he) took office in 1942". The Price List gave 2/5d., per ton Large Coal. He recalled that the workmen on the face in question ("Y" Face) had each been given £1 per week allowance on the List and any abnormalities had been met with additional allowances and any "Guaranteed Wage Payable". The workmen whom he interviewed contended that this method of payment had prevailed for the previous three years on "Y" and for five years before that on another face. But,

"On July 29th the manager gave the Leader of the Conveyor a written notice that after 14 days the allowances were to cease and the men paid on the basis of the Price List. The following day the Manager goes away on Holidays. I personally get a letter from the labour officer saying it was his intention of visiting the Bute Seam on Monday, August 22nd, the first day after his return from a fortnight's holiday.

The Lodge officials protested against the visit as they had not concluded local negotiations with the Manager, which could not be concluded until the manager returned". 122

The Lodge officials met the manager on August, 15th, but failed to persuade him to suspend his intention of reverting to the Price List. It was from that day that the "go-slow" began.

121. Ibid.
122. Letter, dated 3.12.49 from Jack Jones to W.M. Arthur; University College, Swansea.
Jones endeavoured to get the management to place the men of the "Y" conveyor in a similar position to the men of the other three conveyors of the Bute seam where workmen were paid 25/- or 26/- for five tons per shift with an allowance of approximately 4/- a ton above or below the five. He reported that the old Price List had not operated in any of these faces and that he was convinced that if the "Y" men were given the same treatment as others working on the Seam, that the dispute would be overcome. He emphasised that, in his opinion,

"the "Y" position is being used by the management to break up a position that has prevailed for years, and (management) are now invoking a Price List that has been dead for years. If there was justification in making any variations it should be done for the whole of the Seam, and not a section of it ....

"I am satisfied", he continued, that "it is the intention of the management to break up the supplemented payments, bring back the old list, or force a break up of the Pooling system in favour of a yardage principle.

"However, the way the NCB is dealing with it, gives no possibility of control to the Lodge officials or myself, as no section of men in one section of a seam will tolerate being treated differently from the rest, in similar conditions". 123

Jones' report conveys very well the sense of tension which frequently crept into such local disputes. It emanated from a mutual suspicion and from an obvious reluctance, both by men and management, to give credence to the claims of those politicians, union

123. Letter, dated 1.11.49, from Jack Jones to W.M. Arthur; University College, Swansea.
leaders and Board members that the coal industry was, by 1949, one cooperative body in which management and men worked for a common purpose. It was a suspicion and reluctance which could manifest itself in displays of bloody-mindedness, stubbornness and defensive arrogance. Pit managers especially, seemed unwilling to countenance anything which they considered a possible case of their employees poaching upon their authoritative preserves. Thus, for example, a stoppage of work occurred at the Maritime Colliery in the Rhondda in December, 1949 when men of the pit's 'A' District alleged that there had been insufficient dust suppression on a morning shift. The Miners' Agent reported that he had met the Colliery manager, agent and Labour Officer on Saturday December 3rd, and that he discovered that on the previous Thursday morning the Lodge representatives had suggested that in order that the threat of a stoppage (which subsequently occurred) might be averted that the workmen on the "dry" face proceed to work and that two Lodge representatives should stay in the "A" face to observe the dust (a provision catered for under Section 16 of the Joint Agreement). When the suggestion was made, reported the Agent,

".... the Manager replied that some people were after an easy shift, and that he was not given reasonable notice. Later, when it was too late he did agree to the suggestion". 124

Incidents of a similar nature occurred in Tylerstown No. 9 Colliery

124 Letter, dated 30.11.49., from Bill Paynter to W.M. Arthur; University College, Swansea.
At Ystalyfera, the Miners' Agent, Trevor James, reported that, having met the Lodge Committee and workmen involved in the dispute and following an inspection of the coal-face in question it appeared to him that

".... the Management (had) taken advantage of the young workmen on this face; he has exploited their lack of knowledge in the application of an itemised Price List. This greeness is also in evidence in their relations with each other on the face. I found a Double Unit referred to as those on the right and those on the left and there was much in this distinction that was of advantage to Management. I requested the Workmen to elect a new Captain and to recognise in this person their own interests. This was done and I am hopeful that relations will improve".129

In a letter to the NCB's Area Labour Officer, Trevor James alleged that the root of Ystalyfera's troubles was to be found in an unfortunate continuity of industrial relations practices which dated from the earliest days of nationalisation and beyond.

"At the Colliery", he wrote "I was informed by the Morning Shift Overman that loss of output on the date in question was caused by failure to correctly adjust the tension and following a turn over. This reply was given in a straightforward manner to my question .... and it was given to me in the hearing of Lodge Officials.

125. Letter dated 2.1.50 from Jack Jones to W.M.Arthur, University College, Swansea.
126. Letter dated 5.1.50 from Trevor Jones to W.M. Arthur, University College, Swansea.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.
129. Letter (b) dated 5.1.50 from Trevor Jones to W.T. Rees, University College, Swansea.
"If what the Workmen say is true then there is an abnormal loss of output at this pit due to breakages. And in saying this I am not losing sight of the attitude of Management in refusing to pay Waiting Time. It may well be an attempt to conceal the real causes for loss of output from higher management. Such an attitude would be in keeping with past practices in this anthracite district. Over the years labour relations have been used indiscriminately to explain away output and cost figures.

"The organisation on this face calls for serious attention".130

Pushing the matter further, James recommended to the NUM Area Labour Officer that a list of "mis-management" practices attributed to the Ystalyfera "Y" Conveyor be submitted to Ebby Edwards on the National Coal Board

"as a typical example of the role played by certain parts of Management in this difficult period. You will recall that he expressed a desire to be kept informed of incidents where Management have acted unreasonably ...."131

The reverse side of the coin was marked by miners' stubbornness and intransigence in the face of proposed changes to production methods. For every "green" face, such as that at Ystalyfera, there were many others manned by hardened, experienced teams who instinctively suspected all managerial initiatives as posing potential threats to earnings and to existing customs and prac-

130. Letter dated 3.1.50 from W.J. Saddler (NCB Labour Director) to W. Arthur, University College, Swansea.
131. Letter dated 6.1.50 from T.G. Mainwaring to W. Arthur, University College, Swansea.
tices. Such teams appear, for example, to have worked the seams of the Duffryn Rhondda Colliery - a traditionally militant pit which was situated in the Afan Valley.

In the first ten months of 1950 Duffryn Rhondda witnessed five stoppages important enough to be reported to the Area Labour Director of the NCB, W.J. Saddler. A close examination of each of them indicates that there occurred a growth of rank-and-file confidence in its own ability to take on and defeat the pit's management - despite the obvious reluctance of the miners' elected Agents to support them in their unconstitutional actions. In January, 1950 for example, men working in the pit's 2 1/2 Feet Seam returned home after stating their dissatisfaction with allowances. The day previously, (January 2nd), the men working on the "J" Face, 6 Feet Seam, had done the same thing and caused an estimated loss of 180 tons of coal. The Miners' Agent for the district, Tal Mainwaring, settled the disputes but reported that he was

"... afraid that in this case the NCB will claim damages because in the last number of cases I have had the claims squashed, and it appears that the men are taking advantage of that and the least dispute about allowances on the Face, they walk out". 133

During the following August, a stoppage occurred in the pit's Albert Hills District when 3 men came out because management

133. Letter dated 11.9.50 from Tal Mainwaring to W. Arthur, University College, Swansea.
refused to allow them to work in their own place unless they put up 10ft. rings instead of 8ft. They were joined in sympathy by a further 23 men on the morning shift but work was resumed by all the following night. Mainwaring reported that the dispute arose

"because of lack of tact, both on the Management's part and the workmen's, which could have been settled at the Face".  

Just over a fortnight later, the West Level and Cynon District teams at the Colliery began a restriction of output provoked by a general dissatisfaction with wages and, once again, Mainwaring persuaded the men to resume normal working. On this occasion however, his report provides a little more insight into the state of labour relations at the pit:

"In this case, like others", he wrote, "the fault lies more on the shoulders of the Management than on the workmen. The Manager and Production General Manager and the Labour Officer were met some weeks ago where they promised that once the Manager had agreed to meet the Lodge Officers with disputes, that these meetings must not be cancelled.

"Here again the Manager having agreed to meet on the Monday prior to the alleged go-slow, cancelled the meeting because of other business. It appears that the Manager is compelled to attend innumerable meetings arranged by the Coal Board, which have no relationship to the production of coal, such as Education meetings, Welfare meetings, Lectures upon new development, and things which should have been dealt with by people who are well paid to listen to their own voices".  


135. Letter dated 11.10.50 from Tal Mainwaring to W. Arthur, University College, Swansea.
One month later, the men of the Albert Hills District began a go-slow which was provoked by alleged dusty conditions and which resulted in an estimated immediate loss of 240 tons of coal.\textsuperscript{136} Mainwaring's report on this occasion however, contained none of the sympathy which was evident in his analysis of the September incident. Instead, he provides material which goes some way towards vindicating the popular managerial assertion, that it was the workforce's intransigence in the face of industrial rationalisation, rather than mis-management, which was primarily responsible for much of the relatively poor showing of the South Wales coal industry.

"Unfortunately", he wrote, "this is a case where because of the alteration in the method of work the Colliers seem to be reluctant to agree with it. In the past it has been customary to split the face in two, one half working on the night shift and the other half on the morning shift. The Management, in view of the fact of the need for heavy packing and also turning over the Conveyors did not have much time to do this when there was a morning and a night shift working on the face.

"They improved the headings so as to give sufficient clearance so they put all the men to work on the face on one shift, the morning shift. This is more economical, better for safety, and for the cycle of operations, but anyhow the men now argue that there is more dust, whereas out of about 20 tests or more, only on one occasion has the dust exceeded the minimum laid down for safety.

\textsuperscript{136} Letter dated 23.10.50 from Gomer Evans (for NCB Labour Director) to W. Arthur, University College, Swansea.
"It is a case of non-cooperation which we are trying to break down. Further, I have arranged with the Labour Officer and the Lodge Committee that a cutter should be put in the face and this was agreed to by myself and the Lodge Officers and some of the Colliers involved, with the concession of 3d., per square yard, irrespective of whether the section is 6' or 7', so this means giving away about 2d., per ton for the cutter.

"Since this was agreed to, we have difficulty again in getting these Colliers to accept the introduction of the cutter, and the problem of dust in Duffryn Rhondda, like other collieries is caused by Pneumatic picks more than anything else.

"With a cutter cutting wet and also with infusion, this will abolish the dust by over 50%. I regret to say that our chaps are taking unkindly to changes for their own good, but nevertheless I am making it plain to them that the Collieries are run for all the men, and not only for the Colliers".137

Mainwaring's final swipe at the colliers' display of "sectionalism" indicates how seriously this problem was taken by the union's full-time officials. The vast majority of recorded stoppages involved colliers, (face-workers and other production workers) and their relationship with other groups of workers below ground - and with other face-working teams for that matter - frequently left a great deal to be desired. For example, shortly after the Duffryn Rhondda "dust" go-slow, colliers cutting on top of a bunker in the Bute Seam of Cambrian No.4 Colliery, "Y" Conveyor,

137. Letter dated 9.1.50 from Trevor Evans to W.T. Rees; University College, Swansea.
walked out of the pit alleging dissatisfaction with the Price List.\textsuperscript{138} The real reason for their walk-out was more complicated however, for it was subsequently reported by the Miners' Agent that the issue arose because of the desire of the men on the "Y" face to accept a revision of the Yardage Price List, but the men on the Tonnage Faces would not allow them .... "So the strike was a protest against the action of the Tonnage Men", reported the Agent - failing, for some reason, to mention the fact that the strike represented a small, if perverse, triumph for management in as much as the Cambrian colliers had become divided over the same question of payment which the Agent had previously described as constituting a managerial device for driving a wedge between the face-working teams. (See above, pp. 151-154).

Sprinkled amongst these disputes, were others concerned with more personal, and sometimes even physical, clashes. At Cwmgrose Colliery in January 1950 for example, 21 face-workers walked away from the mine's "Y" Conveyor as a

"form of protestation against the attitude of the Fireman on that face, Mr. Ken Rees, who continually causes unnecessary friction by his refusal to recognise the opinion of the face captain on the question of "Waiting Time" and of his practice to reduce the number of hours to be paid below the figure agreed upon at the face during measurement etc.\textsuperscript{139}

An incident of more serious proportions took place on the same day at Glenrhopdda Colliery where men working at the 4ft. Conveyor

\textsuperscript{138} Jones reported that the overman later expressed "his deep regret over the incident. The workman did the same, and shook hands .... It was an incident, in my mind, that could have been dealt with and finished within the face". Letter from Jones to W. Arthur, dated 7.1.50; SWNUM Corres. U.C. Swansea.

\textsuperscript{139} Letter, dated 9.1.50 from Trevor Jones to W.T. Rees; Swansea.
stopped work in protest over an alleged attack by an Overman upon a workman after the latter had used "bad language" at him.

The Miners' Agent, Jack Jones, investigated the incident and reported that he had no doubt that the workman

"... used the language and that the overman struck him first, but evidence revealed that the under-manager, acting manager, and workmen, had to pull the workman off the overman who was lying over the conveyor when it was in motion". 140

Such excesses of indiscipline seem to have been relatively rare, however - unlike examples of "non-violent" indiscipline, the most fragrant examples of which were to be found, predictably, at Gwaun-cae-gurwen where one suspects that managers walked in constant fear of showing their faces at the wrong time - such was the propensity of that workforce to strike with speed and impunity. Commenting, for example, upon a restriction of output by men working the "G" Face, Lower Vein, of East Pit, Gwaun-cae-gurwen, during October 1950, the Area Assistant Labour Director of the NCB reported that his Area Officers alleged that the workmen on this face had been deliberately

"erecting their props just as they care to and never in a straight line, and the Colliery Manager cannot accept any responsibility for poor workmanship when there prevails a complete lack of discipline amongst the workmen.

"During the joint inspection of this face in February 1950" he continued, "a collier was found fast asleep and was prosecuted. On the same day

140. C.G., 13.4.50. Speech given by Mr. Dan Williams.
another collier was sent out because he refused to erect a prop according to the instructions of the Fireman. On the same day, the Group Agent, when going around the Face, was told to "go and take a dose of opium".

"On June 17th 1950, the men on this face demanded the Manager to withdraw the cutter and to restore to hand-got methods. In this respect, when the Face was hand-got the OMS was 42 cwts., and with the machine cut face the output has been 65 cwts., and it is not appreciated why the men want to restore to hand-got methods.

"The Lodge Committee at East Pit have agreed with the Management that the men can fill 6 tons of coal per shift. The output we are getting from the workmen is less than half that amount.

"I make this statement to show that the men are not realising their responsibilities under the Five-Day-Week Agreement and we ask you to see if something can be done in order to restore normal output in this Conveyor Face".

The more vocal amongst the ranks of colliery managers had very definite ideas as to the best means of eradicating such anarchic behaviour from the coalfield. At a managers' conference in Cardiff one such individual declared that every colliery manager should aim at carrying out his duties "fearlessly" and should make a "special effort" to "produce the highest possible output per man-shift at the lowest possible cost". He believed that if colliery managers were given the opportunity to manage the collieries "without frustration and interference, and with much more cooperation and consultation", the mining industry would "prove to

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141. Letter, dated 10.11.50 from Assistant Labour Director NCB Assistant Labour Director to W. Arthur, SWNUM Corr., UCS.
the community "that it was worthy of being recognised as the most important industry in the country." "Colliery managers", he argued, "Must take a stand and protest" whenever they came across any action which tended to interfere with colliery management, or any action which might be brought to their notice whereby there was a "tendency to sidestep authority", or whenever they learned of "some sort of investigation" being conducted without their knowledge or consultation. He concluded by emphasising that, in his opinion, unless colliery managers showed that they were determined to protect their prestige there was a danger that they would lose their identity .... and the position of the colliery manager would become "insignificant". 142

Fears of a possible re-ascendancy of such hawkish sentiments amongst managers tended to compound still further the dilemma in which the elected leadership of the S. Wales NUM found itself during the latter part of 1950. It was as if they, the Executive Council, were perched upon an unstable plank over a yawning chasm. At opposite ends of this plank were the union's "militants" and the hawkish managers. Both were doing their utmost, as the Executive Council saw it, to shift the plank and to topple the elected members from their positions of relative safety. For, as the year passed, it became increasingly clear that there was a growing impatience with the negotiated procedures for settling disputes. Unofficial strikes proliferated across the coalfield.

142. C.G., 13.4.50. Speech given by Dan Williams.
The large numbers of lower-paid amongst the mineworkers were increasingly vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction and frustration with their relative inability to strike effectively — a situation which was seized upon by some of the more militant lodges as a means of challenging the apparent inertia of the "cooperating" union executive. In July, almost five thousand miners from the pits of Fernhill and the Dulais Valley took, or threatened to take, industrial action as a protest against the NCB's refusal to increase the wages of the lower-paid.¹⁴³ By November, there were clear signs that a successful revival was underway of unofficial rank-and-file organisations based once more, upon the structures of the old combine committees and calling themselves "minority movements".¹⁴⁴

None of these developments helped calm the fears and doubts of disgruntled pit managers. Consultation and cooperation between them and their opposites on the Lodge Committees could only achieve consistent harmony if discipline existed within the miners' union. If sectionalism prevailed and it became obvious that the union's elected leadership was unable to control its own members, then, the managers asserted, they would have to take independent measures to restore order and discipline. That would inevitably mean booting out of the pit premises a great many of the more vulnerable and tentative of the "co-operative" and "democratic" proposals and schemes for extending power-sharing within the industry. The more enlightened amongst the union's

¹⁴³. C.C., 6.7.50.
¹⁴⁴. Ibid., 16.11.50.
leaders saw clearly that such developments threatened to curtail, not only the unity of the NUM, but also whatever influences and job controls it wielded within the pits and administrative Areas.

The leaders found it no easy task, however, to counteract the popular tendency of large sections of the union's membership to adopt unconstitutional means of redressing their grievances. The years 1951 to 1954 bore witness to this. They saw what amounted to an "institutionalisation" of rank-and-file militancy and unofficial leadership in the form of the so-called Shakespeare Hotel Movement. They saw also fresh and determined attempts by the elected leadership of the NUM to come to terms with these developments.

The conflict highlighted many of the shortcomings of the joint-Disputes Agreements which Horner had been party to in 1946-47. If the unofficial movements achieved little else, they at least challenged the more facile of popular assumptions concerning the usefulness of compulsory arbitration in situations such as those described earlier in this section. The rigid application of much of the paraphernalia surrounding labour relations was facilitated neither by the nature of coalmining practice and payment in the early 1950s, nor by the workforce's inheritance of an industrial and political lore which refused to contemplate the abandonment of traditional definitions of "them" and "us". As the examples of pit conflicts cited above illustrate, it was not enough to alter the ground-rules governing the way the game was played. Much more remained to be done to alter the state of the ground itself.
"... I was going around everywhere, ... speaking for the Werntarw issue. We had a few more issues too, but that was the most important one. When Paynter made a slash to say that the decisions were made in Cardiff and not in the Shakespeare ... "

"He wanted to know who was running the union. Was it the Executive or was it the boys from the Shakespeare".¹

Evan, John, ex-chairman of the Shakespeare Hotel group, interviewed by Hywel Francis.

The Werntarw issue posed a great many unwelcomed problems for the Miners' Executive during the first half of 1951. Consistent with their pledge to aid the Coal Board in its rationalisation measures, the union's elected leaders had allowed themselves to be convinced by the Board that Werntarw should close and its workforce be deployed at more efficient pits such as that at Llanharan. However, neither the Werntarw Lodge Committee nor large numbers of the coalfield's workforce agreed. Unofficial soundings were made by the Lodge's popular and well-known secretary, Frank Hayward, to test the strength of support for Werntarw amongst other lodge committees.

¹ Transcript held at S.W. Miners' Library, Swansea. Werntarw, near Pencoed, is close to Bridgend on the southern, central rim of the coalfield.
The results must have pleased him, for the issue was taken up by, amongst others, the Shakespeare Hotel Group - the most powerful and substantial of all of the unofficial groupings. It saw the campaign to keep Werntarw open as constituting an excellent vehicle upon which to mount its opposition to the declared policy of the union's elected leadership - a policy which it regarded as overly-co-operative and "appeasing".

The group was so named because it convened its meetings at the hostelry of that name in Neath. Its size seems to have varied from time to time and issue to issue, but its core was provided by delegates from Lodges in the Swansea and Dulais Valleys, others from pits of the old Amalgamated Anthracite Combine Committee, and frequently, delegates representing Lodges in the Maesteg, Aberdare and Rhondda Areas to the east.²

In June 1951, the Werntarw conflict came to a head. 87 men from the pit were transferred by the Board to Llanharan colliery as an obvious gesture of intent to run-down Werntarw's workforce completely. Emergency meetings were held in Neath and a total of fortyfive thousand men struck work in mines situated as far east as the Taff and as far west as the Gwendraeth. The Board backed down and issued a declaration to the effect that Werntarw would remain open. It remained so until 1964.

The Swansea Valley unofficial grouping of lodge delegates contained within its ranks many who had played leading roles in the activities of the pre-war combine committees. The grouping

used the old Western District combine committee structure as a model upon which to base its own activities. Its initial leadership depended heavily upon Communist Party members who happened to hold prominent positions upon various lodge committees.  

The grouping very soon shook off the old restrictions of pit ownership and geography which had limited the scope of the old combine committees and embraced groupings and issues from other parts of the coalfield:

"We went further than the Swansea Valley", explained one ex-leader of the Shakespeare Hotel Group, "because Werntarw became involved. .... So we moved over to the Shakespeare in Neath as our headquarters because we were spreading now see .... I was the Chairman and Aeron Bevan was the Secretary.  

"More were coming in and we were sending invites out .... We had the Rhondda boys coming down to us and all now see. It was because of the threat to Werntarw; that's when Paynter was coming in now because we had on call 45,000 miners ....  

"Dulais Valley, Swansea Valley, the Rhondda, the Aberdare boys were coming in ....  

"I remember going up to Parc and Dare to speak, Eddie Lloyd and Tom Evans: he was on the Executive, were involved and we were calling them in. And we reached the stage when the Werntarw issue came, I remember the Haywards coming down to stay in our house .... and stopping there the night ....  

4. Evan John recording, op. cit., both were members of the Communist Party; Evan John was chairman of Clydach Merthyr lodge and Aeron Bevan chairman of Pwllbach lodge - both mines situated in or about the Swansea Valley.
and we were going around and we were at such a stage that we organised a strike, see ....

"Well, we were giving the orders now. I was going around all of the collieries: up in Gilfach Goch .... appealing to the men to support us - "We must stop the closure of Werntarw", and all that see. And we were successful. We had a sympathetic hearing everywhere that we were going. We did all West Wales and up to Gilach Goch and all around there see .... Tower and Tirherbert were supporting us. We were a powerful group". 6

Shortly after the Executive's backdown on the Werntarw issue, the Labour Government was replaced by the first post-war Conservative Government. It was a development which further complicated the relationship between the NUM and the NCB. The latter now came to be viewed by some miners and their leaders as constituting little more than a body which existed primarily to execute Conservative economic policy. The miners' elected leaders found themselves confronted with the task of justifying to their members the continuation of a policy of cooperation with the Board - despite the fact that ultimate financial control of the industry had passed into the hands of the miners' traditional political enemies. From the Autumn of 1951 onwards, there began a discernable cooling-off of the relationship which existed between the members of the South Wales miners' executive and their opposite numbers on the Divisional Board. By December, for example, the Board found itself disappointed with the response of the workforce to a proposed pay offer which had been agreed after negotiations with the miners' national leaders. A coalfield ballot accepted the offer by 49,250 votes to 26,000 against, but

6. Ibid.
it was stressed by the S. Wales Area leaders that most of the ballot results were accompanied by expressions of discontent over the increased differential which henceforward would accumulate between the minimum wage of men working below and above the surface. Much disappointment was expressed also over the announcement that the miners would not be receiving a second week's holiday with pay during the following summer.\(^7\)

Although both of these issues involved all of Britain's coalfields, it was in S. Wales that the discontent expressed itself most loudly. The reason for this is almost certainly to be found amongst the activities of the so-called "unofficials". They seized upon these grievances and delighted in using them as arrows with which they sought to damage what they denounced as the "collaborationist" policies of the NUM executive.

Evan John, one of the leaders of the Shakespeare Hotel group, for example, recalls setting out to embarrass Alf Davies and Bill Paynter at coalfield conferences by tabling repeated questions concerning the executive's relationship with the Board in the light of a Conservative Government holding the purse-strings.\(^8\) December, 1951, proved particularly hectic for Paynter, newly-elected as the president of the S. Wales miners. Besides the taunts which emerged from the Shakespeare Hotel, he faced problems with organised unofficial actions emanating from two of the most important and militant of Rhondda pits: Fernhill and Parc and Dare.

\(^7\) C.C., 27.12.51.
\(^8\) Evan John interview, op.cit.
The disputes at these pits were symptomatic of a much larger malaise which assumed the form of an increasing reluctance amongst the coalfield's workforce to sanction the kinds of cooperative gestures which its elected leaders had made towards the Labour Government and the Coal Board since 1947.

At the Parc and Dare complex, over 2,500 men struck work, ostensibly in protest against the arrangements for overtime working at the pit. The timing of the strike however, indicates that it was more than this; that it was, in fact, an expression of the Lodge's distaste for the continuation of overtime working now that a Conservative Government had been returned to power. This interpretation is strengthened when one recalls that Parc and Dare distinguished itself as a lodge which had shown extreme reluctance to strike during the earlier years of nationalisation when the Lodge Committee had perceived its role as being one which involved, not only representing its members' interests, but also providing the coalfield with a lead in respect of displaying a willingness and enthusiasm to promote "production for socialism" by working weekends and long periods of overtime.9

9. See, above, Chapter 1, pp. 11-12. Delegates representing 28,000 miners in two areas of the NUM (Swansea and Neath) passed a resolution of protest at Swansea on Saturday, November 2nd, against the declaration made by the General Council of the TUC that they would work amicably with the new Government. The resolution criticised the Council for making the statement without prior consultation with the "rank-and-file" and the various organisations thereof and deprecated the action taken, "particularly having regard to the experience with the Conservatives in 1921 and 1926 ...." The National Executive of the NUM was to be asked to confirm the resolution and send it to the General Council of the TUC. "Western Mail", 4.11.51.
Further north, at the head of Rhondda Fawr, trouble at Fernhill threatened to involve 30,000 of the field's 100,000 miners in strike action over the issue of summonses by the Coal Board against six Fernhill miners whom the Board alleged indulged in a go-slow movement which caused an estimated loss of production of £40,000.10

The strike threat was called off only after discussions at a national level, persuaded the Board to postpone the summonses so that the whole question of claims for breach of contract could be subject to renewed discussions in London. A delegate conference in Cardiff resolved that the union should not countenance further fines and that the Coal Board should not exercise the right it possessed under the Master and Servant Act to take proceedings.11 It had been the case, until February 1951, that a system of voluntary fines had operated on the coal-field in respect of breaches of contract, but this arrangement was terminated by the decision of a miners' conference which agreed that it should be left to Area managers to effect "token" settlements with miners who admitted breaches.

No one was admitting anything at Fernhill, however. The pit's workforce had issued strike notices in emulation of the successful action taken some two months earlier by 800 Ogilvie colliers in Rhymney Fach which had resulted in a back-down by the Coal Board over its threat to prosecute 34 of the pit's workmen for striking for four days and for going-slow for seven weeks after

11. SWNUM E.C. Minutes and Special Conference Reports (ECM & SCR) December 1951.
The Fernhill matter was resolved shortly before Christmas as a result of an appeal to the Board by a deputation of the pit's miners. They declared that productivity results had improved during the weeks immediately prior to their visit and that the Board should contribute to efforts to cool-off the situation by withdrawing the summonses. Amidst much publicity, the Board made what was termed a "Christmas Eve Gesture"; the summonses were withdrawn.

"Bearing in mind the spirit of the season and the desire that the retiring Divisional Chairman, Mr. G.R. Aber-Thomas, should leave without such a problem unresolved, Mr. John Shenton, the Area General Manager, and his executive agreed to let the claims drop."  

There may have been a good many within the Rhondda who accepted the Board's gesture with thanks and admiration, but if there were, they did not make themselves heard. After barely a month of relative industrial peace, it was the militants who once again captured the limelight.

Meeting in the first week of January, the miners of the Parc and Dare Lodge decided that they would not work the voluntary Saturday shift. Their reasons this time centred upon the Government's

12. C.G., 18.10.51; the NCB claimed £10,621 damages. The Ogilvie strike notices were withdrawn only after assurances were given that an out-of-court settlement would be made with the 34 colliers.
13. _Rhondda Leader_, 3.1.52.
14. C.G., 3.1.52.
proposed cuts in social spending - the so-called "Butler cuts"
which were interpreted by many on the Left as signalling an
intention to dismantle the Welfare State. The Lodge Committee
asked for support and received it; slowly at first but soon
gathering considerable momentum so that by late February over
30,000 miners were refusing to work the Saturday shift. Once
again, it was men of the Dulais Valley - members of the so-
called "Minority Movement" - who provided the initial support
for the Rhondda strikers. 3,400 of them gave fourteen days
notice as a protest against the economy cuts and linked the
gesture with another of their grievances concerning the decision
by S. Wales bus companies to abolish workmen's fares - a decision
which was to cause an inordinate number of disputes upon the
field and one which was seen by many miners as constituting a
wage cut: such was the widespread dependence of miners upon
public transport since the instigation of colliery reorganisation
and the mass run-down in production during the 1930s.

Both protests were condemned by the Miners' Executive as offering
an unwarranted challenge to the official leadership. Such con-
demnations appear to have had little effect however, upon any
of the unofficial groupings. By mid-February, delegates repre-
senting 42 lodges met at the Shakespeare and announced that,
pending the delegate conference which was to be held later that
month, the lodges (representing some 30-40,000 miners) were to

15. The Colliery Guardian placed the figure at 40,000 (21.2.52),
the Daily Worker at 30,000.
16. See, below, p.186-188.
maintain their ban on Saturday working. They also decided to
tender fourteen days notice in protest against the recent abol-
ition of workmen's bus fares.17

Paynter and his executive made it plain that they would not
"countenance direct industrial action to express grievances
over the Government's economy measures in the social services",18
- a resolution which was modified considerably at the coalfield
delegate conference in late February.

The conference was held at the Cory Hall in Cardiff and it wit-
nessed the first setback for Paynter's new executive which had
tabled a recommendation that there should take place a one-day
demonstration of protests against the cuts. The recommendation
warned the Government of the "danger of industrial unrest if
attacks on the living standards of the people are persisted in".19
The recommendation was rejected, albeit narrowly, because, as one
reporter put it, it did not go far enough.20 The mood of the
meeting, if not the actual vote, was one permeated by obvious
hostility towards the Tory measures and by a widespread suspicion
that opposition to the cuts should not be left solely in the hands
of the Parliamentary Labour Party:

"Speakers who called for action were in a
majority during today's conference ....",  
reported one observer. "Only a handful put
forward the lines that all action should be
through Parliament".21

19. C.G., 6.3.52.
20. Daily Worker, 28.2.52.
21. Ibid.
The wording and emphasis (upon industrial action) of this report says a great deal about the political attitude of some of the leading actors in this controversy. It appeared in the pages of the *Daily Worker*, the editor of which must have been as confused by the events in S. Wales as were many of the miners. It was a confusion which had its roots, as did so many other confusions on the field, in the old geographical divisions of political and industrial opinion. And it was compounded by the fracture which so often separated Labourite union activists from their Communist brothers.

For by 1952, the CPGB had reverted, as Henry Pelling describes it "to the sectarianism of twenty years before".\(^{22}\) Links with the Labour Left had been severely curtailed and there had been, since 1947, a tendency within the party to abandon those extensions of inner-party democracy which had been introduced during the later years of the war:

"... perhaps most significantly, in 1952 it was decided that the rank-and-file no longer needed the right to 'take part in the formulation of party policy', and for this was substituted the much more limited right to 'take part in the discussion' of policy".\(^{23}\)

The South Wales Miners' Union was undoubtedly amongst the most democratic of all union groupings. The executive was a lay executive and its contacts with the rank-and-file were both solid and sensitive. Delegate conferences occurred with extraordinary frequency and were empowered to discuss and act upon any business which they deemed worthy of their attention.

\(^{22}\) H. Pelling, *op. cit.*, p. 160
\(^{23}\) Ibid.
The contrast between the democratic practices of this union and those of the political organisation to which some of its most gifted activists belonged was obvious. Because of its lay nature, the executive of the Miners' Union could claim firstly that the existence of unofficial committees and "leaderships", of the kind so beloved by the post-1948 CPGB, constituted nothing less than a refusal by Communist miners to act in a democratic and constitutional fashion. Such undemocratic behaviour was linked with the kinds of sectarian activity so often condemned in the past by elected union officials - both Communist and non-Communist. Most unofficial strikes involved relatively small groups of workers - particularly those who worked at the face or on vital haulage jobs. These were the workers with most bargaining power but they were not, automatically, the workers with most regard for the declared aims and principles of their union. For those aims and principles were, in theory at least, concerned with improving the lot of all of the union's membership and, over and above that, with aiding the establishment of a socialist society in Britain.

In the eyes of most executive members, sectional militancy and unofficial action was anathema to those aims. Their experiences during the 1930s had taught them that the maintenance of "unity" was of primary importance, but by 1952, "unity" was a cause no longer in favour amongst the leadership of the CPGB which, by that date, was arguing that virtually all militancy was good militancy and that any strike was better than no strike at all. The Party's line was, in other words, more or less identical to that against which Horner had fought from 1929-1931 and it is
perhaps paradoxical that it was another leading Communist, Bill Paynter, who provided the most effective opposition to it two decades later.

The reasons why it proved to be Horner and Paynter, and not one of a number of talented anti-Communist miners' leaders, who provided this opposition are simple. Neither men could be compared even remotely with those amongst the Party's leadership who distinguished themselves more by their slavish adherence to Dutt's version of Moscow than to any display of political insight or understanding. Both, during their lifetimes, fell foul of the Party's leadership and both did so because of the nature of their relationships with, and insight into, the communities and organizations of the S. Wales miners. Unlike their political masters in King Street, both Horner and Paynter were aware of the unique part played by the miners' union in the everyday life of the coalfield. They understood that it was no mere anonymous conglomeration of dispersed factory branches of the type which so often has been subject to manipulation by a few powerful and central bureaucrats.

It was an organisation with limited, tight, geographical boundaries. It was inextricably linked with the close communities from which it drew its members. And its struggle to nurture and maintain its characteristic unity of purpose had been long and hard and had involved over-coming threats from its own Right-wing as well as those emanating from its Left. Its elected leaders

24. i.e., the SWMF struggle against the so-called Company Unionists or "non-pols"; see, above, Part One.
were not about to squander on political adventurism - of the kind advocated by its Left sectarians - the prizes which it had won as a result of its struggles during the previous two decades. This was not always easy for outsiders to comprehend. The political theoreticians in King Street and Transport House were as often mystified by the actions and statements of the S. Wales lay-executive as political commentators and historians have been since. Whilst the latter have tended to apply blanket categorizations and generalizations which cover the coalfield's workforce with the mantle of Moscow, (deepest hack-red) the theoreticians bemoaned what they interpreted as frequent lapses of Party loyalty: Labourites voting in union elections for Communists and Communists disciplining their anti-Labour activists. In a recent interview upon the topic of confused loyalties, Bill Paynter sought to explain both his and Horner's attitudes in the following way:

".... whether we were right or wrong; in those situations our first loyalty went to the trade union and not to the political party. Now that can be wrong in some people's views I suppose. But I don't know, I think it's part of the way you are bloody reared. I had to face that many times".

"What? You were put on the spot you mean?"

"Well yes. If you're put on the spot what do you do? Do you make the pronouncement that you may be urged to make by the Communist Party or do you look at it purely from the standpoint of the interest of the trade union? I had to take a stand on the National Executive many times contrary to the views that were being put by the Party".

Overwhelming loyalty to the union was not a simple, unambiguous virtue, however. Loyalty meant different things to different men and even to different areas within the coalfield. The geographical and political fractures referred to earlier determined in large measure the quality of support offered by a given workforce to the elected leadership. The differences are most obvious when one examines the propensity of Lodges to strike unofficially or when one compares the nature of the subject matter chosen by Lodges as being of sufficient import to warrant the drafting and submission of resolutions prior to annual conferences.

Much of the preceding work in this thesis, for example, has been preoccupied with examining issues and events which centred upon a relatively small number of collieries. For, despite the fact that in 1947 there were some 200 collieries in operation, the same names reappear, time and again, in strike lists, newspaper reports, NCB and NUM inquiries into go-slows and other forms of disruption. Generally speaking, they belonged to pits which were clustered in the upper-Swansea Valley, in both Rhondda Valleys, in the Dulais Valley, at the top end of the Aberdare Valley and, most obviously of all, around Gwaun-cae-gurwen. This is not to say that other pits did not witness strikes also. The pits of Maesteg and the Garw and lower Aberdare Valleys were rather "prone", as were others in the Rhymney and Taff, but it is possible to draw a number of remarkably clear divisions across a map of the coalfield. The first would include most of the eastern field, from Pontypool westwards to Merthyr Tydfil. It would encompass an area characterized more by the relative quiescence...
of its pit's workforces (relative to the S. Wales coalfield, though not necessarily to those of Great Britain generally) than by the sporadic militancy of a number of its Lodges.26

This area was generally associated with the political "right-wing" of the S. Wales NUM and its delegates could usually be counted upon to vote solidly behind "Labourite" motions at conferences.27

The second division would include most of the central and western sections of the field, including, in particular, the valleys named above: the Rhondda, Dulais and Swansea as well as Gwaun-cae-gurwen, the upper-Aberdare, Maesteg, Afan, Garw and Neath Valleys. It was in this area that the Left strongholds were to be located: at pits such as Parc and Dare, Fernhill, Ferndale, Cambrian, Glenrhondda, Mardy, Onllwyn, Seven Sisters, Cefn Coed, Clydach Merthyr, Pwllbach, Steer and East. This was the area within which the pre-nationalisation combine committees had most effectively consolidated their positions and from which the "unofficials" drew the bulk of their support.

When asked to explain the differences between the two areas, Bill Paynter emphasised what he referred to as the contrasting qualities of leadership available to the rank-and-file in the eastern and western sections of the field. The miners of Monmouthshire and the east, he declared, lacked a recent tradition of electing the type of brilliant local leader relatively common

26. Most obviously, Bedwas, Nine Mile Point, Oakdale, Risca, Marine, the Blaenawon Pits and Merthyr Vale.
27. Recording of Evan John, op. cit.: Recording of David Francis, Swansea, April 1978
in the west - men like A.J. Cook, Noah Ablett, Jack Hughes, Horner, the young Jim Griffiths and Dai Dan Evans. He emphasised the enduring and consistent loyalty in the eastern pits to the declared policies of the Labour Party. It was a loyalty which appears to have manifested itself in a less straightforward fashion in the valleys to the west of the Taff. There it became tinged and subverted by "united-frontism" of the kind nurtured and encouraged by an indigenous and influential Communist presence.

Indeed, the eastern field comprised the nearest thing in South Wales to a "safe-area" for anti-Communists. Paynter recalled, for example, that as a known Communist,

"...it was on very rare occasions that, when I was President in S. Wales, that I went into the Monmouthshire coalfield or, indeed, as National Secretary, went into certain other coalfields of Britain; like Yorkshire for instance - not easy unless you were invited and the tendency was in certain places not to invite known Communists .... with the result that you didn't get the same ferment taking place in Monmouthshire that you did in the rest of the coalfield". 28

This "ferment" was by no means universal in the pits to the west of the Taff however, and when it appeared its character tended to vary from pit to pit and from area to area. Indeed, it is possible to subdivide this, the western half of the field, into two, smaller, areas: the steam coal (eastern) sector and the anthracite west. It is a sub-division which owes its existence as much to the differing political characteristics of the two areas as it does to geological and technological considerations.

The miners of the central steam area - at least, those amongst
them who bothered to evaluate the characteristics of their coll-
eagues were prone to consider the anthracite miners as being some-
what clannish and parochial in outlook. This view was formulated
largely as a result of the enforced journeys made westwards in
search of work by miners from the depressed valleys of Merthyr
and Aberdare. It arose chiefly from a kind of culture-shock
which the steam-coal men suffered as they attempted to adjust
to the different methods of working, associating and organising
which obtained in the anthracite pits. Some of them had worked
only in large "cosmopolitan" mines which recruited their work-
forces from relatively wide catchment areas. Most had live&ln, or near to, three towns renowned for their almost exotic social
"mix": Dowlais, Merthyr and Aberdare. The anthracite villages
into which they travelled may well have seemed rural, if not
parochial, in comparison.

As early as 1936, 542 workers from Merthyr and 420 workers from
Aberdare were travelling westwards to Glynneath - a journey of
12 miles each way in the case of the Merthyr men and 10 miles
each way in the case of those from Aberdare. 89 workers from
Dowlais, Merthyr and Aberdare travelled even further afield to
Onllwyn and Banwen in the Dulais Valley (17 miles from Merthyr).29
The total number of men travelling daily from the eastern com-
unities to the mines of the Neath and Dulais valleys in 1936
was 1,154 and many of them were miners who had worked previously
in the pits of Powell Duffryn or in those belonging to the Llewellyn
family - pits in which, as we have seen in Part One, the mere

29: The Second Industrial Survey of South Wales, op. cit.,
Vol III, p. 31.
continuance of trade unionism had been threatened and in which there survived only the most meagre enthusiasm for risking jobs and wages for the sake of union principles. The atmosphere which they encountered amongst the anthracite miners was quite different and it was a difference which was amplified, moreover, by the length of time spent travelling back and forth to work. The problems and social effects of significantly increased travelling warrant a full chapter in themselves; there is space here, only to mention some of the more obvious, including a reduction of leisure time, increased physical strain and significant deductions from the weekly wage packet. Commenting upon these problems, Bert Coombes wrote in 1939:

"It (travelling to work) has become a recognised thing today. There are good facilities now - double-decker buses and train services - to bring the two thousand and more men who come into this valley to work. (The Neath Valley) They come from a radius of eighteen miles, and pay up to nine shillings a week in fares. If there is no work for them when they arrive, they must return home by some method. They get no pay for that day, but have to pay for the ride. I have known this happen once a week, and sometimes twice, over a period of four months. This travelling means that they are in their dirty clothes for an hour and a half extra at the end of the shift, while in the winter they get nothing to warm them from early morning until evening.

"There is another side to this travelling to work. The officials often prefer to engage men from a distance because these men are difficult to organise. They must hurry to their conveyances, and cannot attend a meeting or anything that concerns the work. If they are paid a shilling or two short in their money it will not pay them to come and see about it. If the committee
are local men - as it is safe to assume they must be - then the outsiders do not know them well, and feel that they distrust them because they are living near the colliery and the officials.

"These outsiders are compelled to pay towards institutions that they cannot use, and have to allow deductions from their pay for welfare schemes, bands, nursing services, etc., that they live too far from to enjoy. They are brought from the streets of towns like Merthyr and Dowlais or Aberavon, and taken to work in an area that is beautiful in comparison - except the spot where the collieries are built. They have to contribute to the building of sports grounds, parks and libraries, yet every evening they are taken past them to their drab homes, with no chance of getting enjoyment from these facilities, and every week they must pay the bus fare out of their small wages". 30

The effects of this kind of travelling then, could be extremely complex and the problems which they threw up were compounded by the differing standards of trade union organisation obtaining within the two areas. As was stated earlier, these differences manifested themselves most strikingly to those men who travelled daily across the geological boundary separating the steam-coal and anthracite coal pits.

One such miner, Glyn Williams, a Merthyr man who had worked, originally, in the steam coal pits of Pentrebach and Troed-y-rhiw in the Merthyr Valley before travelling west in 1935 to work at the anthracite Empire Colliery in the upper Vale of Neath, recalled how different things were in his new workplace:

"My experience of trade-union men in those days (in Merthyr) was one of having great respect for them, because of the struggle they were waging just to retain the Federation. But if they spoke out of turn they were no different to you or I. I'm sure that a lot of the men were working and suffering intimidation: I remember going to the manager in a Merthyr colliery on one occasion with a complaint, and not receiving satisfaction I told him I'd tell the Federation organizer Idris Evans about it; "Tell who the hell you like" he said, "and you'd better be careful about what you're saying." That was the threat; what I thought was my defence - the union - well, it was no defence at all. But when I went to Glynneath mind, it was entirely different; if, for instance, I hadn't been a Federation member in Merthyr .... it would have cost me, when I went to Glynneath, a pound to join. If you didn't have the money they'd give you time to pay it, but they'd make sure you paid a pound to join. Once you was in you felt confident, you had people who were prepared to stand together, the whole colliery was together, it was a different attitude altogether." 

Glyn Williams felt that the primary reason for the strength of the union in the anthracite area lay in the fact that the demand for anthracite coal had kept more or less ahead of supplies, unlike the glut conditions which generally had prevailed in the steam-coal areas. The anthracite mine owners were readier to compromise in order that smooth production be maintained. He also referred to a residual militancy in the workers of the anthracite area, and their determination to defend their conditions and practices:
"From the outset, the anthracite miners were sufficiently militant enough to ensure that conditions were good and should remain good. When my father went down Glynneath to work, some time before me, directly after the 1926 Strike, the men in Glynneath would be throwing stones at the people from Merthyr, they didn't want them there, they were jealous of their conditions .... they knew of the conditions in Merthyr and Aberdare, they didn't want these people to come in because, unfortunately, they had no confidence in them. But the people from Merthyr and Aberdare had to take strong action and stick it out because they had to get jobs, they wanted work. Of course, they fell in line and retained a good strong trade union".32

Various theories prevail within the mining communities on both sides of the geological divide, as well as within the research departments of universities, as to why there seems to have existed amongst anthracite miners a higher propensity to resort to unofficial action to solve their grievances than there existed amongst the miners of the steam-coal valleys to the east.

These theories usually revolve, in the minds of miners and ex-miners at least, around two central themes: the "closeness" and inward-facing nature of the anthracite pit villages; and the difference in the quality and political beliefs of the miners' leaders in the two areas.
To these must be added two allied themes - both of which are popular foci for discussion, if not for publication, by academic researchers. The first is concerned with the traditional influence of pit size and the size of the various workforces; the second is concerned with the influence of property status - miners owning their own houses - upon workers in the two main areas.

Since the first two theories may be considered somewhat more nebulous, or more difficult to "quantify", than the second pair, it seems logical to tackle the latter first in the hope that an examination of them might cast some light upon the first two.
The influence of pit size.

In Chapter 10, (pp. 2-36 , above), it was pointed out that the average anthracite colliery was smaller, in terms of manpower, than those of the central and eastern collieries and that its output, though on a par with the collieries of Monmouthshire, was also smaller than the collieries of the central area. The differences are quite marked if a comparison is made between the average size of the steam-coal collieries of the Aberdare area, immediately to the east of the anthracite boundary, and the collieries of the anthracite field itself. The average manpower in an Aberdare mine in 1946 was 527, in an anthracite mine it was 350. An Aberdare mine produced, on average, an annual output per employee of 270 tons; an anthracite mine, just below 200 tons per employee.33

These statistics have a direct bearing upon two popular supp- ositions regarding the relative natures of trade union organization within the steam and anthracite sectors. The first supposes that it was easier to organize and sustain effective trade unionism within a small and tightly knit workforce than it was to do so within a large and often "cosmopolitan" workforce of the type common in the central field. The second supposes that the owners of these small mines were often themselves "small owners" and therefore more vulnerable to industrial

33. Chapter 10, pp. 2-36.
action by their employees than were the owners of the big eastern pits.34

Much evidence was available to support both suppositions. The weakest lodges on the coalfield included amongst their number several whose memberships were recruited from a wide catchment area. Bill Paynter attributed to this factor many of the difficulties which he encountered when trying to strengthen the union's organisation at the Bargoed and Elliot's collieries in the Rhymney Area. Like Coombes, he spoke of the problem of overcoming the diminished sense of communal solidarity which apparently existed amongst the workforces of these pits35 and it would have needed little insight to equate this diminution with the relative weakness of the Rhymney lodges when they were compared, not only with the lodges of parts of the anthracite area, but also with those of pits located at the "blind", northern ends of the central

34. e.g., "It is difficult to give a satisfactory explanation for such sustained antagonism; (in the anthracite pits) the hard coal miners were extremely loyal to their union and it is possible that the comradeship existing in these small pits encouraged unity in opposing authority or in fighting alleged injustices ... Those collieries, located along the edge of the upland moors in a particularly arid setting, had been originally controlled by local tradespeople. The close personal link between men and owners, and the increasing demand for the high quality Anthracite coal of the locality prompted the managements to accede to excessive demands for allowances and privileges. When the Amalgamated Anthracite combine later acquired these undertakings and attempted to eliminate the non-economic working practices there was continual strife".

W.J. Anthony-Jones, op. cit., p. 84.

35. Recording of Bill Paynter, op. cit.
valleys - pits like Fernhill, Blaengarw, Glyncorrwg and Maerdy (before it was closed for almost a decade and a half in 1933). For these too, were relatively closed communities with no through roads; (or else through roads which had been constructed only as late as the 1930s), a topographical feature which tended to grant these villages a greater degree of isolation and, perhaps self-sufficiency, than obtained in the towns and villages downstream.

Bill Paynter recalled, for example, that although he was a Rhondda miners' official at the time, he was yet made to feel unwelcome by the Fernhill colliery lodge committee when he offered his services on behalf of the South Wales executive during the record-breaking Fernhill stay-down strike of 1936. The committee members were, he explained, "an independent lot", determined to carry the stay-down to a successful conclusion - preferably without having to accept the aid of "outsiders". 36

A similar reputation for militant independence was associated with the lodge located at Maerdy, at the head of the smaller Rhondda Valley. It had been expelled from the SWMF in 1929, convicted of the sin of providing financial support for a Communist parliamentary candidate (Horner) against the orders of the Federation executive which was pledged to support only Labour candidates. 37

The geographical similarities were limited however, to topographical features, for the Fernhill and Maerdy workforces were drawn mainly

36. Ibid.
from differing types of catchment areas. As David Smith has illustrated in his perceptive account of the social and political relationships which obtained in Mardy, there existed in that large village a highly developed and cohesive communal identity which was largely absent amongst the miners working at Fernhill for the simple reason that "Fernhill" itself consisted of a couple of rows of terraced cottages, the old Blaenrhondda Farm and a scattering of mine entrances, shafts and surface constructions. The Fernhill workforce was recruited from a whole string of towns and villages lying downstream of the pits. In 1937 for example, it was calculated that some 200 men were travelling daily the 10 - 12 miles north to Blaenrhondda from Ystradrhondda and Tonypandy. No one however, travelled north up the smaller fork of the Rhondda Valley to find work at the Mardy collieries, the owning company of which was bankrupt by 1933.

Mardy and its pits, which had provided work for upwards of 3,500 men until 1926, was described in 1937 as an unemployment "black spot". After the early 1930s, its "little Moscow" reputation was justified solely upon extra-industrial, political, grounds: its economic bargaining power having been wiped out by market depression.

Comparisons between other such "blind-end" pits will produce similarly contrasting features, but these should not be allowed to disguise the fact that pit location, or topography, played a significant, if not crucial, role in helping to determine the

39. Ibid., p. 152; also, W.J. Anthony-Jones, op. cit., Appendix H, Table 2.
industrial tactics adopted by individual workforces. In the central sector of the field, for example, miners working the pits located at the "blind-ends" of the Garw and Ogmore Valleys struck work more often than did those working in pits located in the valleys all around them.  

Looked at within the widest possible coalfield perspective however, it becomes clear that the "blind-end" pattern is only one of a whole range of dominant variables governing industrial action and that it blends in closely with certain patterns concerned with mine ownership and popular political persuasion. Anthony-Jones has pointed out that, despite the fact that between 1927 and 1939 some 350 collieries were open for varying periods in S. Wales, only 148 of these experienced any strikes outside of the 1931 Coalfield Strike:  

"70 per cent of the strikes occurred at 60 collieries, and the miners at 77 collieries were responsible for 86 per cent of the total man-shifts lost through labour disputes".  

He also points out that,  

"... of the strikes resulting in a complete cessation of work at a colliery, one half took place in the Anthracite sector as did one-third of the partial colliery stoppages on the coalfield".  

If we disregard, for the moment, these strike-prone anthracite pits, we find that we are left with a relatively small number of strike-prone steam and bituminous pits. Of those in this category which were located in the central sector and which experienced more than five strikes each, ten could be described as "blind-end"  

40. W.J. Anthony-Jones, op. cit., Map One; & Appendix E. Table 1.  
41. Ibid., p. 83.  
42. Ibid., Appendix H: Table 2.
pits and eight were situated in other topographical locations. Table 1 below, charts those pits (of both types of location) along with their owners and the numbers of workers employed in 1927 and 1939 and the numbers of strikes which occurred at the pits between 1927 and 1939:
Table 1

Collieries situated west of the Taff and east of the Neath which experienced more than five strikes

1927 - 1939

(a) Collieries situated at or very near the "blind" heads of valleys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colliery</th>
<th>Owners</th>
<th>Numbers Employed 1939</th>
<th>Numbers Employed 1927</th>
<th>Number of Strikes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glengarw</td>
<td>Glenavon Garw</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyndham</td>
<td>Cory Brothers</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenrhowdda</td>
<td>Glenavon Garw</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernhill</td>
<td>Fernhill Collieries</td>
<td>1,510</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>International Coal</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>1,020</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glyncorrwg</td>
<td>North Rhondda Coll.</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garw</td>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trane</td>
<td>Powell Duffryn</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ffaldau</td>
<td>Cory Brothers</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Collieries situated in other topographical locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colliery</th>
<th>Owners</th>
<th>Numbers Employed 1939</th>
<th>Numbers Employed 1927</th>
<th>Number of Strikes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambrian</td>
<td>Powell Duffryn</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cwm (Llantwit)</td>
<td>Powell Duffryn</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duffryn Rhondda</td>
<td>Powell Duffryn</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(in 1947)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryn</td>
<td>Baldwins</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penlyngwent</td>
<td>Cory Brothers</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parc</td>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bute Merthyr</td>
<td>Ocean (United Nat)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glamorgan</td>
<td>Powell Duffryn</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Formerly owned by Welsh Associated Collieries.
2. Formerly owned by Great Western Colliery.
3. Formerly owned by Ffaldau Collieries.

Information gathered from W.J. Anthony-Jones, op. cit.; "Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory", 1947; and a 2½ inch O.S. Map of South Wales.
The most remarkable feature of Table 1 is the comparatively limited number of owners involved; of the eighteen pits listed, fourteen belong to just four coal "combine" companies: Glenavon Garw (2 pits), Cory (3 pits), Ocean and United National (4 pits) and Powell Duffryn (5 pits). One other, Fernhill, was part of the Sir John Beynon "ghost" combine\(^{43}\) and Bryn colliery was owned by Baldwins whose main financial interests lay in steel-making. This left only two pits, International and Glyncorrwg, which could be said to have belonged to "small" owners.\(^{44}\)

Another consistent feature of the pits listed is their size; by S. Wales standards, all of them, barring Trane, Glyncorrwg and Bute Merthyr, were large pits. The average numbers employed in the central steam-coal area, it will be remembered, were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Average Number of Men per Pit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maesteg Area</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhondda Area</td>
<td>569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdare Area</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was very little marked differential in size between the workforce of the average "blind-end" pit and that of the average pit listed as being located elsewhere. (The sizes of workforces varied considerably during the period 1927-1939; see comparisons of 1927 and 1939 in Table One, above.) However, the variations suffered by the pits listed in Table One, are consistent with the variations suffered during the same period by pits right across

\(^{43}\) See Appendix Two.

\(^{44}\) See Chapter 7, Ftn. 24 for data concerning the ratio of "combines" to "independents".

\(^{45}\) See Chapter 10, pp.
the coalfield. Also, the variations almost never serve to shift
the listed pits out of their approximate size-category. Thus,
although Cambrian colliery suffered a loss of 700 jobs between
1927 and 1939, it nevertheless remained, by South Wales stan-
dards, a large - above average - sized undertaking. The varia-
tions suffered by the pits in list (a), Table One, are roughly
consistent to those suffered in list (b).

"Blind-enders" accounted for 24 of the central steam-coal sector's
70 operative pits (or working-groups of pits) in 1946.46 A com-
parison of these figures with those obtaining for 1973/74 shows
that, of the central steam-coal sector's remaining 19 pits, 7
were "blind-enders" - in other words, the proportion of "blind-
enders" to all other pits in the sector had risen during the
first two and a half decades of nationalisation.47 The comparison
indicates that the "blind-end" pits held prospects for continuing
future production which were at least as bright as those of pits
situated in other types of locations in the central sector.

46. "Working groups" refers to geographical conglomerations of
pits, e.g. there were three Fernhill pits (Nos. 1, 2 and 4)
working more or less as a unit in 1946. For present pur-
poses, this conglomeration is referred to as Fernhill Colli-
ery - i.e. one pit. The NCB listed, in 1946, 25 working
colleries in the Maesteg Area (of which some 10 were
"blind-enders"), 27 in the Rhondda Area (some 8 "blind-
enders") and 18 in the Aberdare Area (some 3 "blind-enders").
Information from "Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory",
1947.
47. 1946: "blind-enders" account for approximately 30% of all
sector's pits.
1973: "blind-enders" account for approximately 37% of all
sector's pits.
These figures exclude Mardy which was operative in 1973,
but not in 1946.
There is not enough information however, to prove that enhanced or relatively secure employment prospects were sufficient to encourage the workforces of the "blind-end" pits to risk backing up their demands with industrial action where, had they been working in pits more vulnerable to closure, they might otherwise have held back.

The "economic viability" of a pit is no easy thing to measure, nor, when it is measured, is it consistent with standards of "viability" as they are understood in other areas. Thus, if pits were measured merely in terms of the OMS achieved by their workforces, then most pits which were considered "viable" in South Wales would undoubtedly have appeared to any Nottingham coal owner to be candidates for early closure. "Viability" can depend, not only upon market outlets, productivity and efficiency, it can also depend upon a pit's hidden potential - its untapped reserves of coal.

These were some of the variables which the big private companies naturally took into account during the 1930s. Like the Coal Board after them, they were prepared to close or to reduce in size large numbers of pits in which individual productivity was relatively high but which were poor candidates for the investment of large amounts of capital, owing to their limited reserves of workable coal. The "militant" pits listed in Table 1 belonged, for the most part, to big, "rationalising" companies like Powell Duffryn - companies prone to weeding-out the less promising units which they acquired as they expanded. The large mines in their
possession which remained in production by the late 1930s remained so for good economic reasons, not the least of which was the promise contained within the pits' reserves. To suppose that mineworkers were insensitive enough not to interpret large investment in their pits as an indication of their employers' intentions to continue production for a number of years following would be to regard all miners as idiots.

The employees of the "blind-enders" would, undoubtedly, have been aware of their relatively favoured position and it is hardly fanciful to assume that, buoyed-up by such knowledge and all else being equal, they would be more likely to risk participating in industrial action than would workers who were confronted daily with the gloomy prospect of the closure of their places of work. Such an assumption would go some way towards explaining the strike-proneness of the "blind-end" pits - all of which, with the exception of Glengarw and Trane, survived the first twenty years of public ownership.

Of the ten pits listed in Table 1 (a), however, only three possessed productivity averages which were above the average for pits in the central sector in 1946/47:

* It must, of course, be remembered that the closure of collieries after nationalisation - and increasingly after 1958 - became complicated for the owners as a result, firstly, of the immediate post-war fuel shortage and secondly, as a result of the successive pledges which were given by central government that it would prevent, by the maintenance of full employment, a return to the kind of social distress provoked by the closures and slumps of the inter-war period.
Table 2

The Approximate Average Annual Tonnage per Mineworker in 1946/47

(produced in those "blind-end" pits which experienced more than five strikes during the period 1927 - 1939)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colliery</th>
<th>Approx. Total Annual Tonnage 1946/47</th>
<th>Approx. Average Annual Tonnage per Mineworker</th>
<th>Above or Below Central Sector Average (256.5 tons per annum)</th>
<th>Mine Closed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glengarw</td>
<td>113,500</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyndham</td>
<td>220,000</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenrhondda</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernhill</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>112,400</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>225,000</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glynoorrgw</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garw</td>
<td>127,500</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trane</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ffaldau</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 calculated from returns in "Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory", List of Coal Mines, 1947.
If an accurate measurement is to be made of the influence of troubled industrial relations upon production at these pits, then such productivity figures as those included in Table 2 must be examined within the geological and developmental context of each pit at specific times. However, it is possible to state that the figures in Table 2 add meat to widespread allegations that there existed amongst the workers of the "blind-enders" a tendency to fight harder in defence of their existing powers of "job-control" (or "custom and practice") than was generally possible at pits with less hopeful economic prospects. One undermanager complained, for example, that as late as 1975, the Lodge Committee of Fernhill was "obstinately" defending the continued practice by its members of the Seniority Rule - despite the fact that it was obvious that the continuation of this practice was one of the chief causes of the poor showing which Fernhill made when its productivity figures were compared with those achieved by the miners of the non-"blind-ender", Tower Colliery, to which Fernhill was physically linked as a production unit.48

He explained Fernhill's retention of the Seniority Rule as stemming, not from any particular topographical feature, nor from any variable concerned with pit size or production technique, but from the subversive influence of "Communists .... like George Rees ...." an influence which was, as he put it, "traditionally more acceptable" in Fernhill than it was at Tower.49 It is an

49. George Rees is now General Secretary of the SWNUM.
explanation which begs a number of important questions concerning the adequacy of any attempt to explain away, in environmentally deterministic terms, the decisions and actions of any particular workforce. The case of Fernhill provides proof enough that it is not sufficient to examine a map and thereby to assume that because a pit is located at the head of a "blind" valley its workforce will necessarily have been recruited from the pit's immediate vicinity and, moreover, that it would have been a workforce which was geographically sheltered from the same political influences as those which played over the workforces of pits further downstream. Indeed, at Fernhill it would appear that the reverse was the truth - that far from serving to shelter the workforce, the surrounding hillsides turned the political gusts in upon themselves so that they penetrated every nook and cranny of pit business. The Fernhill/Tower undermanager who blamed the "Communists" for Fernhill's poor performance explained that such influences were largely absent from the Tower-side - on account of the fact that Tower's "Communist militants" had "probably been cleared out", prior to nationalisation, by the pit's old owners, Powell Duffryn.

Environmentally, there can have been few pits in S. Wales more favourably located than was Tower to receive maximum exposure to any political influences which may have drifted into the coalfield. It was immediately adjacent to the anthracite sector, drew part of its workforce from the Aberdare Valley and part from the Merthyr Valley and yet its industrial relations record up to the early 1950s was distinguished only by the absence of serious confrontations.
To attribute this to the open, or "cosmopolitan", make-up of Tower's workforce, one would be forced to ignore the fact that the Lodge of Tower's immediate neighbour (Tirherbert Colliery, which drew its membership from the same catchment area as Tower) enjoyed a reputation for efficiency and organisation far more distinguished than that enjoyed by the Tower Lodge. Yet Tirherbert had been subject to the same managerial techniques and practices as had Tower; both had been owned by Powell Duffryn.

This "difference" appears to date back to the early 1930s when there was a partially successful attempt to introduce a branch of the S. Wales Miners Industrial Union - the so-called "non-political" or "company" union - into Tower. Members of the Tirherbert Lodge viewed the development as an indication that management were aware that Tower contained considerable numbers of employees who were indifferent in their attitudes to trade union matters. And, despite the fact that the Tower men overcame the challenge posed by company unionism, this impression survived to a degree to which it conceivably could have helped determine, albeit in a rather mysterious fashion, the type of miner who consequently sought employment at the pit. They were, said one ex-Tirherbert worker, ".... not always very up in union matters".50

Shelving, for a moment, this subjective assessment, there are two main alternative explanations for Tower's comparative "quiescence". Firstly, it may have been the case that the pit's managers succeeded in cultivating particularly friendly relation-

ships with their employees. This does not however, appear to have been the case; an examination of the surviving correspondence between Tower Lodge and the Miners' Executive indicates that there existed amongst the pit's rank-and-file a great deal of animosity and frustration at the way in which Powell Duffryn administered proceedings. There is no evidence however, of there having taken place at the pit the kind of blatant purge of active trade-unionists which occurred, for example at Powell Duffryn's Gadylys Colliery, three miles downstream of Tower.

Secondly, earnings and conditions at the pit may have been of a sufficiently high standard to promote contentment amongst employees; though again, there seems to be little surviving evidence to substantiate this supposition. Interviews with ex-miners from Tower and Tirherbert indicate that earnings and conditions at both pits differed little, one from another. Neither were methods of production radically different: both pits employed mechanical cutters combined with hand-filling up until the early 1950s.

Presented with such inconclusive evidence, it is necessary to look elsewhere for possible reasons to explain the behaviour and reputations of these workforces. The "anomalies" evident at Fernhill, Tirherbert and Tower repeat themselves whenever comparisons are attempted of pits or groups of pits right-across the coalfield. Almost nowhere is it possible to attribute a particular workforce's brand of trade-unionism to some kind of introverted

51. SWMF Correspondence, Tower envelope, U.C.S.
52. See, above, Chapters 3 and 4.
geographical isolationism.

We have seen how the "blind-end" pits attracted miners from fairly distant communities; an examination of coalfield migration figures emphasises that this tendency was common to most South Wales pits, so much so in fact, that it becomes clear that by the 1930s, few pits were recruiting their workforces from single villages or towns and that this was especially the case in the broad central sector of the field.

By 1936, in every Exchange area within the coalfield, a considerable proportion of miners lived beyond walking distance of their work. The numbers and percentages of those walking or cycling to work, as compared with those who travelled by bus or train in the broad central sector are shown in Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year: 1936</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exchange area in which collieries are situated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merthyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treharris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferndale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontypridd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treorchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonypandy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cymmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maesteg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Steam etc. Area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Anthracite Area)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* In the Aberdare figures men and boys employed at the Powell Duffryn Washery, power station and engineering works are excluded.
The total number of miners travelling to work were probably even higher than Table 3 suggests; possibly as high as 45 - 50,000 in the coalfield as a whole. The increase in numbers travelling coincided, of course, with the overall adjustment in the actual siting of major centres of production - an adjustment which, as we have seen in Chapter One, was provoked by the market slump. In other words, great numbers of men were forced to find work at non-local pits at a time of acute economic depression and job insecurity and at a time when the miners' union was at its lowest ebb in terms of prestige and effectiveness.

It is little wonder, then, that suspicion and even hostility accompanied their arrival at their new pits. Questions were asked: Did the Dowlais men bring with them the seeds of company unionism? Did the Aberdare men transmit to the Aberpergwm miners a despondency cultivated under years of Powell Duffryn management? Did they bring with them trouble in the form of "Bolshie" agitators?

What occurred in the 1930s and '40s was a great shuffle of the workforce which was only temporarily interrupted by the war and the post-war fuel shortage. Any insularity of outlook which may have survived the events of 1925/26 at individual pits must surely have suffered grievous assault during these decades. Within the anthracite area - supposedly the most fertile ground for the breeding of "isolationist" lodges - the tendency by the mid-'Thirties was towards the development of large collieries with

54. Ibid.
55. See, above, Part One.
modern equipment. The Vale of Neath (in the east of the anthracite field) and the environs of Tumble (in the west of the anthracite field) provided the seams and the pits to which were drawn men from smaller and more scattered mining units. Similarly, in the Clydach area there was, during the 1930s, a progressive increase in mining employment whilst further up the Swansea Valley, in the area around Pontardawe, there was a steady decrease.

This ebb and flow of mining labour appears to have made little or no difference however, to the near universal retention of the Seniority Rule and other, pronounced, examples of custom and practice in the anthracite pits. It was in these pits that these particular forms of "job-control" survived longest in South Wales, but there are few, if any, obvious explanations forthcoming as to why this should be so. No explanations emerge, for example, from any analyses one cares to make concerning the physical nature of the anthracite pits and communities. In Chapter 10, pp.25-26, it is argued that no watertight correlation existed between pit size and efficiency of production, though there existed a tendency for the larger pits to be amongst the most productive. A comparison of strike records and pit statistics makes it equally clear that there was no direct correlation between pit size and the prone-ness of workforces to strike.

Of the twenty anthracite mines which experienced more than five strikes between 1927 and 1939, twelve possessed workforces more numerous than the average for the anthracite area and eight were of average size or smaller.56

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56. Comparisons compiled by correlating Table 2, p.203 (above) with Table 1, appendix E, W.J. Anthony-Jones, op.cit. The average sizes of workforce are calculated from the returns listed in the "Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory" Vols. 1928, 1931, 1936, 1939 & 1946. For the
Of the twenty anthracite mines which experienced more than five strikes between 1927 and 1939, twelve possessed workforces more numerous than the average for the anthracite area and eight were of average size or smaller.56

There was, on the other hand, a more direct - though not unexpected - correlation between strike-proneness and low productivity: Of the twenty most strike-prone anthracite pits listed, two (Onllwyn and Abercrave/International) were counted amongst those with the highest productivity records and five (Tareni, Maerdy, East, Gellicoidrim and Ammanford) were amongst those with the lowest.

Virtually no correlation exists, however, between the anthracite workforce's strike prone-ness and the location and size of its mining communities. The communities of the eastern part of the anthracite field for example, resembled the communities of the mid-steam-coal valleys in appearance more closely than they did the communities of the valleys to the west. The rows of company-built terraced housing in the Dulais Valley present a very different prospect to the more spacious, frontier-like clusters of owner-occupied "villas" and spec-built semis of the Upper Amman and Twrch Valleys to the west.

56. Comparisons compiled by correlating Table 2, p.203(above) with Table 1, appendix E, W.J. Anthony-Jones, op. cit. The average sizes of workforces are calculated from the returns listed in the "Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory" Vols. 1928, 1931, 1936, 1939 and 1946. For the purposes of this comparison, the Abercrave and International collieries are counted as one productive unit.
The valleys of the Tawe, Clydach, Amman and Gwendraeth rivers supported as wide a range of communities as was to be found anywhere on the coalfield. Pontardawe and Clydach, for example, were large enough to be called towns and both contained established metal-working industries as did a number of other anthracite-mining communities. Llandybie, Tumble and Pontyberem had been, until the turn of the century, little more than agricultural villages situated in the rolling countryside of south-eastern Carmarthenshire, whilst Ystradgynlais, Seven Sisters and Gwaun-cae-gurwen had mushroomed from mere scatterings of farmhouses into industrial settlements of considerable dimensions.

The topographical locations of strike-prone pits were as various as were the sizes and types of communities. Tareni, for example, was located halfway up the populous Tawe (Swansea) Valley at Godre'r graig and recruited its workforce from the towns of Ystalyfera (to the north) and Pontardawe (to the south). The Gwaun-cae-gurwen mines, located on the watersheds of the Clydach, Twrch and Amman rivers, drew their workforces, not only from the village itself but from nearby Garnant and Brynamman, and, further afield, from the upper Swansea Valley and from Ammanford. Brynhennllys Colliery, on the other hand, enjoyed a strike record second only to that of Tareni but was located in the largely uninhabited northern arm of the Twrch Valley and drew its workforce almost exclusively from the villages of Cwmllynfell and Upper-Cwmtwrch.

The correlations obtaining in the anthracite field between, on the one hand, a pit's size, productivity and location, and on the other, the propensity of its workforce to take strike action, were perhaps even less predictable than were those which obtained in the steam-coal field. In the latter, it was at least possible to assume that an economically buoyant "blind-end" pit would be marginally more strike-prone than would a pit with less promising economic prospects located say, halfway down an economically depressed valley. As we shall see in Chapter 13, however, anthracite militancy had little to do with economic prospects and even less to do with topographical location.

The other popular "explanation" for the high incidence of strikes in this area - the allegedly high rate of house ownership — is examined in the following section in terms of its relationship with the state of house ownership right across the coalfield.

58. This was a principal explanation employed as late as April, 1978, for example, by Roy Davies at the Llafur-Wales TUC Weekend School in his paper, "Anthracite Miners". 
Miners Owning their Own Homes

The correlation between home ownership and the propensity of the owner to take industrial action is a complex one. The incidence of miners owning their homes varies quite dramatically from area to area. This is clearly illustrated in Table 1, p. 216 where the percentage of mining home-ownership is seen to be as low as 5% in the Rhondda and as high as 60% in Ammanford to the west. Both were militant areas. On the other hand, although 45% of Rhymney miners owned their own houses, they were relatively quiescent in matters concerning industrial relations, unlike the miners of Neath and its environs where only 5% were owner-occupiers but where "unofficial" militancy reached its most sophisticated post-war form.

Similarly, areas with roughly equal percentages of miners who owned their own residences managed, nevertheless, to house workforces which expressed their grievances and demands in very different ways. Thus, we discover that the workers who belonged to the "moderate" Lodges of the Gelligaer pits (Ogilvie, Groesfaen, Bargoed, Elliot, Britannia and Penallta) contained amongst their ranks the same percentage of owner-occupiers as was found amongst the more vocal and militant ranks of their Rhondda brethren.

(See Table 4)

There are instances where the correlation is more obvious however. An unwary researcher might, for example, seize with relish upon the comparison afforded by Pontardawe and Merthyr. Pontardawe, with its unspeakably strike-prone pits at Gwaun-cae-gurwen and
Table 4

Particulars of Houses Occupied by Mineworkers living in Local Authority Areas, 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Estimated number of houses occupied by mineworkers in local authority area.</th>
<th>Number of owner-occupied houses. (percentage or actual figure)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhymney U.D.C.</td>
<td>1,500 to 2,000</td>
<td>45 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gellygaer U.D.C.</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>14 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merthyr County Borough</td>
<td>3,257</td>
<td>5 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontypridd U.D.C.</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>5 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhondda U.D.C.</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>16 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Ash U.D.C.</td>
<td>5,240</td>
<td>7(\frac{1}{2}) per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdare U.D.C.</td>
<td>3,250</td>
<td>20 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maesteg U.D.C.</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>33(\frac{1}{2}) per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neath Town Council</td>
<td>3,48</td>
<td>4 houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neath Rural District</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>5 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ystradgynlais R.D.C.</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>50 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontardawe R.D.C.</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>50 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammanford U.D.C.</td>
<td>300-1,000</td>
<td>60 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5  
Particulars of Houses Owned by Colliery Companies in 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colliery Company</th>
<th>Number of men employed as at 193.45.</th>
<th>Number of Houses owned by the Compy</th>
<th>Number of Houses occupied by miners employed by the company</th>
<th>Number of Houses occupied by other Colliery Companies in Column 3</th>
<th>Number of Houses occupied by persons outside of the mining industry in Column 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Monmouthshire &amp; Eastern Field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaenavon Company Limited</td>
<td>1,844</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancaster's Steam Coal Colls.</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Vipond &amp; Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partridge Jones &amp; John Paton Ltd.</td>
<td>9,874</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tredegar Iron &amp; Coal Ltd.</td>
<td>6,524</td>
<td>1,244</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Central Steam Field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff Collieries Ltd.</td>
<td>1,532</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowlais Collieries Ltd.</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean &amp; United National</td>
<td>11,540</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwins Limited</td>
<td>1,763</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pernhill Colls. Ltd.</td>
<td>1,263</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glanavan Garw Colls. Ltd.</td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North's Navigation</td>
<td>2,493</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Rhondda Colliery Ltd.</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Wales Coalite</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Navigation Steam</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powell Duffryn</td>
<td>34,740</td>
<td>6,171</td>
<td>2,731</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3,362 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of these houses are occupied by employees of P.D. not engaged in Coal Mining; e.g. Brickworks and Tarplant.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Coke</th>
<th>Anthracite</th>
<th>Other Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evans &amp; Bevan Limited</td>
<td>3,256</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. &amp; B.G. Colls. (Lougher)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graigola Merthyr &amp; Co.</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swansea Navigation</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendy Merthyr Coll.</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abercave &amp; International</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.L. Clay &amp; Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cwmgerarch &amp; Empire</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Anthracite</td>
<td>12,338</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Fuel and Power, Appendix VII of "Regional Survey Report" 1946, p. 216

(Information supplied to Ministry of Fuel and Power by colliery companies).
Tareni, registered a very high 50% owner-occupation of mining residences in 1945, whilst the downtrodden Lodges of Merthyr represented a workforce, only 5% of which owned their own houses. Taken in isolation, one could argue a case which would seek to prove that the higher the percentage of owner-occupation, the more independent from the influence of company management were the owner-workers and the more ready were they, as a result, to back up their industrial demands with strike action. This is an argument posed quite often by ex-miners as it fits in nicely with the popular theory that a major contributing factor to ineffective trade unionism was the tied cottage or company-owned residence.

The most effective challenge to this theory is offered by juxtaposing the style of industrial relations favoured by the anthracite miners of the Neath area — most of whom rented their houses — with the relative quiescence of the home-owning miners of Rhymney. The theory's best defence, on the other hand, is supplied by the fact that home ownership was highest amongst three of the best-organised districts in the coalfield: the anthracite areas around Ystradgynlais, Pontardawe and Ammanford. But here again, the Neath anthracite miners provide an exception to the rule, for they too, were extremely well-organized.

The largest employer of mining labour in the Neath Rural District up until nationalisation was the Evans and Bevan mining company whose operations centred upon the Dulais Valley. Amongst colliery companies which owned large numbers of houses, Evans and Bevan-owned a higher proportion of their employee's residences than any
other company. (See Table 5, pp. 217-218). Table 6, below, lists those central and western companies in order of ownership priority, i.e., the top of the list being occupied by the company which owned the highest proportion of its employees' residences (of those companies which owned large numbers of houses).

Table 6
The Proportion of Company Employees' Housing which was owned By The Company in 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Number of men employed as at 19.3.45.</th>
<th>Number of houses owned by company occupied by miners employed by the company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evans &amp; Bevan Ltd.</td>
<td>3,256 WEST</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tredegar Iron &amp; Coal Ltd.</td>
<td>6,524 EAST</td>
<td>941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaenavon Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>1,844 EAST</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernhill Colls. Ltd.</td>
<td>1,263 CENTRAL</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partridge Jones &amp; John Paton</td>
<td>9,874 EAST</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powell Duffryn</td>
<td>34,740 CENTRAL</td>
<td>2,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancaster' Steam Coal</td>
<td>2,900 EAST</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean &amp; United Nat.</td>
<td>11,540 CENTRAL</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Anthracite</td>
<td>12,338 WEST</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the companies listed in Table 6, Evans & Bevan, Fernhill, Ocean and Amalgamated Anthracite each employed a workforce with a traditionally high propensity to strike or to take other forms of industrial action in backing up its demands. Yet none of these companies displays any marked similarity in terms of its potential ability to influence its employees by means of extra-industrial pressures as landlords.

It is important to point out however, that the Evans & Bevan company was almost unique in its position as an important housing landlord on the anthracite field. Table 6 illustrates this very clearly, for the company's only serious rival in this respect was the Amalgamated Anthracite company whose proportionally small number of owned residences was scattered across a relatively wide area of the western field. The houses owned by Evans & Bevan, on the other hand, were for the greatest part situated within the communities of the Dulais Valley.

Any comparison of this nature would have to take such complexities into account - complexities which would be compounded still further by the problems posed by having to come to terms with the enormous variety of relationship existing between employer and employed, or landlord and tenant, within these communities.

The employees of Evans & Bevan, for example, do not seem to have regarded their employers in the same light as the Amalgamated Anthracite employees regarded theirs. For although the Evans & Bevan company had over the years swallowed up a number of rival coal concerns in the Dulais Valley (see Appendix 2) and although it ranked amongst the largest of Welsh companies, its employees long continued to identify it as a "family business". Amalgamated Anthracite, on the other hand, was a company controlled by individuals who appeared to their employees as being increasingly remote from the actual business of mining; more akin, in

fact, to the controllers of the great companies which operated to the east, like Powell Duffryn. 60

Not so Evans & Bevan. To the end, they nurtured within the communities of the Dulais Valley an image of themselves as benevolent paternalists: hard but fair taskmasters who appear to have identified closely with the communal sense of pride and achievement which accompanied the business of mining in this valley as in most other valleys. 61

Despite these differences, however, rank-and-file militancy in the Dulais Valley rarely lagged behind that obtaining in the areas controlled by the Amalgamated Anthracite company. Indeed, one is tempted, almost, to argue that the trade union consciousness of the Dulais workmen was sharpened, rather than dulled, by the high incidence of company-owned housing. Using Marxist rhetoric, it could be argued that the employers controlled not only the exploitation of their employees' labour power but that they extended this control into non-industrial spheres and that, in doing so, they multiplies greatly the number of instances where links might be forged in the minds of the employees between previously unrelated grievances and the employer/landlord.

In such a situation, bad company-housing and high rents could well exacerbate unrest caused by low wages. But company houses in the Dulais Valley appear to have compared favourably with

60. See Appendix 2.
61. Recording of John Powell, op. cit., Chris Evans, op. cit.
those owned by colliery companies in other valleys\textsuperscript{62} - as did the rents and the wages.\textsuperscript{63} One is forced to look elsewhere, in the case of the employees of Evans & Bevan, to account for their propensity to take industrial action.

Similar problems arise if one attempts to compare the influence upon the workforce of colliery-owned housing in the central (steam) district. For example, both the Fernhill and Glengarw companies employed workforces which, during the 1930s and '40s, had displayed formidable resolution in their defence of trade union rights and in their promotion of improved conditions and wages. The workforces of both companies were roughly equal in size, but the number of houses owned by the Fernhill company and rented by Fernhill workers was proportionally well over twice that number owned by Glengarw and rented by Glengarw workers.\textsuperscript{64}

Both workforces displayed a higher propensity to strike however, than did the employees of the Cardiff Colliery company at Llanbradach and those of Baldwins' company at Aberbaiden and Port Talbot - despite the fact that both the Cardiff and Baldwins' companies owned and rented to their employees far fewer houses than did the Fernhill and Glengarw companies.

Conversely, although the Ocean company owned and rented to its employees far fewer houses (proportionally as well as numerically) than did Powell Duffryn to its employees, the Ocean workforce


\textsuperscript{63} Recording of John Powell, op. cit., and David Francis, op. cit; Chris Evans op. cit.

\textsuperscript{64} See Table 5, p. 217. "Glengarw" is a shortened version of Glenavon Garw.
nevertheless enjoyed the kind of deserved reputation for effective trade unionism largely denied to the workers of Powell Duffryn. But, as we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, the reasons for the relative "quiescence" of the Powell Duffryn workers had little to do with house ownership but a great deal to do with the repressive industrial practices adopted by Powell Duffryn management during a period of acute economic depression.

The inconsistencies which arise from these comparisons indicate that there are no simple correlations to be drawn between, on the one hand, the propensity of workforces to adopt strike action and on the other, the sizes and locations of their pits, their rates of work-productivity and their status as house-holders. If the Rhymney miner was less prone to revert to strike action than was his Dulais Valley counterpart, it was due more to the particular nature of the industrial legacy which he inherited from the 1930s, than it was to any chance combination of pit statistics and map references. For, whilst the relative stability of the anthracite coal market had enabled the Dulais Valley miner to retain use of such proven defences as that provided by the Seniority Rule, the Rhymney miner had suffered the twin burdens of mass unemployment and Powell Duffryn management — a combination which served to stunt the growth of even the most "constitutional" forms of trade union activity; so much so, in fact, that it tended to focus the hopes of the Rhymney miner more upon the possibilities of obtaining relief from his predicament through parliamentary legislation than upon the possibilities of obtaining relief through the actions of his union. This was clearly illustrated, time and again during the decade following
the election of the first post-war Labour Government. At coalfield
delegate conferences, it invariably would be the representatives
of the Rhymney and Monmouthshire Lodges who would provide the
backbone of support for "Labourite" resolutions and the most
consistent opposition to resolutions drafted by those amongst
the Communists who sought to embarrass the Labour Government
and the Government's most loyal supporters on the mineworkers'
executive.

Parliamentarianism never achieved such primacy amongst the an-
thracite miners. Relatively stable employment and the continued
existence of the Seniority Rule helped maintain their confidence
in the Lodge (though not necessarily in the union) and there
persisted amongst them beliefs and assumptions which were more
akin to syndicalism than to social democracy. Bill Paynter,
recalling the many skirmishes which he fought out with the un-
official leaders of the anthracite Lodges during his presidency,
stressed the role played in that part of the coalfield by the
most celebrated advocate of what might best be termed "South
Wales syndicalism", Nun Nicholas: native of Clydach, conscientious
objector, anarchist, long-time Daren Colliery checkweighman and
NCIC teacher:

".... one of the influences on Lodge leadership,
especially amongst those who had attended classes,
was Nun Nicholas. Dai Dan Evans (and others) att-
tended his classes and knew him very well. He was
a teacher who poured contempt upon political in-
stitutions. To a very large extent; the essence
of his teaching .... was syndicalist: power was
with the masses, power was with the industrial
workers in the trade union movement .... To a very
large extent, I would say that the outlook in the anthracite field ... was influenced by that kind of teaching and they saw their industrial power as the real power - in relation to the employers and in relation to the State ...

"Dai Dan, who was one of Nun Nicholas's students, described Parliament as a "sewerbed". They despised Parliament; they did not regard it as a source of power and to some extent they are very correct in that I believe". 65

Paynter attributed to this "syndicalism" two tendencies which distinguished the anthracite miners from the great majority of their brothers to the east. The first was the more obvious of the two: namely, an extraordinarily stubborn resolve to defend pit custom and practice - a resolve which grew out of a desire to maintain as much "job-control" as was possible at the point of production. The second was a corollary of the first. It argued that the consistency and persistence of this resolve - especially after the election of the first post-war Labour Government and the subsequent nationalisation of the mines - constituted a clear indication of the absence amongst anthracite Lodges of the kind of unerring loyalty to the Labour Party which so often characterised the political behaviour of a great many of the eastern Lodges.


Paynter was quick to add, however, that in his opinion, "... when you come into the field of custom and practice you are leaving politics ... It's part of a way of life; it's almost like a principle of religion and particularly in the anthracite. I'll go as far as saying that, in my opinion, a lot of their attitudes to custom and practice became a sort of fetish attitude ... You couldn't justify it in relation to the changes that were taking place in the industry (during the 1950s) and, indeed, they had to modify it". Recorded in London, March 1977.

It is important to add here, that this alleged "deficiency" of concern for the politics of Westminster was sometimes interpreted by the "politicos" of the central lodges as proof of the parochialism of anthracite pit politics.

This attitude was echoed recently (Dec. 1978) at a coalfield conference, organised to discuss the proposed closures of the Deep Duffryn and Fernhill collieries. During a long, rambling and generally irrelevant speech by an anthracite delegate, a young left-wing committee man from the Rhondda's Mardy lodge turned to a fraternal delegate, Dr. Hywel Francis and asked, "Where's this bloke from?" Francis replied "Cwmtrwch". "Aye", said the Mardy man, "and his politics are bloody Cwmtrwch too ... the old bobah". (aunty in Welsh)
This "independence" continued after the fall of the Labour Government and reflected itself in the marked antipathy which militant anthracite Lodges displayed towards the TUC's line of "peaceful-coexistence" with Churchill's Government. Their local target was Paynter's South Wales Miners' Executive which found itself in the unenviable position of having to carry-out the directives passed down to it by Lawther's pro-TUC National Executive. Paynter, for his part, emphasised, time and again, the need for "unity" amongst all S. Wales miners; but to many of the anthracite militants (and, increasingly in the early 1950s, to many of the steam-coal militants) "unity" did not encompass the forfeiture of pit customs and practices and the closure of collieries - even when such gestures were part and parcel of their union's policy of making concrete its support for the TUC's line of "peaceful-coexistence" with the Conservatives.

The relative political "independence" implicit within many of the unofficial stoppages and "alternative leaderships" organised by the anthracite militants provided a rallying point for large numbers of those upon the coalfield who discovered that "peaceful coexistence" stuck in their craws. We have seen, for example, how the Shakespeare Hotel group managed to forestall the Coal Board's planned closure of Wern Tarw Colliery and how the unofficial movements of the Dulais and lower-Swansea Valleys appeared increasingly ready to lend their services to disputes in the central steam-coal sector. The winter of 1951/52 saw unofficial strikers at Fernhill approach the Shakespeare Hotel group for support and receive it.66 Another Rhondda Lodge, Parc & Dare, received sim-

66. See, above, p. 175.
ilar support from the so-called "Dulais Valley Minority Movement" during a strike directed against the Conservative Government's cuts in public spending in February, 1952. These incidents were merely two of the more serious to occur during a winter of disruption which brought little comfort to the advocates of the union's official policies of cooperation.

The Spring of 1952 however, saw a temporary lull in the activities of the unofficial groupings. Saturday shift-working continued uninterrupted in the coalfield until May when a custom and practice dispute at the Bwllfa pits provoked a sympathy strike by some 5,000 Aberdare Valley miners and the threat of further supportive action by 3,500 of their Dulais Valley brethren who declared their readiness to strike "unless the local union executive supports the men at Bwllfa".

The miners' executive duly negotiated with the Board and the latter backed down on the disputed principle; the Dulais threats were withdrawn and 5,000 miners returned to work. The showdown did little to boost the confidence of the executive; indeed, it provoked its members to issue a fresh series of declarations condemning a whole range of unofficial actions and special criticism was reserved for the continuing existence of organisations such as that centred upon the Shakespeare Hotel. Paynter, at a hastily organised Coalfield Delegate Conference, persuaded his members to order that such organisation "disband immediately".

67. Ibid., p.174.
68. C.G., 8.5.52.
One observer, reporting upon the Conference, reminded his readers that these organisations had been active in the boycott of Saturday work and that "... much political agitation lies behind them". 69

Not content merely with issuing condemnations however, Bill Paynter employed a tactic which (as we have seen) both he and Horner had used previously and with some success. It involved out-maneuvering the "unofficials" by publicly advocating demands and claims far-reaching enough to define both himself and his elected Executive Committee as "militant" in comparison with executives from other areas of the country. Moreover, he chose the claims very carefully before publicizing them for, inevitably, they served to provide a contrast to the often-sectarian claims of the coal-field's unofficial strikers. Thus it was that Paynter, was early on associated with efforts to secure a wholesale re-grading of positions and tasks below ground and with efforts to introduce a simplified day-wage payments system which would nullify the divisive and harmful effects which piece-working tended to inflict upon workforce unity. In late May, for example, he told an audience of Bargoed miners that S. Wales would not be satisfied with putting forward a demand for an increase of £1 per week as had been advocated by the union's national executive. The miners, he argued, had suffered a reduction of 12/- a week in real wages since 1947 and he warned that the "period of peaceful progress is coming to an end .... we are now facing a situation in which we have to defend the improvements and reforms secured in the last four or five years". 70

69. Ibid., 15.5.52.
70. Western Mail, 25.5.52.
Many miners, he alleged, were being obliged to work overtime "to get a living wage" and were losing the social benefit of the five day week. Moving on to deal with what he referred to as "recent criticisms" concerning the use of the industrial weapon for political aims, he informed his audience that such tactics were "nothing new": trade unions had always engaged in some form of industrial actions for political objectives, he said, because so many reforms were dependent upon legislation. But he went on to warn his audience that that did not mean the union should suddenly embark upon strikes - despite the fact that the membership was entitled to call upon the trade unions to determine a policy of resistance to any government actions which had the effect of depressing the standard of living or hindering vital reforms.  

His plea for "constitutional militancy" was received with uneven enthusiasm however, for whilst the previously "silent" majority tended to remain consistently silent, the only response forthcoming from Aberdare was another unofficial strike: this one provoked by the announcement of increased bus fares.

More than 2,000 miners at the Tower, Tirherbert and Bwllfa collieries stayed out for over a fortnight and so obvious was the groundswell of sympathy for them that the executive had no choice but to offer promises of support. The editor of the "Colliery Guardian", commenting upon the dispute, declared that

71. Ibid.
"There is much underground discontent in this coalfield, with agitators seeking a "showdown" and, unfortunately, the miners' leaders are siding with the malcontents. A delegate conference at Porthcawl last week delivered an "ultimatum" that unless the grievance over subsidised fares is resolved in a fortnight the conference will be recalled to consider "more effective steps" to press the demand for an all-round maximum transport cost of 5/- a week." 72

The habit of striking unofficially in support of almost every kind of demand was infectious. Within seven days of the ending of the "busfares" stoppage, a strike by 39 firemen and overmen, dissatisfied with a wage offer made to NAGODS by the Divisional Board, brought Fernhill and GLENRHONDDA to a halt. The strike spread the following day to 25 pits and, although only about 350 firemen and overmen were involved in the unofficial action, it caused management to lay off some 5,500 miners. 73

Once again, the strikers achieved their objective; they returned to work only after the Board promised "prompt and meaningful" negotiations. The lessons of their actions were not lost upon the rest of the workforce; in mid-September a thinly-veiled strike threat went forward to the National Executive of the NUM from the Swansea and Neath areas of the S. Wales miners. They were protesting against the decision of the TUC General Council to enter into a "contract" of wage restraint with the Conservative Government. Their protest alleged that the General Council had committed the miners to this agreement without the authority of the union's

72. C.G., 14.8.52.
73. Western Mail, 19.8.52.
membership - despite the fact that the miners' delegates at the TUC were parties to the decision.

The case of the Swansea and Neath miners was a weak one. As part of a democratic trade union they were fully aware that they were subject to the decisions of the union's elected leaders, and those leaders had expressed their support for the conciliatory line adopted by the TUC. The Swansea and Neath protest can hardly have been a serious attempt at influencing the policy of the NUM's leadership; it was much more by way of a warning that the militants of the Western field were extremely unhappy with the course of political events generally and especially so with the apparent lack of progress made by the NUM Executive to improve wages, to bring an end to the Saturday shift and to eradicate the necessity for excessive overtime working.

In late October, the resentment bubbled to the surface. A joint communique was issued by the revived "Splinter Movements" of nine Dulais Valley lodges and the three Cambrian Combine lodges at Clydach Vale. It announced a boycott of Saturday work in protest against the rejection by the Coal Board of the Miners' Executive's demand for an extra 30/- per week for its day-wage members. The communique, and the revival of the Movements which issued it, were denounced by the Executive as comprising a "menace to industrial peace". It was a denunciation which impressed few of the "revivalists". They organised a meeting

74. C.G., 6.11.52.
75. Ibid.
at the Shakespeare at which delegates representing some 26,000 miners agreed to recommend the banning of all overtime working until the 30/- wage increase was granted.76

Within a week, some 24 pits, including nine in the Rhondda and Aberdare areas, six in the Neath, eight in the Maesteg and one in the Swansea area, were engaged in the boycott of the Saturday shift, overtime working and some forms of piecework. By the second week in November, the boycott had been modified and whilst the ban on Saturday coalfilling continued, it was agreed to allow overtime and pieceworking to operate as normally. On November 8th, 22 pits were reported to be implementing the Saturday ban. The actual method used to spread the action from pit to pit was the distribution of unofficial circulars.77 It is recorded, for example, in the Minute Book of the Parc & Dare Lodge, that

"A circular was received from the Fernhill and Glenrhondda Joint Lodges soliciting support in their fight against the rejection of the 30/- increase by the reference Tribunal ...."78

The pits which initially imposed the ban were concentrated in the central and western-central sectors of the coalfield: eight were located in the Maesteg Area, six in the Neath Area, four in the Rhondda, three in Aberdare and one in the Swansea Area.79 By

76. Ibid.
77. The sources of the circulars which arrived at Parc & Dare were named as the "Neath Joint Lodges", the "Rhondda Joint Lodges" and the "Upper Rhondda Wages Campaign Committee". Parc & Dare Lodge Minutes, 15.11.52, U.C.S.
78. Ibid., 22-23.11.52. U.C.S.
79. Western Mail, 8.11.52.
November 15th it was reported that 55 pits were not working the Saturday shift (96 were) but that of these, only 20 were publicly stating their reason as being the rejection of the pay award. Once again, these were concentrated in the "left-wing", central sector of the field and the pits named were those with long histories of harbouring political radicals: they were, in the Rhondda: Parc and Dare, Glenrhondda, Cambrian, Brittanic, Tymawr, Gelli and Fernhill; in the Maesteg Area: Pfauldau, Penllyngwent, Werntarw and St. Johns; in Aberdare: Tower, Tiriherbert and Rhigos; in the Swansea and Neath Areas: Morlais, Daren, Dillwyn and Crynant.

These lodges rejected the resolutions drawn up at a delegate conference (called a week earlier by the S. Wales Miners' Executive Council) which sought to bring an end to the Saturday boycott. Parc and Dare for example, after being informed by their Lodge's industrial delegate, Rufus Roderick, that the conference had been ".... historic in the annals of the S. Wales coalfield", and that feelings there had been ".... of a very high character", nevertheless decided to reject the conference's resolutions and to substitute for them an alternative set of resolutions which recommended a continuance (or reintroduction) of the bans imposed upon the Saturday shift and upon overtime and piecework, and an insistence that, in future, no wage claims should go forward for compulsory arbitration by the National Tribunal.

80. Ibid., 15.11.52. Cwmcarn - a pit in the lower Ebbw Valley in Monmouthshire was also named amongst those imposing a specific Saturday ban.
81. Parc & Dare Lodge Minutes, op.cit., 9.11.52.
A general meeting of the Parc and Dare workmen decided, in addition, to tie in this action in support of their wage claim with a further demand concerning the arrangements whereby a miner who worked his full five shifts in one week was paid an additional shift's payment by way of a bonus. The NUM's proposals on this topic "did not go far enough" for the Parc and Dare men who expressed the opinion that a man should not lose the whole of his bonus if he missed one shift in a week (as per the NUM's proposals) but that he should lose only one-fifth of that bonus.82

In support of these resolutions, the Parc and Dare Lodge Committee decided immediately to post pickets at the mine entrances in order that any workman who had not heard of the decisions of the General Meeting be informed.83 A rota was drawn up, independent of the pit's management, listing which safety workers and maintenance men would be allowed to descend the shafts at weekends.84 In addition to this, the Lodge organised the pooling of all earnings over and above the basic underground rate of £7-0-6d., in order that an equal share-out of bonus earnings might take place for the duration of the ban.85 Deputations were sent to solicit support at other Lodges and delegates from Parc and Dare were invited to attend an "Inter-Valley Joint Lodges Meeting" which was held at the Shakespeare Hotel in Neath on November 28th.86

82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., 12.11.52.
85. Ibid., 16.11.52 and 19.11.52.
86. Ibid., 23-26.11.52.
Faced with such highly organised and determined opposition, Paynter responded by granting the request of the militant Lodges that a further delegate conference be called in order that the protests be amplified by combined action of Lodges right across the coalfield. For their part, the Rhondda men voted to end their boycott in lieu of the conference, adding, as they did so, a public reminder that they were being "forced" to resume working the Saturday shift in order that they might enable themselves to earn a wage sufficient to meet the increased financial demands which accompanied the approach of Christmas. 87

The conference, held on December 15th, resolved that efforts be made to persuade other British coalfields to join S. Wales in tendering 14 days' notices terminating all contracts with the NCB ".... to enforce the demand for an immediate increase in wages for all day-wage men". 88 At a further coalfield delegate conference, held on December 30th, it was reported that the Miners' national leaders had shown little enthusiasm for any form of industrial action in support of the wage claim. Rufus Roderick informed the Parc and Dare Lodge that ".... there had been a complete retreat by the National Executive on the question". 89

The N.E.C. had, in fact, advocated the "intensification" of their talks with the Coal Board for new National Rates for day-wage men - a recommendation which the Parc and Dare Lodge rejected in favour of pressing on with the tendering of strike notices. 90 The South Wales Miners' Executive met, late in January, 1953, and was in-

87. Western Mail, 1.12.52.
88. Ibid., 16.12.52.
89. Parc and Dare Lodge Minutes, 31.12.52.
90. Ibid.
formed by Paynter of the attitude of the NEC towards the possible use of industrial action in support of the wage claim. The NEC, he informed them, had abandoned the idea of the immediate institution of a new wages structure for the coal industry and had decided instead, to proceed with a claim for an immediate increase in wages for all day wage men.91

Paynter, like Horner before him, had long cherished the idea of introducing into the industry a revised wages structure which would standardise rates of payment for identical tasks performed below ground in pits in all of the country's Divisions. Such an innovation would, he believed, overcome the tendencies towards "sectionalism" which the Divisional differences encouraged. Not all of the members of the NEC shared his enthusiasm for the idea however. In those Divisions, like Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, where potential and actual bonus earnings were relatively high, there existed an understandable reticence to instigate a "stand-still" in earnings in order that other, less favourably placed, miners might catch up. The miners of Nottinghamshire, for example, had provided ample evidence, less than three decades earlier, of their limited willingness to suffer Welshmen pleading "national solidarity"; likewise, the face-workers of Northumberland and Cumberland, earning, as they did in 1953, an average of 6/-4d., per manshift, must have felt at least a degree of suspicion concerning the S. Wales proposals when they learned that the average face worker in the latter coalfield earned just 48/- per manshift.92

91. SWNUM E.C. Minutes, 28.1.53.  
92. NCB Annual Report and Accounts, 1954
Paynter's proposals were not merely a reflection of the wage frustration of those who elected him however, for S. Wales had a long and honourable tradition of leading the way in national campaigns to secure a guaranteed living wage for workers employed on non-piece rate contracts. The results are clearly illustrated below, in Table 7 which lists the approximate average earnings for the three general grades of mineworker employed by each Division in 1953. (Also listed are the differences in earnings per man-shift between faceworkers (who generally were employed upon piecework) and the grouping known as "all underground" (which includes face-workers, as well as haulage and repairmen etc., in its calculations) and the differences in earnings between "all underground" and all those working upon the surface).
Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Faceworkers</th>
<th>All Underground</th>
<th>Surface</th>
<th>All Mineworkers</th>
<th>Difference between face worker and &quot;All Underground&quot;</th>
<th>Difference between &quot;All Underground&quot; and Surface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Wales</td>
<td>48 - 0d.</td>
<td>44 - 8d.</td>
<td>32 - 10d.</td>
<td>42 - 1d.</td>
<td>3 - 4d.</td>
<td>11 - 10d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>53 - 4d.</td>
<td>47 - 2d.</td>
<td>30 - 2d.</td>
<td>43 - 5d.</td>
<td>6 - 2d.</td>
<td>17 - 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North/land &amp; C/land</td>
<td>61 - 4d.</td>
<td>51 - 6d.</td>
<td>32 - 1d.</td>
<td>46 - 9d.</td>
<td>9 - 10d.</td>
<td>19 - 5d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham</td>
<td>57 - 2d.</td>
<td>49 - 9d.</td>
<td>33 - 6d.</td>
<td>46 - 1d.</td>
<td>7 - 5d.</td>
<td>16 - 3d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire</td>
<td>59 - 5d.</td>
<td>49 - 7d.</td>
<td>32 - 8d.</td>
<td>45 - 7d.</td>
<td>9 - 10d.</td>
<td>16 - 11d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancashire</td>
<td>54 - 4d.</td>
<td>45 - 7d.</td>
<td>32 - 1d.</td>
<td>42 - 6d.</td>
<td>8 - 9d.</td>
<td>13 - 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>64 - 1d.</td>
<td>54 - 5d.</td>
<td>32 - 6d.</td>
<td>50 - 3d.</td>
<td>9 - 8d.</td>
<td>18 - 3d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>59 - 8d.</td>
<td>49 - 3d.</td>
<td>32 - 8d.</td>
<td>44 - 8d.</td>
<td>10 - 5d.</td>
<td>16 - 7d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent.</td>
<td>69 - 7d.</td>
<td>55 - 10d.</td>
<td>34 - 10d.</td>
<td>51 - 4d.</td>
<td>13 - 9d.</td>
<td>21 - 0d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Earnings figures obtained from NCB Annual Report and Accounts, 1954
Since before the First World War, there had been repeated efforts by the Miners' union in S. Wales to reduce differentials in earnings between varying grades of workers. It was, after all, in the union's best interests to do so, since it is clear that union solidarity received little encouragement from a wages system which divided the workforce by blessing pieceworkers with relatively high earnings and day-wage men with earnings which were often little above those needed to maintain the merest subsistence.

Faceworkers' earnings had not been allowed to "run away" from those of other grades of workers to the extent to which they had in, say, the East Midlands, Northumberland or Kent. This is clearly illustrated, below in Figures 1 - 8 which chart the Earnings per Manshift and Average Weekly Earnings for selected Divisions from 1947-1974.

It is possible to attribute a part of the relatively low earnings of S. Wales faceworkers to geological and technical determinants: difficult seams, lack of advanced power cutting and loading machinery, etc., but, as we have seen, these were not the determinants favoured by the coalowners, the Coal Board and the Government for explaining away low productivity in S. Wales. Restrictive practices and conscious lack of effort on the part of the miners were the reasons most often quoted in these quarters.

The truth undoubtedly lies somewhere between the two extremes. Bill Paynter recalled that it was not uncommon in some of the central and western pits for the Lodge Committees to set bonus "norms" and to order that any bonuses earned over and above those norms
FIG. 1
EARNINGS PER MANSHEFT 1947-1974
(EXCLUSIVE OF VALUE OF ALLOWANCES IN KIND: abbrev. V.A.I.K.)
SOUTH WESTERN DIVISION
(SOUTH WALES, SOMERSET + GLOS.)

£10
£8
£6
£4
£2
£0

1947 - 1974
FIG. 2

EARNINGS PER MANSHIFT 1947-1974
(EXCLUSIVE OF V.A.I.K.)

SCOTLAND (NORTH SCOTTISH)
(1967-1972)

EARNINGS

£10

£9

£8

£7

£6

£5

£4

£3

£2

£1

0

1967 - 1974

ALL WORKERS

FACE

ALL UNDERGROUND

SURFACE
FIG. 3

EARNINGS PER MANSHEET 1946-1973/74
(EXCLUSIVE OF VA-I-K)

NORTHERN (NORTHUMBERLAND)
(1967-1974)
FIG. 4

EARNINGS PER MANSHIFT, 1946-1973/74
(EXCLUSIVE OF VA:IK)

YORKSHIRE (NORTH YORKSHIRE: DONCASTER)
(1967/68-1973/74)

- £10
- £8
- £7
- £6
- £5
- £4
- £3
- £2
- £1
- £0
FIG. 5

EARNINGS PER MANSHIFT 1946-1973/74
(EXCLUSIVE OF VAT)

EAST MIDLANDS (NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE) 1967-1974

£10

£9

£8

£7

£6

£5

£4

£3

£2

£1

1947 - 1974

1946 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74
FIG. 6

AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS
(EXCLUSIVE VAT)

SOUTH WALES (EAST WALES AREA)
(1967/68-1971/72)

- Average earnings over time for South Wales (East Wales Area) from 1947 to 1974.
- The graph shows the weekly earnings with different categories.
- The categories include 'All underground', 'Face only', and 'Surface'.
- The data is presented from 1947 to 1974.

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The graph illustrates the change in average weekly earnings over a period of 27 years, highlighting the increase in earnings for different employment sectors within the South Wales area.
FIG. 8

AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS
(EXCLUSIVE VAT)

EAST MIDLANDS 1947-1966/67
(NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 1967/68-1973/74)

- £40
- £35
- £30
- £25
- £20
- £10
automatically be donated to the Lodges' funds - a state of affairs hardly conducive to the promotion of a high incidence of overtime working. The readiness of the Parc and Dare men to pool their bonus earnings during the Saturday work boycott of 1953-54 was a variation of this practice and it is difficult to interpret their action as signifying anything other than their possessing a highly developed sense of trade union solidarity.

Faceworkers formed as high a percentage of the coalfield's workforce as was to be found in any of the country's coalfields (see Table 8)

Table 5

Faceworkers as a Percentage of Other Grades Employed in 1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Faceworkers as a percentage of total numbers employed by Division (1950)</th>
<th>Faceworkers as a percentage of total numbers employed below ground by Division (1950)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland &amp; Durham</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Wales</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCB Annual Report and Accounts, 1965/66; calculated from Table 35, p.60.

and, as we have seen earlier, their unofficial stoppages and go-slow accounted for the overwhelming majority of such occurrences in South Wales. They had been accused, justifiably, of nurturing and perpetuating "sectionalism" - even after the twin achievements of nationalisation and the consolidation of a National Union of Mineworkers. Yet here they were, in the winter of 1953-54, displaying an almost altruistic solidarity with their less fortunate comrades. Why was it that they chose this demand, and not one financially closer to their hearts, upon which to make a public demonstration?

The reason is quite simple. The Shakespeare Hotel Group and its affiliates were led by political radicals, by Communists like Evan John and Left-wing Labourites like Emlyn Williams. They resented the "sectarian" tag with which they found themselves adorned and they seized upon the Daywage issue as a means of counteracting the slur. They genuinely were in favour of the erosion of wage differentials and vehemently opposed to the regular working of the Saturday shift - a practice which, as far as they were concerned, constituted little more than a retreat from the cherished principle of the Five Day Week. In this respect, they were quite close to their most formidable union opponent, Bill Paynter. But, as a member of the N.E.C., Paynter's choice of action was infinitely more limited than was theirs. Understanding this, they acted accordingly. They resolved that if Paynter found himself unable to work openly against the policies of the N.E.C., then they would do it for him. After all, there was abundant evidence of the existence of widespread support for

* Now President of the S. Wales miners.
the Daywage claim: the S. Wales Executive was plagued with Lodge demands for strike action and large sections of the workforce (including the faceworkers) had proven themselves ready and willing to make considerable financial sacrifices to ensure the success of any action which they considered worthwhile.

Paynter's response was an equivocal one. True to past form, he opposed any mention of unofficial action - particularly if that action was organised by "renegades" such as those at the Shake- speare Hotel. He also expressed a dislike for the tactic employed: the boycott of overtime. It could, after all, be rendered meaningless in those pits where overtime opportunities were normally scarce or inconsistent. Nevertheless, the pressure of events left him with no choice other than to offer to the S. Wales membership a clear and militant lead on the question. A failure to do so might have entailed an eclipse of the Executive by the unofficial groupings.

But Paynter was also under pressure - from his fellow N.E.C. members and from the Coal Board - to subdue his more militant Lodges. On January 28th, for example, he informed the S. Wales Executive that the S. Wales and Scottish coalfields had been lectured "very seriously" on the conduct of their members during the preceding months:

94. There were calls for strike action even from Monmouthshire lodges. The Arrail Griffin lodge, for example, demanded the tendering of notices as early as the second week of the New Year. SWNUM E.C. Minutes, 13.1.53.
"It was pointed out that tremendous quantities of coal had been lost in both these Divisions due to actions taken by the workmen over this wages question.

"However, after very long discussions with the Board they undertook to consider our request for an immediate increase in wages for all daywage men, and finally offered 8d. per day for all adult daywagemen with a proportionate increase for juveniles.

"The N.E.C. considered this offer and decided unanimously to reject it and to proceed to the Government seeking an interview to discuss this question." 95

The "interview" produced an increase of 4d. per shift in the Board's offer - an increase which a majority of the Union's N.E.C. duly recommended its members to accept. It was put to the ballot in S. Wales after Paynter, in a fighting speech, had declared that the coalfield was opposed to the national conference recommendation and that this attitude had been endorsed at a previous delegate conference in S. Wales where the feeling was clearly expressed, ".... that if we are to bargain with the Coal Board for a continuation of the Saturday shift beyond April, we want more for it than 1/- a shift". 96

His position was massively endorsed by the ballot which, by 69,950 votes to 4,800 rejected the N.E.C.'s recommendation. A spokesman for the S. Wales Executive declared that,

95. SWNUN E.C. Minutes, 28.1.53.
96. C.G., 5.2.53.
"South Wales thinks we should make a demand for 2/6, or 15/- a week increase. We do not think it good enough to barter a continuation of Saturday work for 4d. a shift, that is the difference between the 8d. offered by the Board, and the 1/- suggested by the union. We do not think the union is going far enough". 97

Once again however, it soon became abundantly clear that even this overwhelming endorsement of the "militant" line was insufficient to disguise the continuing existence of political tensions within the South Wales union - tensions which were provoked, not only by the "unofficials'" persistent sniping at the Area Executive Committee, but also by the ongoing animosity which continued to manifest itself between card-carrying Communists and Labourites. These tensions were linked by the fact that the Communists were inextricably identified with the leadership of the unofficial groupings - so much so, that loyal Labourites tended to read political subversion into each and every one of the "unofficials'" actions. Neither side lost an opportunity to slip a punch into the ribs of their opponents and the wages dispute provided an excellent venue for battle.

The unofficials were, after all, criticising the whole approach of the parliamentary Labour Party as well as that adopted by the national leadership of the trade union movement. They tended, in open debate, to link the "collaborating" policies favoured by Labour and the TUC with a whole host of reactionary shibboleths, including Britain's involvement in the Korean War and her "imperialistic" suppression of nationalists and revolutionaries.

97. Ibid., 12.2.53.
in Kenya, Malaya and British Guyana. Indeed, the minutes of the coalfield's known Left-wing Lodges are shot-through with condemnations of Labour's tacit support for (or, rather, lack of vigorous opposition against) the Tories' fawning pro-Americanism and their continued insistence upon defending a senile British empire.98

One of the unofficial groupings' most able public apologists was Dick Beamish, Area executive member, sometimes fellow-traveller, and Chairman of the Abercrave Lodge; in February 1953, he launched a typical attack upon the policies of the Labour Party and the TUC. At an Area delegate conference which ostensibly was devoted to discussing the wage claim, he insisted upon attacking British foreign policy and, in so doing, in drawing upon himself a welter of counter-criticism from Frank James, a loyal and long-standing defender of the Parliamentary Labour Party and an official of the National Colliery Lodge in Rhondda Fach. Beamish's criticisms of the TUC's support of wage-restraint were, he said, ".... inconsistent with the NUM's present policy". It was such criticisms, declared James, which gave a lead to the National Reference Tribunal to turn down the union's wage claims, and he went on to attack Beamish's criticism of Britain's conduct overseas, alleging that they were

".... largely in opposition to the declared policy of the Movement" and that the country's foreign policy ".... arose largely from the action taken by the Eastern Nations at meetings of the United Nations and out of their foreign policy".99

98. See, especially, the Parc & Dare lodge minutes.
99. SWNUM E.C. Minutes, 2.2.53.
This political division manifested itself in the eastern sector of the field, in January and February, when Ness Edwards, M.P. for Caerphilly,\textsuperscript{100} warned a meeting at Tirphil in the "loyal" Rhymney Valley that it was time that the...

"... loyal members of the union stamped on these reactionaries who functioned behind wild, irresponsible revolutionary cloaks and who, perhaps unconsciously, were doing their best to destroy nationalisation."\textsuperscript{101}

He quickly followed this up with an attack upon those miners who disregarded their "social obligations", reminding his audience that,

"Those of us who condemned the capitalist coalowners for taking out of the economy more than they put in should be the first to condemn that minority which, by their irresponsibility, follow the old coalowners' policy. It is with regret that we have to learn that exploitation of the many by the few was not abolished when the nation took over the coal industry. Any worker failing to pull his reasonable weight in a nationalised industry is exploiting his fellow workers in principle just as much as the coalowners did". And he reminded them that, despite all that had been done "... to secure rational improvement, a minority still play the fool and still disregard their social and moral obligations and bring disrespect on their industry and their fellow workers. Unless we all endeavour to put in as much as we take out there can be no hope for human progress. In our hurried efforts to change the economic organisation we have failed to realise the need for change in individual attitudes".\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100} Former Labour Postmaster General and ex-miners' agent for the Rhymney.
\textsuperscript{101} C.C., 22.1.53.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 12.2.53.
Offence was taken at Edwards' remarks by the Lodge Committees of Bedwas and Groesfaen, two of the Rhymney Valley's best organised Lodges. They demanded Edwards' resignation as a Miners' M.P. — despite the fact that Edwards had been amongst those full-time organisers who had been entrusted by the SWMF, during the mid-'Thirties, with the unenviable task of aiding the very same Bedwas militants (who were now attacking him) in their efforts to eradicate Company Unionism at the pit. After declaring that he had no intention of being deterred, "by a threat of political intimidation", he addressed a meeting at Penallta Colliery, a traditional Labour stronghold where he claimed that the "overwhelming majority" of the miners' M.P.'s supported his recent criticisms and that he had received the "full backing" of the president and vice president of the NUM before he made them. He informed his audience that the position had become

"... so serious, both economically and politically, that it was necessary that straight talking should be done. To have remained silent while the interests of the S. Wales miners were in serious danger was to betray not only the miners but nationalisation as well."

For his pains, he was rewarded with the "unanimous support" of the Penallta Lodge and he was able to watch the Bedwas and Groesfaen criticisms die quiet deaths.

* The Bedwas Lodge contained amongst its members several Communists and a large number of seasoned militants — all of whom had taken part in the bitter and violent campaign to rid the pit of Company Unionism in the mid-1930s.

103. This was eagerly pointed out by the Western Mail, 21-22.2.53 and 2.3.53.
104. It is interesting to note that he does not make it clear whether he received the support of the General Secretary of the NUM, the Communist Arthur Horner. C.G., 5.3.53.
105. Ibid.
It was this intensity of support for the Labour Party which brought a temporary solution to the Saturday Work issue and which, in doing so, allowed the S. Wales Executive a much-needed respite from the continuous sniping of the "unofficials". In early March, the NUM Executive Committee agreed by a large majority to continue Saturday working and issued the following resolution by way of an explanation:

"The National Executive Committee of the NUM represents the subtle attempt by the Tory Party to destroy nationalisation, consciously creating bitterness within the mining industry, to weaken cooperation between the Union and the NCB. The joint efforts now being made by the NCB and the NUM to increase production, to improve efficiency, to strengthen cooperation, to work additional voluntary shifts on Saturdays, will be undermined by the new attempt of the Tories to decry nationalisation, and will weaken the efforts being made to build up our national economy". ¹⁰⁶

This followed the publicity given to the demands of a number of Conservative M.P.'s that a public inquiry be held to investigate the administration and efficiency of the British coal industry. It was a demand which provoked a meeting at Ystradmynach of lodge delegates representing some 24,000 mineworkers in the Rhymney and Merthyr areas to express publicly their "full support" for the N.E.C.'s resolution and their sentiments were echoed a week later at a Coalfield Delegate Conference at Porthcawl where it was announced that,

¹⁰⁶. NUM E.C. Minutes, 12.3.53.
"This Conference warns the Tory Party to keep its hands off Nationalisation of the coalmining industry. Any attempt to decentralise this industry, which would mean a reversal to District wage arrangements prevailing in the inter-war years and in this coalfield give daywage rates which would have to be supplemented to bring them up to a bare subsistence level, will be resisted by every means possible. This Conference declares that the solution of the problem of this industry by cuts in wages is ended for all time."\textsuperscript{107}

By April, Paynter felt able, once again, to associate himself openly with a joint NUM/NCB plea to the S. Wales miners to boost production.\textsuperscript{108} At the Area Annual Conference in May he made it clear in his Report that the Coal Board's reluctance to increase wages and to instigate a new wages structure was due as much to the "uncertainties" created by the unofficial boycott of Saturday working and the "decline in productivity and efficiency, and the increase in strikes and go-slows" as it was to any inbred managerial reluctance to increase wages without a struggle.\textsuperscript{109} The assembled delegates received his Report with no undue agitation and the Conference passed off relatively peacefully, the delegates being happy for the most part, to sit back and enjoy a ritual bout of Tory bashing which was executed with particular vehemence that May. Paynter, for example, declared that

"There can be no doubt that the policy of the Tory Government aggravates the position considerably. The practical elimination of food subsidies; the inroads made into our social and welfare services

\textsuperscript{107} SINUM E.C. Minutes, 23.3.53.
\textsuperscript{108} It took the form of a joint letter signed by the chairman of the NCB, Houldsworth; the chairman of the South Western NCB, Rees; the General Secretary of the NUM, Horner, and the President of the S. Wales miners, Paynter.
\textsuperscript{109} SBNUM, Annual Conference Report and Agenda, 1953, p. 28.
by this Government has substantially lowered the standard of life of the people of this country .... 

"The most important task confronting the Union in the immediate future is to press for the return of a government to power that will introduce legislation which will serve the best interests of the workers and their families".\textsuperscript{110}

Bathed in this non-sectarian light, the Conference proved itself inconducive to wild political infighting. A Penallta resolution attacking the use of Union funds for political purposes other than those directly to the benefit of the Labour Party had promised fireworks but fizzled out before two "opposition" amendments, inspired by Communists at the Parc and Dare and Abercrave Lodges, could be tested against it.\textsuperscript{111}

Summing-up at the end of the Conference, Paynter perpetuated the conciliatory atmosphere by attributing much of the record total of coal lost through stoppages and restrictions during the previous 12 months \textsuperscript{112} to "provocation" by management and officials. And he declared that, in a large number of cases, men left their places of work in protest against delays in the supply of material or clearance. He went on to criticise the way in which "massive American investment in West German coal and steel" was, once again, allowing the Germans a degree of "efficiency-supremacy" and encouraging the spread of American-West German economic domination. Britain, he declared, must trade with the Socialist countries.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., pp. 25-26.  
\textsuperscript{111} Penallta were persuaded by the E.C. to withdraw their resolution. A.C.R. and Agenda, p. 16, Clause 10.  
\textsuperscript{112} 385,000 tons, the highest loss since nationalisation.  
\textsuperscript{113} C.G., 14.5.53.
Sticking to his theme of industrial efficiency and expansion, he went on to outline the sorry plight of many pits in S. Wales. They had, he declared, "been neglected and starved of capital equipment for the past 30 years". No new shafts had been sunk and the existing mines "have had their resources wantonly dissipated by the old colliowners". The best seams had been largely exploited, he said, and long-term plans had taken up most of the time of the planning staff of the NCB so that little or no attention had been paid to improving collieries from which outputs were to be obtained during the following five years. The capital allocation under the NCB's Coal Plan - £102.7 million over 16 years - could, he said, "... really be all spent in the anthracite coalfield alone". He ended by making it clear that he was not at variance with the aims and objectives of the leaders of the unofficial groupings; he just did not approve of their methods. He was not defending the working of overtime. "Incessant over-time working", he declared, "was a health hazard and a social injustice". 114

Paynter succeeded in pleasing almost everyone. His call, earlier in the Conference, for the return of a Labour Government had been supplemented, for the sake of his fellow Communists, by a demand that Britain trade with the Eastern powers. Men worried about the possibilities of closure of their run-down pits were offered the comfort of understanding that it was management, and not they, themselves, who were responsible for the run-down.

114. Ibid.
Even the more strike-prone amongst the delegates were spared the rod and comforted instead by having it officially confirmed that most strikes were provoked by managerial intransigence. Whatever detailed response the speech may have had, it undoubtedly contributed to the maintenance of what might best be termed a "truce" between the E.C. and the unofficial groupings during the Summer which followed.
Part Four

The Disappearing Milenium

Chapter 13  Speeches at the Pithead Baths
Chapter 14  Old Divisions & New Alliances
Chapter 15  Conclusion
Chapter 13

Speeches at the Pithead Baths

During July, 1953, the Conservative Government played a considerable part in warding off inter-union conflict on the coalfield by announcing its refusal to extend Section 62 of the National Insurance Act. This meant that some 3,000 partly disabled and unemployed miners stood to lose from between £1 - £2 per week since Section 62 provided for extended unemployment benefit after the end of the statutory period of payment. Its ending meant that the men affected would be transferred to the National Assistance Board where they would be subject to a Means Test.

Virtually no other issue could have been so calculated to induce a sense of outrage amongst the membership of the NUM. Paynter responded by calling a Coalfield Delegate Conference at which there were witnessed remarkable scenes of brotherly solidarity, not the least of which was the enthusiastic reception given to a fighting speech by that sworn enemy of the "unofficials", Ness Edwards. He declared that the Tory Government was endeavouring "...to foist piecemeal upon the people of this country its old policies", and his words were echoed by a great many other speakers who railed vehemently against the Government's action.¹ Paynter made it clear that he "welcomed the spirit of revolt which had been expressed in the conference ..." and, for a moment, it must have seemed to the "unofficials" that their desire for a strike

¹. SWNUM, E.C. Minutes, Area Delegate Conference (A.D.C.) 25.7.53.
which would "shake-up" the union's national leadership was on the cards. But Paynter chose that moment to lay before them a fragment of his political philosophy:

"We have to recognise the fact", he reminded them, "that to use industrial power for political purposes is one of the highest forms of struggle of the working class movement.

"The next step following is to the barricades ...." and he did not believe that the miners should take a decision of that kind, ".... without very serious thought and preparation". He urged the Conference to reject, for the moment, the loud clamour for the tendering of 14 days' strike notices and to back, instead, the resolution of the Executive Council (which condemned iscontinuance of Section 62). Such a course of action, he said, could be combined with other forms of protests, such street demonstrations and coalfielc petitions, to "encourage the maximum degree of hatred of the Tories and their policy, and ultimately win such support in this coalfielc and in the country generally as to sweep them out of office.

"To use the biggest weapon in our army at this stage of the struggle", he warned his audience, would result "in a serious anti-climax".

The Conference overwhelmingly carried the resolution of the Executive Council. ²

This sense of possessing a common determination to oust from power the traditional class enemy tended to have little or no effect, however, upon day to day relationships between men, management and

2. Ibid.
union representatives at pit-level. Strikes and go-slows occurred with their usual frequency and the leadership of the NUM and NCB displayed their usual inability to prevent them happening. In July, the Area E.C. of the union undertook to examine the causes of stoppages which occurred on the coalfield during that month. It was decided to circularise the Lodges urging them to forward to the Central Office detailed accounts of the circumstances which led to the stoppages taking place.

Very little response was forthcoming and the E.C. was forced to issue a summarised account of that which they already knew.

"During this month", they announced, "44 stoppages took place in the coalfield, most of which could not be defended by the Union.

"In some instances the daywagemen struck work in protest against the action of pieceworkers in stopping the previous day ....

".... this was symptomatic of the sharp divisions which are developing in the coalfield on this issue".\(^3\)

At a special Coalfield Delegate Conference called to discuss the problem, Paynter warned his audience that there had been so many unofficial stoppages in South Wales, Scotland and Yorkshire that the NCB was considering bringing back prosecutions for breaches of contract. He declared that he was

"very much concerned and, in fact, alarmed at the lack of Trade Union consciousness prevailing on the coalfield in this matter".

\(^3\) Ibid., 22.9.53.
He reminded the delegates that the union had pledged itself to give full cooperation to the Board in their efforts to raise productivity and he

"... appreciated that there were other factors militating against the unity of the membership, namely, the differentials which prevail between the conditions of employment of surface and underground workers. The wage differentials ... threatened to divide sharply this Organisation in this Area.

"These differences", he warned them, "are being exploited by the Colliery Managers", but he was of the view that, "as an Organisation", the members "should endeavour to minimise these differences" and behave in such a manner as not to aggravate them. Most of the Stoppages and restrictions which took place on the coalfield were, he claimed,

"... in connection with the terms and contracts of pieceworkers, who earn money much in excess of that paid to daywage workers above and below ground."

"Further, these actions are undertaken by our members without consultation with representatives of the Union at any level ...."

He expressed serious alarm that, if this policy was allowed to continue unrestricted, it would lead to the "disintegration of this Organisation at a time when we will need it the most ....", for, he argued, there could be no doubt that the days of "obtaining concessions without struggle" were at an end: "The Awards of the National Reference Tribunal and the National Arbitration Tribunal in other industries merely underline this fact" and he wound up his speech by stating that the policy of his Executive Council was to endeavour to avoid this "disintegration and the cancer
which was developing in the Organisation.\textsuperscript{4}

The Conference unanimously accepted his report but the significance of their acceptance must have been diminished somewhat by the words of a delegate from a relatively "loyal" Lodge, Aberpergwrm, who stated that, whilst he

"... appreciated the position as put by the E.C.," he nevertheless wished to remind them "that there were problems on the coalfield which call for speedy solutions ..."\textsuperscript{5}

In other words, it was the same old problem: How was it possible to convince angry miners that they should abide by negotiated procedures and thereby lengthen the time it would take to resolve a dispute which they might otherwise resolve quickly merely by striking in the time-honoured fashion unto which they had been reared? The colliery Lodge Committee which had most first-hand experience of this problem during 1953 was almost certainly that at Caerau at the northern, "blind-end" of the Maesteg (Llynfi) Valley. At a Lodge Committee meeting in late June, for example, the Secretary recorded that the colliers of the pit's "W.R." District had agreed to go-slow for the week commencing June 22nd. He told the Committee that the pit's manager had informed him that, in 1952, a quarter of a million pounds had been lost at Caerau Colliery and that in 1953 the position was even worse. The NCB, he claimed, were no longer prepared to "pour money down the drain". Forewarned, the Committee resolved unanimously to advise the "W.R." colliers to refrain from carrying out their decision to go ca'canny.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{6} Caerau Colliery Lodge Minutes, Committee Meeting (CM) 21.6.53; U.C.S.
The advice was not heeded. The go-slow was instigated and such was its effect that the Lodge Secretary reported, four days later, that "considerable bad feeling exists at the colliery following upon the W.R. dispute". 7 A mass meeting was called for the following Sunday to discuss the situation and its implications for the future of the pit. Addressing the assembled miners, the Lodge Secretary "dealt with the extreme difficulty being experienced when colliers walk out, and the consequent division between themselves and the day-wage men". He urged the meeting to "avoid walk-out and ca' canny and so give our established machinery a fair chance to function". After a lengthy discussion, the meeting resolved to accept the Secretary's recommendation and a pledge was taken ".... not to walk out in future and go ca' canny..." 8

In early October however, 26 Caerau colliers walked out over a price list disagreement and caused some 850 of their workmates to strike in sympathy with them. 9 At a mass meeting of the Lodge just five days after the initial walk-out, the Miners' Agent for the Maesteg Area, Tal Mainwaring, persuaded the men to return and to refrain from the use of ca'canny. They agreed and the lodge committee issued a statement to the effect that any future action which involved the use of "ca'canny or walking out without full consultation with lodge officials, and full use made of the established machinery" would not be tolerated and it was made clear that any such action would not "secure the attention of the Organisation, since it tends to create a division between colliers and day-wage

7. Ibid., 25.6.53.
8. Ibid., Mass Meeting (YM), 28.6.53.
9. C.G., 8.10.53.
men, and in a time of changed economic and political conditions, would completely destroy our Organisation, and thereby leave us wide open for attacks upon our standard of living."  

Even such resolute promises of Lodge discipline as these did not prevent similar incidents occurring at Caerau with remarkable regularity during the following five years. The "disease", as Paynter referred to it, seems however, to have been endemic only at certain collieries and not at others. Its outbreaks seem mainly to have been confined to Lodges where "militants" were in plentiful supply but where the Lodge Committees did not exert over their memberships the kind of discipline which was to be found at traditional Communist strongholds like Parc and Dare, or indeed, at pits where the Lodge Committees were dominated by active and articulate advocates of the policies of the Labour Party.

Caerau and Parc and Dare were Lodges which represented two very different models of trade union organisation. A comparison of their Lodge Minute Books (both of which are remarkably copious and informative) reveals some quite startling differences in the relationships which existed at these pits between the Lodge Committees and their rank-and-file.

The Parc and Dare Minutes communicate a sense of the Lodge Committee being always firmly in control of virtually every facet of the workmen's side of pit business. The pages are cluttered with

11. Indeed, if we move forward to January 1958, we find, recorded in the Minute Book, an identical series of events provoking an identical response from the lodge committee and its supporters. Caerau C.I.M., MM., 14.1.58 and 15.1.58.
details of disputes settled, go-slows prevented, deputations being received and so on. Those of Caerau, on the other hand, seem fraught with the continuous promise of unofficial walk-outs and go-slows. The Committee men frequently are forced to issue appeals to their members; threats of closure are purposely and repeatedly dragged out and there is present a sense of general indiscipline which one never encounters within the pages of the Parc and Dare Minutes.

The other, quite startling, contrast is the absence within the Caerau pages of references to contemporary political controversies, and especially to those concerned with international affairs. Hardly a page of the Parc and Dare Minutes is without its mention of Kenya, Malaya, British Guyana, Korea, the world-wide encroachment of American economic and military influence, or demands that China be allowed into the United Nations and West Germany prevented from re-arming. The political influences upon the Committee of its Communist and Left-Labour members is everywhere evident. One senses that they consider the Lodge an important and vital platform for political, as well as industrial, debate. And one gains a similar impression from the Minute Books of the Labour-dominated Lodges to the east. There, one encounters Lodges which not only conduct their union business in an efficient and disciplined fashion, but which readily communicate a sense of concern that the Communists from the central and western sectors are "kept in hand".¹²

¹². This is especially evident in the minute books of the Penallta Lodge, 1951-1958; U.C.S.
Expressed differently, there appears to have been a "tightness" of discipline and organisation amongst those lodges which, over a long period, displayed evidence of there operating amongst their ranks men who recognised and emphasised the links existing between politics and trade unionism. For such men, the Lodge became much more than a vehicle with which they could occasionally secure certain financial objectives and a degree of job security. For them, it became a symbol of the ability of the working class to organise itself in a disciplined and effective fashion. Indeed, for many of the Communists especially, it assumed a position of extraordinary political importance in as much as it was the closest they came to holding positions of real administrative power. And, once they had attained those positions, they generally attempted to execute their duties as efficiently and conscientiously as they were able, for they recognised, that if they were to advance themselves within the Union, there was little point in them appearing as "wild men" or as individualists who were known to command little respect inside their Lodges. They had to be seen to be doing the business and doing it properly.

Not all of the Communists who figured in Lodge politics were of this type. Some remained inveterate "rank-and-filers" or "Committee-Men" who, if they could manage it, would hold no truck with the more blatant compromises of principle forced upon their position-seeking comrades. Still others found themselves with no choice other than to remain as Committee Men, their talents having been eclipsed by some brighter luminary or louder voice, or their way repeatedly blocked by resolute Labour opposition. Such men as these frequently were to be found amongst the leaderships of the
unofficial groupings, but they bore less resemblance to the "average" unofficial striker than did the most disciplined member of an Eastern Valleys Lodge.

Their influence is obvious, for example, within the agendas of the union's coalfield annual conferences. Year after year, it was the Lodges to which they were attached which forwarded the sophisticated critiques of the Labour Party's alleged political "collaboration", or criticisms of the Government's pro-Americanism. For example, the voice of one such Communist, Evan John, is clearly discernable in the following resolution which his Lodge forwarded to Conference in 1953:

"In the cultural field America has nothing to offer us, other than racial discrimination, a literature well below the standards to which we are accustomed in Britain, and a political democracy which reeks of gangsterism". 13

Such resolutions, and those which most coherently opposed them, tended invariably, to emerge from efficient and well-disciplined Lodges which sometimes were dominated by Communists, sometimes by Labourites. They tended far less frequently to emerge from those Lodges which were famous for their sectional strike-proneness - like the Lodges of Gwaun-cae-gurwen or, for that matter, those of the greater part of the anthracite field. 14

13. SWNUM Annual Agenda and Report; May, 1953. The resolution was moved by the Clydach Merthyr Lodge (of which Evan John was the Chairman) and seconded by the Dillwyn Lodge of the Dulais Valley. It carried. SWNUM E.C. Minutes 11-13.5.53.

14. There were of course, exceptions. The pits of the Dulais and Lower Swansea Valleys, as well as those at Abercrave and Morlais, were generally as prolific in their output of political resolutions as were most Lodges in the central and western sectors of the steam-coal field. See, Chapter 12, for an earlier discussion of anthracite pit politics.
These latter types were the lodges which most worried Paynter and executive council for, within them, trade union discipline tended to remain as constant as do the shadows of clouds across windswept hillsides. It was an indiscipline which contrasted strongly with the extraordinary loyalty which many of these same lodge memberships displayed towards their own codes of custom and practice. This contrast was especially marked amongst the younger anthracite miners who appear to have concerned themselves with pit matters to the virtual exclusion of wider union matters. The president of Youth Representatives of the SWNUM alleged that these individuals displayed little more than an "appalling apathy" towards trade union affairs.\(^{15}\)

He alleged that less than half of the S. Wales miners' lodges had youth representatives upon their committees and that this "lack of interest" arose "out of the period of relative prosperity we have experienced in recent years". Somewhat paradoxically however, the Conference of Youth Representatives, after listening to its President's allegations, passed a resolution urging that the adult rate of wages be paid to 18 year-old miners whose minimum rate was almost £2 per week lower than that received by a miner at 21.\(^{16}\)

"Apathy caused by high earnings" was also the diagnosis put forward by another active Lodge official, Frank James, a staunch Labour man from the National Colliery in the Rhondda. He complained that

15. C.C., 12.11.53. The Youth President was E. Scrivens.
16. Ibid., Minimum wage underground in 1953: 21 and over £7 6 6d. 18 - 21 £5 8 6d.
it was

"... not easy to generate support ... amongst the men in this coalfield ... The main enemy of the miners at present is their own apathy.

"This is due to the high average weekly wage earned by them by working excessive overtime".

He cited cases at his own Lodge where men were working "the full 24 hours" of overtime in one week. "This supplementation of wages by overtime earnings", he declared, "was a bad thing for the trade-union and for the miners".17

It was with this threat to the union itself in mind that Paynter and the Executive Council stepped up their pressure for an all-round wage increase and for the instigation of a comprehensive new Wages Structure which would replace the anarchic system of piece-rate payments and reduce drastically hours worked as overtime.

Paynter addressed the Conference of Youth Representatives in November, 1953, and assured them that he and his colleagues would do all in their power to halt the "Tory Offensive" against the living standards of the working class and that they would "... fight to recover by wage increases, the economic position held by the miners in 1947".18 At an Area Delegate Conference during the same month, he claimed that the Government had "decided to deliberately precipitate a wage crisis in this country" and he warned that "... the wages earned in overtime in this industry are not

17. SW NUM E.C. Minutes, A.D.C. 30.11.53.
18. C.C., 19.11.53.
to be a substitute for the payment of a living wage to our members for the five normal shifts. The Conference passed a resolution urging the Government and the Coal Board to expedite a decision on the miners' wage claim and to investigate the question of relative prices charged to industrial consumers. Dai Dan Evans, the vice-President, informed the press that, "If this industry is to be a service to other industries the wages of the miners should not be based on the economics of the industry. We are selling coal too cheaply to certain big industrial concerns and as a result we cannot meet the wages of the miners".

Calls for strike action and the resumption of the boycott on Saturday working were proposed as a means of enforcing the union's criticisms and delegates joined Dai Dan Evans in expressing their "anger" over the supply of "subsidised coal" to leading industrialists: the profitability of the nationalised coal industry, claimed one Ferndale delegate, was being "deliberately restricted to offset wage claims by the miners and to enhance the profits of the great industrial monopolies".

A spokesman for the Executive Council explained that, since nationalisation, the industry had made a gross profit of £15.7 millions, but that it still carried an accumulated net loss of £12.7 millions. Of the gross profit, £94.4 millions had gone in interest repayments and in the form of interim income to the old coal owners; £11.5 millions to profit tax - despite an accumulated deficit and £8.7 millions spent on imported coal which was subsequently sold at a

19. SWNUM, E.C. Minutes, A.D.C., 30.11.53.
20. C.G., 26.11.53.
loss. In other words, claimed the spokesman, the gross profit had been "... swallowed up by these impositions upon the industry by Government policies".  

In mid-December, Homer joined the chorus of protest. He told a Monmouthshire audience that "discontent" would be rife upon the coalfield unless the wage claims were settled quickly and he added that miners should not have to work on Saturdays to earn a "living wage .... they have fought too long for a five-day week not to enjoy it". His words were echoed by Paynter at a dozen or more different venues during the following two months. At Treharris he warned of "widespread action in this and other coalfields" if the Board did not admit the miners' claim in full. He was certain, he added, that the agreement to continue Saturday work would not be renewed as "it was

"... now widely recognised by all sections of the men that organised overtime work and the earnings that accrued (were) an obstacle to obtaining a living wage for a normal week's work. It (was) for this reason that a demand to end Saturday work (was) being more widely pressed than ever".

At a delegate conference in Cardiff in January, the assembled delegates voiced their opposition to the Coal Board's offer of increases of 7/6d. and 8/6d. per week for surface and underground men respectively. Despite the fact that the offer was tied to a productivity deal, the N.E.C. recommended its acceptance, though with no great enthusiasm. Paynter rejected this advice quite firmly.

22. Ibid., 24.12.53.
23. Ibid., 21.1.54.
and argued that the delegates should follow his example. In voting against acceptance, he said, South Wales would be making it clear to the public that the proposed new Minimum of £6 15s., and £7 15s., a week was not a living wage and that the coalfield "objected in principle to the strings the Coal Board have attached to the offer, namely that there should be a continuation of the Saturday work agreement and cooperation to improve production by 2½% this year".

He explained that, in his opinion, any productivity deal must, of necessity, be a "matter of policy to be decided by the union quite independently of any wage settlement. Our people fear that it will mean tying us to some form of sliding scale related to production to which we object in principle".

In the national ballot which followed however, Paynter discovered that a majority of his members apparently were content with the N.E.C's wages proposals and with working long periods of overtime. The results in S. Wales were not dramatically different to those cast in the English fields on the wages issue, although there was a much more forthright minority vote against extending the Saturday Work Agreements in S. Wales than in most other coalfields. The national vote in favour of acceptance of the N.E.C's recommendations was 542,000; that against, 221,000.


Votes cast in S. Wales on the N.E.C's recommendation concerning the wages proposals:

- FOR 55,150
- AGAINST 20,950

Votes cast in S. Wales on the N.E.C's recommendation to accept a further period of the extended working hours agreement:

- FOR 47,700
- AGAINST 31,200

SWNUM, E.C. Minutes, 9.2.54.
Sir William Lawther informed the public that he and his Executive had promised to cooperate with the Board in an effort to secure a 2½% increase in production and he added that they had undertaken to continue Saturday working until April 1955, at the earliest.25

The S. Wales vote emphasised the problem which Paynter faced whenever he attempted faithfully to echo coalfield feeling upon any controversial topic. In the run-up to the ballot, the loudest and most persistent noises had been made by the delegates of the "Left" Lodges - working both through official and unofficial channels - but when it came to the vote, the "silent majority" rallied behind the orthodox Labourites and won the day for the N.E.C. - despite the stirring speeches of Paynter, Evans and Will Whitehead against acceptance.* The problems posed to anyone seeking to represent such a divided workforce would have been formidable enough, but for Paynter they were compounded, as they had been for Horner, by his membership of the Communist Party and by the existence of the powerful unofficial groupings in which fellow Communists were playing leading roles. To have identified himself too closely with the positions taken by the pro-N.E.C. spokesmen of the Labourite majority would obviously have alienated him still further from the "unofficials" and from the line of the Party of which he was a member. On the other hand,

25. C.G., 11.2.54.

* The "Leftists", e.g. those at Parc and Dare, complained bitterly over the fact that the ballot was a postal ballot as opposed to a pit-head ballot. This, they felt, rendered the membership more susceptible to succumbing to pro-Agreement propaganda on the radio and in the press. Parc and Dare Lodge Minutes, 21.2.54.
the result of the ballot indicated clearly that, whenever he chose
to identify himself too closely with the "Leftists", he almost
always ran the risk of forfeiting his credibility as a leader who
could claim that he was capable of reflecting and representing
the demands and aspirations of the whole coalfield and not just
of its more militant and articulate members.

Recognising the vulnerability of his position, Paynter was forced
to agree, shortly after the ballot, to a number of Coal Board
proposals which threatened still further his already strained
working relationship with the "unofficials". He agreed, for
example, to allow a joint NUM/NGB working party to investigate
the "contradictory reports" which had emerged from the Parc and
Dare pit during a so-called "Efficiency Campaign" which had been
conducted on the coalfield during the previous year. The Parc
and Dare Lodge Committee was accused by Divisional Management of
allowing certain restrictions of output to take place within the
colliery complex - an accusation which the Committee refuted but
which stung it sufficiently to cause it to recommend to a general
meeting of its members that no sectional action should be taken
during the following month. The meeting accepted the recom-
modation only after a "rather lengthy discussion", which seems
to indicate that there may have been more to the Coal Board's
allegations than the Lodge Committee was willing to acknowledge
in public.\footnote{Parc and Dare Lodge Minutes, 21.2.54.} The incident provides an indication of the depth to
which the Communists were shaken by the result of the postal
ballot. Parc and Dare was one of the most powerful Lodges on
the coalfield; had it chosen to do so, it could undoubtedly have called upon its long-standing unofficial allies (Fernhill, Glencrondda, the Lodges of the Dulais Valley, etc.), to take sympathetic action in opposition to the investigation. But it chose not to. Instead, it rallied to Paynter's side, as if recognising that the time was ripe for a re-grouping of the coalfield's left-wing militants rather than for a confrontation which might well have resulted in them suffering a further set-back at the hands of the union's pro-N.E.C. elements.

The union's Left-wing had not been alone in appreciating the lessons provided by the February ballot however, for the Coal Board, too, recognised the implications of the rebuff which the Left-militants had suffered and it chose the moment to renew its public attacks upon the "unofficials" and their apologists on the miners' executive. During early March, for example, the Chairman of the S. Western Divisional Coal Board, D.M. Rees, visited one of the coalfield's most strike-prone pits, Caerau, and issued a warning, as he opened the colliery's first pithead baths, against the dangers presented by unofficial strikers. He claimed that since Vesting Day there had taken place 21 stoppages at Caerau, including five during the previous twelve months:

"I am loth to say this", he declared, "but I have to tell you that if this sort of thing persists the Board will be forced to take steps which will, in the long run, only hurt the people engaged in the industry".

The best way the miners could show their appreciation of the new amenities, he said, was to make every effort to increase output at the colliery.27

27. C.G., 11.3.54.
A similar plea was made to the men of Celynen South colliery by the deputy Labour Director of the S. Western Coal Board during the opening ceremony of their pithead baths one week later. He alleged that "one in three men" at Celynen South had been filling "rubbish" instead of coal during the month previously. Making a plea for more effective cooperation, he made a rhetorical and somewhat obvious statement, declaring that there were "... only two kinds of men in the mine ... the men and the management", and that, between them, they could produce the results that were needed. 28 Such sentiments were to be expressed with mounting frequency during the following 12 months. Indeed, the pithead bath opening ceremony came to be recognised both by management and union as presenting an ideal opportunity for the dissemination of their particular brands of propaganda. And rightly so, for whilst management could lay claim to having provided the new amenity, the union could use the opportunity to invoke poignant images of past generations of mineworkers who were denied by their profiteering masters even this most basic industrial facility. 29

It was wages rather than the virtues of industrial cooperation which provided the main topic at the South Wales Miners' Annual Conference in May 1954 however. In his Report, Paynter declared

28. Ibid., 18.5.54. The speaker was W.J. Saddler, ex-General Secretary of the SWNMU and an alleged authority of the filling of rubbish.
29. By May 1954, the statistics of pit-head bath construction was as follows:
   Total number of baths completed prior to Vesting Day 49
   Total number of baths completed since Vesting Day 28
   Total Number of baths under construction: 24
   Total number of baths in planning stage 12
   Total 120

"In addition, 18 baths are programmed at present. When all of the above schemes are completed, provision will have been made for approximately 98,000 men". SWNMU Annual Conference Report, May 1954, p. 60.
that, although a settlement had been accepted, its effect would be, in his view at least, temporary and he added that a new demand would be "probable" in 1954/55.30 He recounted the discussions which the union had had with the Board concerning the selling-price of coal and its relationship to miners' wages. In the course of the discussions, he declared, the Board had acknowledged that certain coals were being sold below their costs of production.

These were, in the main, smalls, coking coals, low volatile steams and anthracites: in other words, the coals mined predominantly in South Wales. Price adjustments were in the pipeline, but the projected increase in earnings which they would realise (some £2½ millions) would not be available for wage increases. He informed the delegates that the income was already earmarked to meet the cost of new safety measures which the union had pressed for, including non-inflammable belting, stonedust packs and a staff training college.

The Board, said Paynter, was "very disturbed" at trends in the Coal Trade. It was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain an entry to the European Market as the Schuman plan developed. The U.S.A. was increasingly able to sell coals of equal quality to ours at £1 per ton less than our prices. Denmark, he alleged, was already taking coal from the U.S.A. on this basis. In addition, coal was meeting a new competitor, residual oil, which was "as formidable as Hydro-electricity". In short, he informed them,

30. Ibid., p. 1.
the Board was arguing that, in a world of increasing coal production, there was taking place a relative contraction in the available markets and that these "growing difficulties" would be aggravated still further by any attempt to transfer the cost of wage increases to the price of coal. Paynter emphasised however, that the union did not consider that the Board's case warranted the kinds of losses in real earnings which the miners had suffered since 1947 and he argued that what was needed was a complete overhaul of the wages structure, lamenting, as he did so, that nothing had been done to instigate this process since the previous Annual Conference of the national union. He recalled that at that Conference, South Wales had tabled a resolution calling for the "evaluation of emoluments" obtaining in all of the country's Areas and for pledges from all NUM Areas to "facilitate the early settlement and introduction of the Wages Structure".31

He reported however, that when the resolution was considered at the pre-Conference Meeting of the National Executive, there was "fierce opposition from certain quarters" and that, "in the interests of maintaining unity", South Wales agreed that they would go no further than to formally move the resolution and refer it to the Executive Committee. He added that it was clear from this experience that there was "still a need within the Union to get agreement on principles to provide an accepted basis for continued discussions with the Board".32

31. Ibid., p. 5. The "Wages Structure" meaning the proposed standardisation of wages by grade across all British coalfields and the elimination of area differentials and anomalous piece-work.
32. Ibid.
The S. Wales Executive received the unanimous backing of the Conference for their efforts and there were a number of vociferous condemnations of those NUM Areas "too short-sighted" to appreciate the value of a new Wages Structure. Numerous speakers went on to denounce the continued existence of wide pay differentials between piece-workers and daywage-men and no fewer than 12 Lodges from all parts of the coalfield signed a successful joint resolution expressing concern at the inadequacy of surface workers' wages. The conduct of the Conference delegates communicated an air of solidarity and confidence sufficient enough to draw from Paynter one of his most forceful Presidential speeches.

He began by warning the delegates that, in future, the union would refuse its services to any body of men who were seen to be ignoring conciliation machinery and taking unofficial action. Briefly echoing the theme which recently had been favoured by official openers of pit-head baths, he reminded the men that there existed an urgent need for less absenteeism and more clean coal, but he quickly proceeded to treat the delegates to a clear-cut exposition of a number of his most fundamental political tenets. He declared that he would

"... always strenuously oppose those within the Labour and trade union movements who advocate policies of 'restraint' on wages claims, collaboration with employers to increase productivity by harder work and longer hours, and the identity of interests between capital and labour ....

"We are paid wages for the time we labour in production and then buy back the things we produce in order to barely exist. It is this wage earning status of the producers that makes over-production inevitable".
Getting into his stride, he attacked what he considered to be a
ludicrous arrangement of priorities which existed within the coal
industry, where the former mine-owners were

"... guaranteed their £12 million or so a year
interest, in good years and bad, before a penny
is available to improve wages and conditions".

He went on to condemn the Government and the Coal Board for
refusing the miners' requests for information concerning the
prices at which coal was sold to industry. They kept it a secret,
he said, because it would "expose the way in which this nation-
alised industry is being milked by big business". It was, he
declared, up to the miners' "great union" to change their position.
But the fight could not be confined to the mining industry on its
own; "It must go along with the fight for Socialist nationalisation
of all the main industries". This, he argued, would be the only
guarantee to the workers that there would be full employment and
that life would get "happier and easier from year to year".33

This was a brave speech to make under the circumstances. Had he
so wished, he could have delivered a text which would have served
as an inoffensive cosmetic, designed to disguise the union's in-
ternal political divisions. Instead, he chose to rub into the
faces of his political antagonists an aggressive and eloquent
condemnation of the kind of "collaborationist" wages policy which
he believed would lead inevitably to increased work-loads and
spiralling productivity deals. This was typical of Paynter.
Time and again, one finds in his speeches an open socialist
commitment of a kind which leading trade-unionists tended in-

33. Ibid., "Presidential Address".
creasingly to shrink away from during the early and mid-'Fifties. He spurned the narrow visions which so often accompanied mere wage-militancy and, as we have seen, he rarely missed an opportunity to remind those amongst his members who were prone to indulge in sectional strikes of the potential danger which their actions held for working class unity.

His speech was received with approbation by the assembled delegates and the 1954 Annual Conference ended with no obvious display of disunity within the miners' ranks. The more sensitive amongst observers would however, have spotted several of the old political fractures lying just below the Conference's surface. One indication of their existence was provided in the debate which surrounded a Penallta Lodge resolution calling upon the Government to

"... transfer responsibility of all compensation payments to the former owners from the mining industry to the Exchequer or Treasury Funds". 34

This was challenged by an amendment from the Rhigos Lodge which argued that the resolution should read, simply, that, "This Conference calls upon the Government to terminate the interest paid to the former coalowners". 35 The Penallta resolution reflected the rather vague compromises being floated upon the subject by interested Labour M.P.'s, at the time. The Rhigos amendment, on the other hand, was undoubtedly much closer to the sense of indignation which the subject had long provoked amongst very

34. Ibid., "Agenda", p. 18. The resolution was seconded by the Wyndham Lodge.
35. Ibid., Amendment seconded by Onllwyn No. 1 Lodge.
large sections of the coalfield's workforce - and, especially, amongst the Communist sections. The proposers of the amendment, Rhigos and their seconders, Onllwyn, were both recognised as "Left-wing" Lodges, whereas Penalita epitomized the type of "loyal-Labour" Lodge encountered throughout the eastern coalfield.

The amendment was carried comfortably - an event which must have provided welcome relief to those on the union's political Left who could still taste the sourness of the defeat which they had suffered at the Wages Ballot months earlier.

In the pits themselves, however, the Conference debates and speeches appear to have had little impact. Paynter's advocacy of unity could not prevent another rash of unofficial strikes. Even at Parc and Dare, for example, the lodge committee found itself struggling to contain sectionalist strikers. The lodge minutes record that groups of colliers were walking out of the 2' 9" seam,

"... thereby creating disunity amongst the members ..., which not only meant a serious financial loss, but it placed the Coal Board in an infinitely stronger position, in the forthcoming negotiations, regarding the 2' 9" Price List. But the paramount factor was that sections of workmen were violating Lodge decisions and principles, which could not be tolerated".36

At a General Meeting of Parc and Dare, workmen agreed "unanimously" to reaffirm their Annual Meeting decision that

"... no Sectional Action be taken, until the matter is first discussed by a General Meeting of the Lodge. Any section doing so would not have the backing, service or protection of the Lodge or the Union".37

36. Parc and Dare Minutes, 22.5.54.
37. Ibid.
Further down the Rhondda Valley, a similar train of events provoked a serious dispute at the Lewis Merthyr Colliery where 82 miners were given dismissal notices because of a go-slow by 35 face-workers. The dismissed men included day-wage men who were admitted by the Coal Board to have been innocent of any charge of indulging in restrictive practices and who were laid-off because the face-workers refused to abide by the pit's mutually-agreed arbitration procedure. The Finance Director of the S. Western Coal Board, Mr. A. Lindsay referred to the dispute when opening the new pit-head baths at Nantgarw Colliery. It was, he said,

"symptomatic of the extensive trouble (which was) affecting the whole coalfield".

He claimed that S. Wales strikers had caused no less than three quarters of the total estimated tonnage lost through disputes nationally during the first six months of 1954. These strikes and go-slows were, for the most part, confined to "certain pockets of the coalfield" but, he declared, they had a debilitating overall effect upon the coalfield's productivity — a fact which was causing the miners' union as much anxiety as it was the management. Output per manshift in S. Wales, he claimed, was only 18.4 cwts., compared with 25.2 cwts., in other Divisions which were, as a result, "carrying South Wales on their backs". There was, he alleged, no "technical justification" for this "terrific disparity". The wages of colliers under nationalisation had "increased from 35/9d., per ton to 47/2d., per ton", an increase which, he said, represented a yearly increase of £4.5 millions and he went on to list some of the "innumerable improvements"
which had occurred in the fields of welfare and pensions. To bring themselves up to the productivity levels of miners in other Divisions, the men of S. Wales would, he said, have to effect a "colossal" increase in output. For its part, the Coal Board had authorized capital expenditure in S. Wales of £60 millions during the previous seven years. But, he declared, the Division had been "physically able" to spend only £33 millions. He did not however, expand upon the reasons for this under-expenditure. He merely went on to state that, whilst the other Divisions had cleared a profit of £72 millions during the previous seven years, S. Wales had lost £54.5 millions; in other words, they had "absorbed" 75% of the inland profits which the other Divisions had made.  

 Appropriately enough, Paynter chose, as the venue for his reply to Lindsay's allegations, a ceremony staged to open the new pit-head baths at the rejuvenated Mardy Colliery into which had been invested some £4 millions of Coal Board capital. The S. Wales Miners' President declared that Lindsay's statements had been "very unfortunate" and not calculated to improve labour relations. Referring to the allegation that there was no justification, on technical grounds, for the disparity between S. Wales output and that obtaining in the rest of the country, he said that, whilst union leaders accepted responsibility for restrictions and sectional strikes, the Joint Investigation made by the Board and the union had revealed a very backward standard of technical efficiency. The greater increase in production in the pits of the

38. C.C., 26.8.54.
Midlands, he declared, had been achieved mainly on the basis of new power-loading equipment:

"... in 1952", he said, "there were only 18 power-loaders in the S. Western Division and in 1953 only 19, and they were responsible for less than 4.5% of the total output".

He added that, since Vesting Day, the S. Western Division had allowed the "grass to grow under its feet". Only during 1953/54 had there been "any serious and effective attempt to reorganise in higher technical efficiency". 39

Paynter's allegations were answered some three weeks later by the Production Director of the S. Western Division, Mr. G.S. Morgan. At the opening of the Tirherbert and Tower Collieries' pit-head baths, he said that he believed that low mechanisation in South Wales was the result of a "backward attitude of mind" towards machines on the part of the miner. 40 Morgan's allegations were backed up shortly afterwards by another Divisional Manager who attacked what he termed the "minority" of mineworkers - those who were "... creating disorganisation entirely disproportionate to their numbers". They were, he said, "... not doing a fair day's work and ignoring the proper machinery to redress grievances". 41

39. C.G., 2.9.54. Mardy Colliery had, of course, been Arthur Horner's old centre of operations and he attended the opening ceremony where the manager of the pit presented him with a silver tankard paid for by the workforce - a potent symbol, indeed, of the way in which the relationships between management and union had changed upon the coalfield since the turbulent 1930s.
40. C.G., 23.9.54.
41. Ibid., 4.11.54.
As if to emphasise the validity of these analyses, Tirherbert Colliery witnessed the first stay-down strike to have occurred on the coalfield for six years. It happened just over a month after the ceremony to mark the opening of the colliery's new pit-head baths and some three weeks or so before the occurrence of another stay-down, this time at the Glenrhondda Colliery, four miles to the south of Tirherbert, in the "blind-end" of Rhondda Fawr.

Both pits previously had held reputations as the workplaces of militant, but disciplined, Lodge members and both strikes took the coalfield somewhat by surprise. The Tirherbert stay-down involved just eight miners who managed to make idle some 300 of their workmates by refusing to surface for four days. Led by an energetic one-time Communist-turned Moral Rearmer, Jack Addiscott, the stay-downers demanded the transfer of Tirherbert's 29 year-old colliery manager, Jack Ellis, and in support of their demand, they listed a number of grievances concerning working conditions and haulage accidents which they alleged had taken place at the mine since Ellis's appointment. They declared, in addition, that he had been responsible for a decline in productivity. The Coal Board refuted all of the men's claims; productivity, it was announced, had actually risen since Ellis's arrival and the stay-down was denounced as "futile and output wasting". Bill Paynter arrived at the pit and persuaded the men to call off their action, though they refused to do so until after "stop-tap"; Paynter recalled that the stay-downers had heard from the deputies inspecting the mine that bets had been laid in the nearby village

42. Ibid., 11.11.54.
of Hirwaun that they would be out for their Saturday-night drink before the pubs closed:

"It was thought to be a safe bet, such were the reputations of one or two of the leaders, but it turned out a loser."\textsuperscript{43}

The reasons for the stay-down were probably a good deal more complex than those which received publicity. Contrary to the Coal Board's denials, records show that production did indeed fall during the two years in which Jack Ellis managed Tirherbert (roughly from the Summer of 1954 until the Summer of 1956):

Table One

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\hline
\hline
Number of men working below ground & 337 & 353 & 333 & 328 & 320 & 321 & 161 \\
\hline
Number of men working above ground & 74 & 78 & 86 & 86 & 90 & 89 & 60 \\
\hline
ANNUAL PRODUCTION (TONS) & 202000 & 195000 & 168000 & 160000 & 141000 & 143000 & 95120 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Information gathered from "Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Review", Vols. 1952-1958

\textsuperscript{43} W. Paynter, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 115.
However, Table One indicates clearly that production had been falling since 1952 - though the fall was more marked during the year in which Ellis took over, 1954. Coincidental with this fall was a slight loss of manpower below ground and a corresponding rise of manpower above ground; this in itself can hardly have been conducive to improved production although a subsequent slight increase in numbers employed both below and above ground in 1955-56 did nothing to prevent a further decline.

Ellis left Tirherbert for its neighbouring colliery, Tower, in 1956 and his arrival at his new pit was greeted with a decline in production similar to that suffered by Tirherbert:

**Table Two**

Tower Colliery Statistics, 1954-1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Number of men working below ground</th>
<th>Number of men working above ground</th>
<th>Annual Production (TONS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>G. REES</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>410000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>G. REES</td>
<td>1071</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>430000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>G. REES</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>383000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>J. ELLIS</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>284000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>J. ELLIS</td>
<td>1180</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>296476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>J. ELLIS</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>317000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>J. ELLIS</td>
<td>1054</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>294820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information gathered from "Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Review", Vols. 1954-1960
Once again however, it is impossible to tell if the big fall in production during 1956 took place before, or during Ellis's initial period as manager. None of these statistics are sufficiently detailed to support any case against Ellis's ability as a manager; mines are not like car plants or bottle factories, and production cannot be controlled to anything approaching the same degree as obtains in most factories. There are, in every coal mine (and especially so in the central and western mines of S. Wales), literally hundreds of variables which can affect the level of production. Chronology and old age are not the least of these and, in 1954-55, Tirherbert was beginning its run-down (it closed in 1958). Tower, on the other hand, was undergoing large-scale changes, both in the methods and allocation of production, during the period of Ellis's management. The fact that Tower was still operating in 1978 may well be interpreted as tribute enough to the man's ability.

Ellis himself held a reputation for bluntness and a tendency towards authoritarianism. His nickname was "Sack 'em Jack" and he was reputed to have been tutored in his craft by fellow authoritarians in the employ of Powell Duffryn. At the time of the Tirherbert stay-down he was 29: young for a manager and, no doubt, he was aggressively ambitious. Tirherbert before his arrival, had seen a rapid turnover of managers: he was the fourth to arrive in the six years which had passed since the retirement of F.C. Beale who had managed the pit for the previous seven consecutive years. The only relatively settled institution at Tirherbert at the time of his arrival was the workmen's Lodge.
As we have seen earlier, (Chapter 12, pp.206-207) it was a Lodge which was strong and effective enough to have provided a long-term contrast with the somewhat weaker lodge at the neighbouring Tower Colliery. The Tirherbert workmen's Committee contained within its ranks men who had held active trade-union office since before the Lock-out of 1926. The mine itself was relatively small and the organisation was "tight". The Committee men had, as one ex-member recalled, "seen off" three managers since the retirement of Beale and they had operated a ban on Saturday working which had proved more effective and durable than at almost any other pit on the coalfield. The ban had been organised and operated in conjunction with elements of the Shakespeare Hotel group and Tirherbert delegates had long been involved in several of these unofficial movements. The young Ellis then, would have found himself faced with a formidable lodge committee at a time when the militant "Left" on the coalfield was unsettled and unhappy with the behaviour of the NUM's national officers and with the results obtained during wage negotiations. The potential for some kind of "showdown" was self-evident and Ellis, it seems, was not a man to back away from such a situation.

Long after the stay-down had ended and Tirherbert had closed, several of the pit's ex-workmen sought to explain the meaning of the strike in terms different to those cited by the NCB. It occurred, they said, because they were "fed-up" with the way in which their pit, and the coal industry in general, was being managed. The mining bureaucracy had become "top-heavy" and management "hadn't changed one bit" since before nationalisation. One

ex-Tirherbert man went as far as to admit that he and his workmates had expected that nationalisation would bring with it some kind of "worker's control" within the industry. He referred specifically to a train of events which had occurred some two years previous to the 1954 stay-down. In August, 1952, it will be recalled, large sections of the S. Wales membership of the National Association of Colliery Overmen and Deputies, staged an unofficial strike which, in turn, caused the lay-off of thousands of miners - including those working at Tirherbert. Distressed at the prospect of losing their wages, the men held a mass meeting to coincide with a visit to the Area of the miners' national president, Will Lawther. Setting the scene, the ex-Tirherbert man recalled that things had been ".... quite as bad under nationalisation" as they had previously. Asked why, he explained "Well, it's obvious. The men who took over after nationalisation were the same men who ran Powell Duffryns. Same officials and bosses you had. If there was a change it was in the unions. I remember Will Lawther, when the officials were striking for money; the collieries were closed and we had men who had passed their "Papers"* and were capable of taking the colliery over. Will Lawther the ex-Communist came up. I was in the C.P. once remember. And we asked him if we could take over the colliery - leave the officials to strike as they liked and we'd run it. "Well, this was supposed to be part of nationalisation, wasn't it? 'No fear boys, nothing doing', he said. We were more or less locked out and because the dispute was within the industry we weren't pulling unemployment benefit ....

* I.E. Ordinary miners who had taken and passed theoretical examinations which would have entitled them, had they so wished, to apply for jobs as colliery officials. Some even went as far as achieving qualifications to the status of what might be termed "shadow" colliery managers. They were men who chose, however, to remain within the ranks of the non-salaried workforce.
"We had men who were capable of running the pit, who had passed their certificates: Addiscott in Hirwaun was one who was with me. If we'd have had that breakthrough we'd have got rid of all them ex-officials of the Powell Duffryn see. That was the change that was wanted see; everybody's sore point it was then.

"I remember working as a kid when there were men of 70 working underground, with big beards. 'Wait 'till nationalisation comes', they'd say, but they had a great disappointment, because what did you have? Closures". 45

However much this sense of "disappointment" may have become exaggerated as a causal factor over the intervening years, there can be little doubt that its existence at Tirherbert can have done nothing to sweeten the relationship which existed between the Lodge and the pit's new manager. The ramifications of the "disappointment" theory are enormous. It could have been used at the time to excuse almost any unconstitutional action and most probably was by those articulate enough to have done so. Rarely, if ever, is it mentioned in contemporary reports or accounts of strikes and go-slows, however. It is one of those intangible and unquantifiable factors which may even have remained the private property of a small number of sensitive and lively minds, manifesting itself only during times of relative crisis or confrontation with a hostile management. Conversely, it may have been common property but expressed with that same lack of articulation which characterised most workers' expression of their brand of class-consciousness. Whichever may have been the case, it cannot be dismissed lightly as a possible contributory factor to the high strike rate which obtained within this sector of the

45. Recording of Tommy Howells, op. cit.
The Glenrhondda stay-down which followed closely on the heels of that at Tirherbert appears to have been a less complex affair. 400 miners were laid off when 21 colliers refused to surface for just over two days in support of a protest by one of their number for payment which he allegedly lost when his piecework production was interrupted due to the necessity to remove some timber from his place of work.46 Whilst the strikers were still below ground, the Coal Board summarily dismissed them on the grounds that they were infringing the Coal Mines Regulations by staying below in excess of statutory hours. It was subsequently reported that the Board's use of this ploy "proved a shock" to the strikers and that it served as warning to all others who might have been planning the use of similar tactics.47

The dismissed men were reinstated only after they had given an undertaking that they would not resort to irregular action in the future. The miners' union, it was reported, welcomed this attempt by the Board to improve pit discipline.48 The sense of "disappointment" mentioned at Tirherbert was more in evidence at a dispute which occurred in Cefn Coed - a mine in the Dulais Valley - shortly after the Tirherbert stay-down. Once again, the Lodge at Cefn Coed was a strong and effective one, deeply involved in the Shakespeare Hotel movement and demonstrably capable of controlling its own membership. Its industrial relations record had been good and the strike caused as much surprise to the Area Union and Divisional Management as had those at Tir-

46. C.G., 2.12.54.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
At Cefn Coed it centred upon the use which the Coal Board were making of private contractors inside the pit. A Wimpey's drivage team was enlarging the shaft sump and, in doing so, arousing resentment on account of the fact that it was "being sent shotfirers or any other experts" whenever it required them. This, it was alleged, was delaying work in other parts of the colliery and was thereby reducing earnings. The Lodge Minute Book records that,

"It was unanimously agreed that (the Committee) notify the Lodge over the microphone, that any member who works a part or whole shift in this drivage from next Monday onwards will lose all seniority in Cefn Coed as far as the Lodge is concerned".

This was not enough for some of those suffering shortages of helpers and equipment at the coal face however, and 500 men struck work in support of two daywage miners who refused to obey a managerial order for them to work with the Wimpey's team. "Outrage" was expressed that the nationalised Coal Board should continue to allow private companies to reap profits from the coal industry, and the Lodge Committee declared that, henceforward, none of the pit's workforce would be prepared to place themselves "... at the beck and call of Wimpey whatever the outcome". The local Miners' Agent visited the pit and declared his distaste for the way in which the Coal Board was continuing to hire private contractors. After recommending the strikers to return to work, he stated that, in his opinion, "... the Wimpey problem was much too
big a problem for one Lodge to deal with .... "It must", he said, "be tackled by the Union", adding that "Preference in all departments" had been given to Wimpey by the Board.

The question of the use of private contractors continues to provoke anger in the pits, even in 1978, but in 1954, at a pit so closely identified (as was Cefn Coed) with an unofficial movement whose general aims were to push the Miners' Executive "leftwards", the issue must have served as an excellent focus for any expression of disappointment which may have been provoked by the alleged shortcomings of nationalisation. At the very least, it helped perpetuate a widespread feeling that the transformation from private to public ownership was somehow incomplete. The editor of the "Colliery Guardian" referred to it in his summary of labour relations on the coalfield during the 12 months ending in December, 1954:

"This coalfield has long been a hotbed of discontent under the old regime", he wrote, "and while considerable improvement has taken place in labour relations they are still disturbed by two factors:

(1) old animosities which die hard, and
(2) the failure of the younger miners of today to appreciate fully the real extent of the improvement in their status. To far too many miners the NCB is the old coalowner in disguise and a fair target for all sorts of grievances. Above all, the miners in South Wales, where the bulk of Parliamentary seats are held by miners' nominees, are over-politically minded and have too often 'taken it out of the coal industry' where grievances concerning them have no direct relation to their employment".

52. Cefn Coed Lodge Minutes, 17.11.54.
53. C.G., 6.1.55.
By the definition of the Colliery Guardian's editor, the hottest spot on this "bed of discontent" would almost certainly have been that most "over-politically minded" of South Wales communities, the Rhondda, and in mid-January, the Coal Board's Area Manager presented himself at one of the Rhondda's most militant pits - Fernhill - ostensibly to open the newly constructed pithead baths. He did not however, miss the opportunity of using the platform afforded him to condemn what he called "pettiness and go-slow policies". He recommended that the miners "stop this silliness and give the Board a fair crack of the whip". He must have been disappointed with the response which his speech provoked however, for less than two months later, 1,000 Fernhill miners embarked upon a 10-day strike over a dispute concerning management's plans for allocating workplaces at a mechanised face which was just being brought into production.

It was the kind of dispute which was subsequently to cause problems at most pits where men maintained a strong Seniority Rule. The members of the Divisional Board, for their part, desired that all of their new and very costly coal-faces be manned by the fittest and most able amongst their employees; but this invariably meant that contraventions of the Seniority Rule would occur, simply because the most senior men at the point of production were not necessarily the fittest and most able. At Fernhill, the Lodge demanded that it retain the power to veto any allocations of places which management cared to make and the strike was called off only after a compromise had been reached which the Lodge considered satisfactory.

Worried, perhaps, by the almost farcical way in which unofficial strikes followed directly upon pit-head bath pep-talks by Coal Board officials, the Chairman of the S. Western Divisional Board, David M. Rees, chose as the venue for his next "state of the coalfield" speech a far less risky platform. At the annual conference of the S. Western Division of the British Association of Colliery Managers, he informed his audience that in 1954 there had taken place some "501 stoppages and 274 incidents of restriction of output" in the pits of South Wales.\(^5\) There was, he said, a "non-cooperative state of mind" in evidence which threatened to "set at naught the efforts of the NCB to reconstitute the South Wales coalfield". He made it clear however, that he thought that this non-cooperation was by no means exclusive to the mineworkers. Colliery officials too, (though not managers) were guilty of partaking in "strikes and ca'canny and men accepting the minimum as the maximum of their effort".

Neither were bad labour relations attributable to any one side, he argued; they could be "minimised by diplomacy and immediate attention to difficulties and grievances". He criticised what he termed "under-enterprise" on the part of management in not taking the full opportunity presented them to mechanise. Less than 2% of the 1,000 working districts in S. Wales had been mechanised, he informed them, and that was "an absurdly low percentage".\(^6\)

The response of speakers representing the Colliery Managers was somewhat predictable. Their Divisional Chairman announced that

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\(^5\) Causing, between them, an estimated loss of 448,000 tons of coal. C.G., 31.3.55.

\(^6\) Ibid.
at no time had there been a greater need for "team spirit" in the Division than was needed in 1955. He added that he believed that wherever the Coal Board encountered "difficulties" with its labour force it should be prepared to "correct and discipline both men and management"; he did not however, specify which form of discipline he envisaged being meted out to errant managers.

Rees' decision to publicise his doubts concerning the handling of industrial relations is indicative of the mounting concern which the strikes provoked at all levels within the industry. So-called "tit-for-tat" strikes, which by 1955 were relatively commonplace, proved particularly worrying both to Divisional Management and the union's Area Executive. A typical "tit-for-tat" occurred at Bargoed Colliery during early April and involved some 700 workers. It began when colliers in one district of the pit struck work over a wage demand. Colliers in three other districts left their place in sympathy and, in doing so, caused the lay-off of about 400 day-wage men who, having been sent home, lost their weekly bonus shift. The colliers decided to resume work the next day only to find that the day-wage men, "incensed" at being made idle the day before, had decided they would strike and cause the colliers to be laid off.58

The final weeks of April witnessed a spate of go-slows and strikes, including a stay-down at Pontremawr. In one week alone, no fewer than 25 collieries were affected by such actions, most of them for short periods of time only, but the results were sufficient enough to cause S. Wales miners' leaders to admit that the atmos-

58. Ibid., 14.4.55.
phere in the coalfield was now "worse than at any time since nationalisation" and that they were largely helpless to alter it since the strikes were "mostly over small grievances and customs". At the Miners' Annual Conference in May, Paynter reported that a "serious deterioration" had taken place in the industry. He reported that the "tremendous and abounding goodwill evinced in the early days of nationalisation" had been completely lost. The loss of confidence in the NCB, he said, was "one of the intangibles in the present situation"; the Divisional Coal Board and the union had reached "many points of agreement in the diagnosis as to what is wrong" but he had to report that "concrete remedies" still eluded them.

He referred the delegates to the so-called "What's Wrong" investigation which had been carried out jointly by the union and the Coal Board in the pits of the Rhondda Valley. It had produced no new findings. Stoppages were attributed largely to piece-workers and the methods used for assessing their earnings. Other major causes of dispute were the payment of guaranteed wage claims and the awarding of special allowances for working in abnormal places at the coalface. But the investigation concluded that the attitude of the "dominant sections" of the workmen towards the Coal Board had changed in recent years. This, it claimed, was due largely to their experience in dealing with disputes at the place of work. They had found that they were "able to secure redress of their just grievances in many instances by taking or threatening to take action". They were thus able to solve their

59. Ibid., 21.4.55.
60. SWNUM, E.C. Minutes, A.C.R., 9-11.5.55.
difficulties in this manner "when the Lodge Committee had failed in the first stage of the conciliation machinery". This, in turn, tended to bring the conciliation machinery into "disrepute".61

The Chairman of the Groesfaen Lodge of the western Rhymney Valley spoke for a great many other Lodge Committee men when he informed the Conference that, in his opinion, the E.C. should give "... much more serious consideration to this question than what is contained in this report. Lodge Officers and Committee men are being pilloried in the Lodges on these issues", and he was of the view that the Area Executive Council should ease the problems faced by Lodge Officers by supplying them with clearer instructions as to which course of action they should adopt in the event of "illegal" actions occurring at their pits.62

The General Secretary of the S. Wales Miners, Bill Crews, was less pessimistic, however. He dismissed the epidemic of strikes as constituting no more than a "passing phase" and he announced that proposals were "under examination" to try and improve relations. In the meantime, he argued, the problem was to "restore faith in the conciliation machinery".63

Echoing the statements of the Divisional Coal Board's Chairman concerning the lack of mechanisation in S. Wales, Paynter highlighted the comparative backwardness in this respect of South Wales:

61. Ibid.
62. Ibid. The speaker was Arthur Owens.
63. Ibid.
"In the East Midlands .... there is 127,900 yards of face worked with a manpower of about 90,000 compared with 108,220 yards worked by 98,000 in S. Wales and the rest of the Division. The number of conveyor transfer and loading points in the East Midlands are one and a half times as many as in the S. Western Division with a lesser number of men. In coal getting equipment the ratio is 2:1. Machines, like money, flowed to increasing returns. The reverse was also true. Returns would also be realised in direct proportion to the machines or outside agencies which were introduced into the Division".  

These statistics, claimed Paynter, did much to explain the differences between the Divisional productive standards and he proceeded to explain how poorly, in terms of production achievement, was the single most popular piece of machinery in Welsh pits, the pneumatic drill. He informed the delegates that the Executive took the "gloomy view" that

"in absence of new manpower, the belated results of reorganisation schemes and the aging mining population, there is not much chance of a radical improvement in productive results in this and other Divisions".  

The good intentions expressed at the Conference became submerged, almost immediately, by a renewal of unofficial action in the pits of Gwaun-cae-gurwen and the Upper-Swansea Valley. Go-slow tactics by the miners of Pwllbach Colliery provoked the Coal Board into

* The Rhigos Lodge, for example, successfully proposed a resolution calling for the extension of mechanisation in order that the resulting high productivity might facilitate the reduction of the miners' working day to seven hours for an underground worker and seven and a half for a surface worker. Annual Conference Agenda, May, 1955, p. 8.

64. C.G., 5.5.55.
65. Ibid.
issuing dismissal notices to 200 of the 450 working there. The Coal Board claimed that the men involved had been producing only 1,500 tons per week when the normal output was 2,500 tons. The miners, on the other hand, complained that in one part of the colliery - a part which had not been mechanised - certain concessionary payments had been withdrawn. Output was increased however, and the dismissal notices withdrawn.

Once again, Paynter reacted to these events by supplementing his attack on unofficial actions with concrete proposals for the removal of what he believed to be the root causes of the men's dissatisfaction. He called for the immediate introduction of a new Wages Structure and an accompanying increase in minimum standard rates. He wanted the implementation of a seven hour day, five days a week; the reorganisation of production on the coalfield and the introduction of fundamental changes in the "structure of nationalisation within the industry". Mining, he said, could only function effectively if it was operated to "assist in the realisation of the wider socialisation of industry".

Like the "good intentions" expressed at the Annual Conference, Paynter's proposals passed largely over the heads of the unofficial strikers. At the Steer and East Collieries in Gwaun-cae-gurwen, for example, 150 "blameless" daywage workers were dismissed because a go-slow by faceworkers meant that there was insufficient coal for them to deal with in the haulage and surface

66. Ibid., 12.5.55.
67. SWNUM., E.C. Minutes, A.D.C., 6.5.55.
sections. Output per manshift in the anthracite area was reported to be as low as 10 cwt. (overall) as against an average of 18 cwt. in the coalfield as a whole. There were anthracite pits where miners were reported to be "taking it easy" and not suffering for it

"financially because in many pits they enjoy special allowances given years ago for working in difficult places, which may amount to a half-shift bonus a day, and although conditions may have changed, they resent any tampering with these allowances which it has become a "custom" to pay". 68

A daywage increase of 11/6d., per week was paid out on May 12th and was followed, almost immediately, by loud grumbles from pieceworkers who were concerned that their wage differentials were being eroded. The outlook for improved industrial relations was gloomier than ever, but the Coal Board and the union nevertheless managed to extract a crumb of comfort from the developments at Pwllbach colliery where output had been increased as a result of the Board's threats to sack 200 miners. It was announced, after the cessation of the go-slow, that the O.M.S. had increased from an average of 9-15 cwts. per faceworker to an average of 80-90 cwts. per day. In promoting this increase, the Coal Board and the union had persuaded the men to make all efforts to continue their "diligent trend of cooperation and effort; to discuss grievances constitutionally; to assist management in the allocation of labour and task assessment; to discuss with management any miner not pulling his weight; to consider the allocation of suitable men for specific jobs; to fill clean coal and to accept a continuous examination of all factors affecting output". 69

68. C.G., 19.5.55.
69. Ibid., 26.5.55.
The list of concessions reads like the script of an old anthracite coalowner's favourite dream. Never, even in the darkest days of the inter-war depression, would the miners of Pwllbach or, indeed, of any of the other "self-respecting" anthracite Lodges, have contemplated relinquishing such advantages to their employers. And yet, there was also an inevitability about the way in which the Coal Board's terms were forced upon Pwllbach. Time and the development of monopoly ownership had caught up with the pit's style of trade unionism, for mighty as Amalgamated Anthracite (Pwllbach's old owners) had been, they were lightweights compared to the National Coal Board. To its new owners, Pwllbach was little more than one of a number of unproductive and troublesome anthracite pits. It was hardly as large as a single district of almost any one of the Board's Midlands pits; its only justification for continued existence was the fact that it produced anthracite. And anthracite was in high demand.

It required little contemporary insight to interpret the major post-nationalisation developments of mining organisation as indicating the impending demise of the more troublesome of the small mines. In May 1955, the Pwllbach militants caught a whiff of their own mortality. With the kind of resignation which accompanies a sane acceptance of inevitable defeat, they slunk into line and began subscribing to a code of discipline which, they were sure, awaited all other anthracite militants who desired to remain in the employ of the Board. But not all militants displayed such perception. There were others who looked upon Pwllbach's "step-down" with the kind of disdain which Wellington
might have reserved for a particularly bright platoon of ex-
unemployed working men which had decided to retreat at a crucial
stage of the battle of Waterloo. Amongst the most disdainful
of these were the militants of Brynhenllys Colliery, an anthracite
pit which was situated just two miles upstream of Pwllbach,
near the village of Cwmllynfell - hardly shouting distance, in
fact, from that citadel of potential industrial Kamikazes, Gwaun-
cae-gurwen.

On August 12th, 1955, the Divisional Coal Board issued notices
terminating contracts to 193 Brynhenllys miners who, according
to the Board, had between them been responsible for the loss of
some £3.5 millions in lost production during 1954.70 "This
decision" said the Coal Board in an official statement,
"follows a period in which every opportunity
has been provided for the men to improve their
O.W.S. but it has remained persistently low".

The problems of Brynhenllys had been subject to NUM/NCB discussion
since 1952 and in June, 1955, Paynter issued a special plea to
the Board in which he promised the cooperation of the miners in
return for continued production at the colliery. For their part,
the miners agreed to the following undertakings.

(1) That there should be a reassessment of tasks.
(2) Every man would work a full shift.
(3) The best men would be selected for special work.
(4) The men would undertake to use the machinery to settle
    disputed cases.
(5) There would be no restrictions of effort pending the settle-
    ment of disputes.

70. Ibid., 18.8.55.
The management undertook to open two new production faces, the potential output of which was 150 tons per day. (at an overall O.M.S. 15\(\frac{1}{2}\) cwts.) The actual results achieved fell far short of this, however. Between July 18th and August 13th, the average daily output was 66 tons; the Face O.M.S., 15.7 cwts. and the Overall O.M.S. 7.4 cwts.\(^71\) Restrictive practices were reported as being initiated amongst the following grades: Colliers, Borers, Roadworkers, Pipe Turners, Coal Cuttermen, Conveyor Fitters, Supplies Men and Screenmen. The colliery Manager was reported as having "made representations to the Lodge Committee on 12 occasions in 21 days on the effect of these restrictive practices and the future of the colliery".\(^72\) The Lodge Officials claimed that they had done all in their powers to persuade the men to respond to the agreed list of undertakings but they were forced to admit (at a meeting with the Area E.C.) that they had been unable to get the workmen at the pit to do so. The E.C. concluded that there "appeared to be no sense of responsibility as far as the workmen were concerned" and that it was apparent that no effort had been made to operate the Agreement arrived at.\(^73\)

Paynter reported that the union could "do no more to assist the Brynhenllys workmen" and warned the Pwllbach and Gwaun-cae-gurwen members that unless there was a sustained improvement, they too, faced a similar fate:

"We have", he said, "failed to control our men, and the lack of discipline at the Brynhenllys Colliery was such that men under all pretexts decided on going-slow or walking-out".\(^74\)

\(^71\) SWNUM., E.C. Minutes, A.D.C., 26.8.55. Although this represented less than half of the potential output and O.M.S., it was a good deal better than the 2\(\frac{1}{2}\) cwts. O.M.S. achieved during June.
\(^72\) Ibid.
\(^73\) Ibid.
\(^74\) Ibid.
However, he warned the employers that the union was not prepared "to do the dirty work for the Board". The union's function, he informed them, was "to protect the workmen and not manage the pits". 75

After a great deal of deliberation, the Area E.C. resolved that they would do nothing further to assist the Brynhenllys workmen as they "had refused to assist themselves"; in reply to which, the Brynhenllys Lodge delegates complained that they had "fallen down" because "a small minority" of the pit's workforce were not prepared to carry out Lodge policy and they stated that they believed that they were being used as "whipping boys" and that the fate which was meted out to them would be "meted out to adjacent collieries in the very near future". They concluded by stating that it was their belief that "weak management" lay at the root of the colliery's problems. 76

At a separate Area Conference convened by the E.C. to discuss the Brynhenllys issue, a stormy debate ensued between, on the one hand, those who suspected an NCB conspiracy to rid the industry of its militants and, on the other, those who resented the way in which certain members refused to budge in a direction which might be helpful to the union. The Abercrave Lodge delegate, for example, reckoned that the NCB's action was "political": a move designed

"to work for a policy of unemployment, thereby creating a surplus of labour which could be used as a lever against the working class people who were out for a decent standard of living".

75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
He was backed by the Seven Sisters delegate and by the delegate from the big Penrhiwcheiber Lodge who declared that the union was "running away from the problem" and that the Board, even if it determined on closure, should find work for the dismissed men in other pits. Agreeing with this analysis, the Lodge delegate of Wyllie colliery in Monmouthshire stressed how "unhelpful" weak management could be. On the other hand, a number of speakers rose to back the E.C's line that if the union failed to recognise and combat indiscipline then it was avoiding "a most important problem". They emphasised that there should be a sense of responsibility evident amongst the members in carrying out union policy.77

This analysis was given further support by the speech delivered to the Conference by Trevor James the Miners' Agent for the Area in which Brynhenllys was situated. He claimed that the trouble was not political. There was, he said, ".... no wage dispute. In fact, the rates paid (at Brynhenllys) were 200% above those paid in the rest of the coalfield".

Attacking the spirit which, as he saw it, had provoked the Brynhenllys closure threat, he declared that it was ".... only by the workmen in the pits in the area having a sense of responsibility that the canker which exists there can be removed".

Supporting Trevor James's analysis, Paynter reminded his audience that, with regard to the possible employment of Brynhenllys men at other pits in the area, the prospects were made more bleak than they might have been by the very strict application of the Seniority Rule in the anthracite sector.

77. Ibid.
The colliery closed on August 27th; 193 men were dismissed for "go-slow, indiscipline and refusal to cooperate with management". No provision was made for finding alternative work for the dismissed men and a public warning was issued by the Board to the miners at Pwllbach, Cwiallynfell and Gwaun-cae-gurwen to the effect that they, too, were "under close examination".78 Within four weeks, the Coal Board began the operation of dismantling Brynhenllys - in defiance of a last minute rescue attempt by 20 anthracite Lodges who claimed that the Chairman of the S. Western Divisional Coal Board had informed various M.P's and members of local authorities that if output in other anthracite pits was improved he would consider reopening Brynhenllys.

The twenty Lodges had sent a joint delegation to Cardiff seeking an interview with the union's Area E.C., but Paynter and his fellow Executive members refused it on the grounds that the whole protest movement was allegedly organised by unofficial joint committees operating contrary to the constitution of the miners' union. In addition, Paynter claimed that Rees had informed him that he'd made none of the statements to M.P's and local authorities which had been attributed to him.79

The "unofficials" found that they were not able to muster the kind of mass support for Brynhenllys which they had succeeded in mustering for Wern Tarw four years earlier. What active support there was, was confined almost entirely to the anthracite sector. Throughout the rest of the field there was prevalent a feeling that, distasteful though the closure was, the Brynhenllys men

78. CG., 1.9.55.
79. Ibid., 22.9.55.
nevertheless had "asked for it" by their intransigent behaviour.

The Coal Board can have had little reason for rejoicing however, for the closure appears to have had no immediate impact as a disciplinary measure. Stoppages occurred within weeks at Cwmllynfell, Bargoed, Abercraev and Duffryn Rhondda; indeed, by November it was becoming clear that 1955 would enter the records as having experienced the highest incidence of strikes and restrictions since Vesting Day, 1947. The bulk of these actions took place in the pits of the Neath, Maesteg and Rhondda Areas but, as Table Three and Figure One illustrate, (pp.315-316) they were by no means confined to these Areas. A comparison of the 1954 and 1955 figures shows that all Areas, except those of Swansea and Aberdare, experienced increases of 100% or more.

Not surprisingly however, both the Miners' Executive and the Coal Board chose to concentrate their anti-strike propaganda upon the worst-offending Areas. Strikes in November at Glyncorrwg, Parc and Dare, Cwm Llantwit and Wyndham (all situated in the Rhondda and Maesteg Areas) persuaded Horner that he should undertake a mission of peace. He journeyed from London to Maesteg where he addressed a gathering of local miners in an attempt to rally the workforce behind the flag of discipline and unity. His choice of tactic surprised almost everyone. Instead of berating his audience as he might have done, he congratulated them on helping to produce the highest O.M.S. achieved on the coalfield since nationalisation. Emphasising the heroic nature of their achievement, he declared that they had done it, "..... despite acute

80. This is clearly communicated in the minutes of the Coalfield Conference on Brynhenllys; SWNUM, E.C. Minutes, A.D.C., 26.8.55.
Table 3
An Analysis of Losses Due to Unofficial Stoppages, 1954-55

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1954</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STOPPAGES</td>
<td>RESTRICTIONS</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>STOPPAGES</td>
<td>RESTRICTIONS</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Number during Period</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>456</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Number of men Involved</td>
<td>40,031</td>
<td>11,480</td>
<td>51,511</td>
<td>83,269</td>
<td>13,726</td>
<td>96,995</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Estimated Tons Lost</td>
<td>186,582</td>
<td>231,635</td>
<td>418,217</td>
<td>381,773</td>
<td>334,800</td>
<td>716,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Estimated Tons Lost - per Incident</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>686</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis by Cause :</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Wages, allowances, etc.</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>619</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Conditions and hours</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>201</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Refusal to Transfer or to Obey an Order :</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>182</td>
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<td>4. Others</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
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Analysis by Areas :

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<th>TONS</th>
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<th>No.</th>
<th>TONS</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>TONS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Swansea)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8,550</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20,432</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28,982</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4,670</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14,510</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19,180</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 (Neath)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>14,765</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>14,380</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>29,145</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>37,188</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>55,455</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>92,643</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Maesteg)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>51,485</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36,595</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>88,080</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>84,820</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>34,820</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>119,640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Rhondda)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>29,313</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>132,404</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>161,717</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>97,651</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>199,184</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>296,835</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Aberdare)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>39,645</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13,475</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>53,120</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>47,491</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17,735</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>65,215</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 (Rhymney)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22,683</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7,360</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>30,043</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>62,630</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6,072</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>68,702</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 (Monmouth)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>20,044</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6,989</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>27,130</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>47,258</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7,025</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>54,283</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest of Dean Group</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: S.W. NUM, Annual Conference Report and Agenda, April 1956, p. 95.
labour shortages" and he advised the members of the Coal Board that if they wished to retain the "loyalty" evident in this effort, they should grant an immediate rise in wages. This, he claimed, would not only cut back the numbers of strikes, but would serve also to attract "miners sons who have been put off by the images of mining inherited from their fathers' experiences during the inter-war period". 81

More predictable tactics were employed by Paynter and the Executive Committee in their efforts to force back into line the militants of Pwllbach, Cwmllynfell and Gwaun-cae-gurwen. They sent down to that troubled area the three Executive officers most likely to receive a sympathetic hearing from the erring militants: Dai Dan Evans, Trevor James and David Francis; all of them ex-anthracite miners and all of them intimately familiar with the baroque nature of anthracite customs and practices. The Coal Board, for its part, refused to open the newly-constructed pit-head baths at Gwaun-cae-gurwen until evidence was forthcoming of an increase in O.M.S. and of an improvement in labour relations. 82

Instead of improving the situation however, the Board's action precipitated an emergency meeting of the Swansea District of the NUM at which the assembled delegates voted in favour of handing-in strike notices in support of the District's demand that the baths be opened immediately. The delegates laid the blame for the area's unofficial strikes upon the "delays" which, they alleged, "were occasioned in the settlement of claims under the Wages Structure", and they condemned a recent decision of the Board to close the Ynysarwed Colliery in the Neath Valley. 83

81. Western Mail, 13.12.55.
82. SWUM E.C. Minutes, 8.11.55.
83. Ibid., 22.11.55.
The NUM's team of "troubleshooters": Evans, James and Francis, managed however, to avert the threatened strike by persuading the Gwaun-cae-gurwen men to toe the union line in return for the opening of their baths. Neither they, nor their fellow Executive members were able to effect a change in the Coal Board's attitude towards the closure of Ynysarwed however, although the Board were persuaded to ensure that all of the displaced men were found jobs at other pits. 84

Evans, James and Francis managed to initiate a debate within several of the anthracite Lodges as to the best means of maintaining discipline amongst Lodge membership. They appear to have been determined to persuade the Lodge Committees that the E.C. would find its efforts to instil some kind of order amongst militants infinitely easier if the Lodges were prepared to take a harder line with their own dissidents. In response, the Committee at Mountain Colliery drew up a set of proposals which declared that any workmen

".... who take part in unofficial stoppages or are the cause of cessation of work in future shall be dealt with by the Lodge to the extent of having such workmen downgraded". 85

Similarly unequivocal proposals were not forthcoming from the most strike-prone Lodges however; they appear to have been more preoccupied at this time with lobbying the E.C. in an effort to pressurize it into changing its decision to support the character (if not the size) of the wage claim being negotiated during November and December by the union's national leaders.

84. C.C., 24.11.55. The colliery closed on November 19th because of the exhaustion of its main areas of production and because excessive geological difficulties prevented the opening up of new areas.

85. SWNUM E.C. Minutes, 6.12.55.
It was a claim which was concerned mainly with the earnings received by daywagemen and it was made palpably clear, at a coal-field delegate conference called to discuss the issue, that there were many Lodges which were upset that pieceworkers apparently were being excluded from the proposed claim. Speakers representing Lodges located as far east as Celynen South and as far west as Seven Sisters expressed worries that such an exclusion would create greater "disunity" amongst the rank-and-file than existed even at that moment. The E.C's line was defended by Paynter in a speech which seems to have dispelled most of the delegates' worries. They endorsed their leader's analysis overwhelmingly and the matter might have rested there but for a speech by Dick Beamish, delegate from the Abercrave Lodge, member of the Area Executive Committee and a powerful, though sometimes inconsistent, public orator.

He informed the Conference that, whilst he and his Lodge supported the attempts of Paynter and the E.C. to instigate a new Wages Structure which would replace the anarchy of piecwork earnings, they nevertheless were of the view that the policy pursued by the union during the post-nationalisation years was responsible for the "apathy and frustration" which, he said, was prevalent amongst the workforce at that time. He went on to assure his fellow E.C. members and the rest of the Conference that, whilst the Abercrave

86. The Wages Agreement, signed on February 23rd 1956, gave a rise of 2/4d., per shift to daywagemen. It raised the minimum rate for an underground daywage worker to £9 Os. 6d., and for a surface daywage worker to £8 Os. 6d. C.G., 23.2.56.

87. This view was expressed most forcefully by delegates from Risca, Groesfaen, Penrhicwceiber, S. Celynen, Naval, Cefn Coed, Ferndale, Seven Sisters, Cwmcarn, Bedwas and Merthyr Vale. SWNUM Minutes, 19.12.55.
members were not apathetic concerning questions relating to their wages and conciliations, they nevertheless were

".... extremely frustrated in view of the fact that the Union fails to support its demands by aggressive action". 88

It was a speech which echoed the sentiments of a great many other delegates who, though they conducted themselves as loyal trade unionists, nevertheless admitted to feeling confused and stymied by their Executive's insistence upon cultivating an image for the union which was "respectable" rather than "awesome" in character. Beamish's frustration could be compared to that which might be felt by a weightlifter, trapped in a locked room, who is ordered by his companions to pick the lock of a door which he knows he could smash open with ease.

88. Ibid.
Old Divisions and New Alliances

1. A Primer: the Cambrian Walk-out

By February 1956, negotiations were in progress between Paynter and the Coal Board concerning the revision of piecework rates in South Wales. The miners' leader pointed out the serious impact of the last two wage agreements on piecework incentives:

"The minimum rates for pieceworkers have, in the main", he said, "increased by £2 9s. 6d., a week. This has meant for a large number of pieceworkers that the incentive has been either wholly removed or substantially reduced".

At a delegate conference, the Executive informed the members that, whereas twelve months prior to the conference the underground minimum was £7 15s., per week - when actual earnings of coalface workers in S. Wales was around £12 17s., per week - it now stood at £10 4s. 6d., per week whilst average face earnings had altered little because of the absence of any revisions of piecerates. The effect of this upward trend of the minimum rate was that it had done little to encourage higher levels of production,

"... for in most cases the coalface worker already earns well above the minimum .... Piece-workers see this narrowing of their differential compared with daywagemen and are discontented about it".

1. SWNUM, E.C.M., A.D.C., 26.2.56.
2. Ibid.
The joint negotiations, designed to remedy this discontent, proceeded too slowly for the Maesteg and Rhondda militants, however. A strike at Caerau over the non-payment of the weekly shift bonus to colliers' helpers tripped off a series of unofficial actions by pieceworkers which culminated in a walk-out by some 2,000 miners employed at the Cambrian Collieries, scene of the famous disturbances of 1910-11 and renowned as one of the coalfield's most efficient and disciplined lodges.

The walk-out was provoked by the decision of the collieries' general manager to send home 226 of those of his employees whom he accused of having undertaken a "go-slow" in protest against the continuance of an out-dated price-list for pieceworkers. After four days, the strikers voted to continue their strike and to enlarge it by seeking support from other Rhondda Lodges. The Lodge Chairman, Mr. V. Morgan, claimed at Tonypandy on March 28th that the strike was a means of protesting at the NCB's unwillingness to increase pieceworkers' wages consequent upon the new daywage agreement. His members, declared Morgan, felt that it was "unfair to expect a coal hewer to expend so much more effort than a day-wage man engaged in the various auxiliary tasks unless his rates of pay were increased proportionately".3

Within five days, seven major Lodges, representing some 8,000 men, struck work in sympathy with the Cambrian pieceworkers.4

3. C.G., 5.4.56.
4. The Lodges were Coed Ely, Fernhill, Glenrhondda, Lewis Merthyr, Naval, Tydraw and Tymawr. It is interesting to note that amongst those usually militant Lodges which refrained from striking was Parc & Dare: - the result, perhaps, of Paynter's influence upon his fellow Communists who were influential on the Parc & Dare committee? The Lodge Minutes do not provide the relevant information.
The Chairman of the Divisional Coal Board, D.M. Rees, declared the action "irresponsible" and added, rather mysteriously, that it would not be tolerated, for there had "... never been a 'differential' as such between the pay of day-wage men and pieceworkers". With better attendance, he declared, pieceworkers could improve their pay and he pointed out that at Cambrian Collieries, for example, the average earnings of pieceworkers per shift since 1949 had risen from 38/9d. to 55/9d. Over the same period, day-wage men's earnings had risen, he said, from 14/6d. to 19/8d.\(^5\)

Startling though the contrasts in earnings may have appeared, Rees's moral appeal cut little ice with the pieceworkers. They returned to work only after Paynter had informed them at a general meeting in Tonypandy that negotiations were in progress for a new wage structure for pieceworkers and that in the meantime they should exercise the trade union discipline for which they were justly famous. The strike shook the miners' president, however, as must the speed with which the other Rhondda lodges responded to the Cambrian request for support. The whole operation smacked of the organisational skills of an unofficial committee and the Cambrian lodge was, of course, as well-versed as any on the coalfield in the matter of constructing unofficial committees of workmen. During the 1930s the rejuvenated Cambrian Combine Committee had formed the most effective and cohesive of all of the workmen's groupings inside the Powell Duffryn empire.\(^6\)

\(^5\) C.C., 12.4.56.
\(^6\) See, above. Part One, Chapter 4.
The Cambrian stoppage was quickly followed by a stay-down at Maerdy which rendered idle some 2,000 men and by a complex wages dispute at the Maesteg collieries of Coegnant and Cwmdu where over 1,000 struck work. These were large-scale stoppages and they provided a sombre backdrop to the 1956 Annual Area Conference at which the Executive Committee made its most concerted effort since nationalisation to install some order and discipline amongst the more strike-prone of the union's members. A special section of the Annual Report was devoted to the findings of a joint NUM/NCB investigative survey of unofficial stoppages and it opened with a declaration to the effect that unofficial stoppages would

".... probably be with us as long as mining operations continue in this country",

and it set out its conclusions in a tone which was not overly-censorious, although it emphasised that,

"In recent years .... this question has acquired a most mischievous turn. Serious disunity has been evinced in our ranks as a result of unilateral action taken by small groups of men".

The report went on to point out that it would have been idle to suggest that these men had no grievance:

"No man will willingly act in this way without some cause. Sometimes it is not easy to find an adequate reason for such actions. However, we must be cognisant of the fact that it is always much easier for men removed from the seat of operations to be objective in their analysis of a situation but it is not quite so easy for men who are constantly at the scene of operations".

7. Twenty two Maerdy miners stayed-down for 16 hours to protest against the velocity of the air which management ordered to be blown through the 2' 9" face. Conditions at the face were damp and it was impossible to eat there during the mid-shift break. C.G., 19.4.56.
In the same sympathetic vein, the Report's authors stressed that although the actual stoppages often occurred over trivial matters, they nevertheless were usually the results of whole series of "irritations":

"So many factors of complexity intrude themselves on the scene that makes it difficult of analysis and remedy. It would be wrong for either side in this industry to proclaim its virtuosity in this connection. It would be doubly wrong for the Simon Pure pundits of the press and the general public to pretend that they have a solution in hand."

"In this extractive industry where conditions are continuously changing, and so much improvisation had to be adopted, it is extremely difficult to apply ready-made remedies".

Nevertheless, the Report emphasised that almost three-quarters of one million tons had been lost through strikes and restrictions during 1955 and it claimed that the loss had not been evenly spread throughout the coalfield: the vast majority of stoppages and restrictions had taken place "in a few collieries in each Area" and notably in the Areas of Maesteg, Rhondda and Neath. (see Figure One, Chapter 13, p. 316) To deal with these "isolated pockets" whose actions were "impairing the authority of the Union at all levels", the Executive proposed that conciliation machinery be improved with the aim of expediting settlement of disputes; that the N.E.C. of the union should strive to speed up a new wages structure for pieceworkers and that in the meantime the Area Executive should endeavour to improve price lists. The standard and maintenance of equipment for mechanised mining should be improved, "so as to reduce the number of disputes arising from breakdowns" and the status of colliery managers should be improved,
"in order that they may be able more effectively to deal with disputes without recourse to their superiors". In return, the Report suggested that managers adopt a more reasonable and sympathetic attitude towards the complaints of the men and it went on to argue that the Coal Board should undertake a campaign among its technical staff in an endeavour to "secure a more widespread understanding of the terms of industrial agreements entered into between the Board and the Union". For its part, the Union should undertake an

"intensive campaign to improve discipline in its own ranks; that the miners be told that the services of miners' agents and the executive committee cannot be used to resolve disputes, in the case of men who embark on unofficial action, until they return to work".  

As was the established pattern at previous conferences, few delegates rose to question or oppose the E.C.'s proposals. They were carried overwhelmingly after a discussion in which successive speakers emphasised the discontent amongst piecerate-workers. It was obvious to all present that the real test of the coalfield's support for the executive's proposals would come during the months which followed. In the meantime however, there were a number of conference delegates, prominent members of the unofficial groupings, who sought more devious means of forcing an open confrontation with the less "progressive" wing of the Area Executive. Scattered amongst the Conference resolutions which criticised the behaviour of the British Government in Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and the Pacific atomic testing ranges was one from the Seven Sisters Lodge which called upon conference to:

8. SWNUM, A.C.R., 1956, pp. 94-97
".... agree to put an end to the policy now pursued by the Labour Party, that is, of proscribing other organisations that are consistently fighting for peace and progress in the living standards of the workers. We are of the view", it continued, "that all organisations who oppose the Tory Party and all that it stands for, should unite in order to remove them from power, so that the Labour Movement can then go forward to realise the aspirations of the pioneers of Socialism".

The resolution provoked yet another scuffle in the Communist Party's ongoing campaign for an end of the bans and proscriptions which excluded Communists from membership of the Labour Party. Like most of the previous scuffles, it ended in defeat for the Communists but it is doubtful if the resolution's proposers had seriously considered winning in the first place. Having learned from past experience that their social democratic opponents were capable of blocking anything which smacked of Communist heresy, they were more likely intent upon isolating the Executive's foremost Labourites in order that the latter might clearly be identified as belonging to that same camp from whence emerged (or so the "unofficials" amongst the Communists claimed) the dubious creed of "industrial collaboration" and the stultifying dullness of trade union "constitutionalism".

It proved however, to be the Communists' last major opportunity to taunt their Labour opponents in this fashion, for during the

following Autumn they were to see their political credit whither at an alarming rate as news arrived of the shattering events in Poland and Hungary. But those events lay in the future. For the moment, they were able to sit back and listen as Paynter (who was soon to allow his membership of the Communist Party to lapse) informed the Annual Conference that "precipitate action" was growing and weakening the union in its task of prosecuting the fight for vital and major reforms. Any semblance of unity within the miners' Lodges, he said had been "completely destroyed" and he went on to claim that elected leadership was being ignored:

"... the general interest of the miners' union organisation and policy counted for nothing, the selfish interest of the few being regarded as paramount".

He advised the miners to "back the union and abandon unofficial action" and he emphasised the urgency of his plea by adding a warning that the first signs were in evidence of a drop in the demand for coal. There were, he said, large numbers of American miners unemployed and he reminded the assembled delegates that competition for diminishing markets was becoming more intense.10

Forewarned, the delegates returned to their pits and were faced with as many piece-rate-induced problems as before the Conference began. Once again, Paynter attempted to ease their worries by declaring that the S. Wales Miners' Union would proceed forthwith with a claim for increased wages to "effect the attack upon real wages by the Tory Government and to secure a substantially higher standard of living for all miners and their families".11

10. C.C., 3.5.56.
11. SWNUM., A.D.C., Minutes, 4.5.56.
His words had little effect. The month of May brought with it major stoppages in the Amman, Dulais and Rhondda Valleys as well as in the Maesteg Area. Towards the end of the second week, the Divisional Coal Board announced that it was prepared no longer to stand by and watch as production was constantly interrupted by what it termed its three "Black Areas". Its members agreed that what was needed was some drastic surgery. The most strike-prone of the coalfield's workforces, those of the East and Steer pits at Gwaun-cae-gurwen, were to be dismissed. By this act, the Board hoped to cut its financial losses, rid itself of a most undisciplined set of employees and show the rest of the workforce that its warnings were more than empty rhetoric.

The controversy which the announcement provoked within the miners' union was both serious and long-lasting. Small pits, like Brynheullys, had already suffered similar fates and it had long been apparent that the Board was prepared, if needs be, to drag down a large and powerful Lodge. Coinciding, as it did, with the first signs of the impending decline in the demand for coal, the closure proved to be a significant turning point in labour relations on the coalfield. The thirteen years which followed were to witness the most dramatic of all of the declines yet suffered by the South Wales mining industry and, as the industry declined, so too did the collective self-confidence of the miners-workers.

12. i.e., the Rhondda, Maesteg and Neath areas.
2. The Closure of East and Steer Pits, Gwaun-cae-gurwen.

Delegates from all of the coalfield's Lodges gathered at the windy seaside resort of Porthcawl on Monday, May 14th, 1956, to discuss the East and Steer closures. Paynter addressed the gathering and described it as "one of the most serious" to have been held in "the last 25 years". He informed the delegates that he could not recall a time when a Conference had been convened to consider the closure of a colliery allegedly because of labour troubles. So serious were the implications of the Board's decision, he said, that he had decided to "... place before Conference objectively the facts of this situation", and he proceeded to give an outline of the events (leading up to the closures) which, in the main, differed very little from that made public by the Coal Board.

He reminded the delegates that there had been a long history of trouble at East and Steer Collieries. Both had been closed in 1948 for a short time owing to restrictive practices; and in 1949, Steer was closed for a year and a half. In both cases, reopenings were granted only when the men agreed that they would cooperate with management in carrying out their allotted tasks. In 1955, both pits were amongst those which previously had shown unsatisfactory results and which therefore, had been made subject to examination by the joint NUM/NCB Investigating Committee. It was found that, in 1955, no fewer than 47 stoppages or "go-slow" had occurred at the two pits, and that 11 more had occurred during the first four months of 1956, culminating in an unofficial strike (upon which the men had been engaged since April 24th) in support of two pit-bottom tram-shacklers from Steer whom the Board
accused of practicing repeated ca' canny. The strike had spread to eight other collieries in the Amman Valley although seven had since returned to work in response to the advice of their local union officials. Only Steer, East and Cwmgorse remained out at the time of the Conference.

The Miners' President pointed out that output per manshift at these pits had been consistently far below the average for the Division as a whole and he alleged that the workforces had refused to

"honour agreements made on their behalf
nor have they followed the advice of their
Union. They have not made use of their
conciliation machinery". 13

The Divisional Board members had declared that they saw no sign of improvement and that, "after repeated trials over a period of nearly ten years", they felt that they were "no longer justified" in continuing to work the East and Steer pits. 14

Paynter laid a great deal of emphasis upon the Board's declaration of regret:

"During the whole of this period", he said,
"the Board have been fully aware of the effect of closure on the supply of coal and of the social consequences for the men themselves and the community dependent on the pits. They have, therefore, only reached their decision after the most careful consideration and with great regret". 15

13. SWNUM., A.D.C.M., 14.5.56.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
The shucklers' go-slow, which provoked the Coal Board's decision, was only the most recent of an exceedingly long list of similar actions undertaken by the men at Steer and East. A typical example of ca'canny, it is worth careful analysis, for it explains much about the scenario within which it was possible for 1,065 men to enact 47 stoppages or go-slow in a single year.

Prior to the introduction of the Wages Structure for daywage-men in 1955, the shucklers at Steer were in receipt of their normal shift rates plus a 1/4-shift allowance per shift for handling tonnage in excess of the norm. The East pit shucklers, on the other hand, were in receipt of the day rates in accordance with the Conciliation Board Agreement for an agreed norm, plus 1d., per ton for tonnages handled in excess of the norm. In both instances, for the basic tonnage, these men were in receipt of their five shifts at the normal rates plus a bonus payment at their shift rate. When the new Wages Structure was introduced however, a dispute arose in respect of the assimilation of these men. The Board's representatives contended that they were day-wage men and that they should be assimilated into their proper grade and their wages consolidated in accordance with the provisions of the new Wages Structure. The Lodge Committee however, contended that the shucklers were piece-rate workers and submitted a claim along these lines to the National Joint Negotiating Committee which, in turn, rejected it by ruling that the men were daywage workers and should be paid accordingly.

In the meantime, the Miners' Agent had met the Board's Area Labour Officer and, in July 1955, an agreement had been made
whereby these men would be deemed to be piece-rate workers—an agreement which was abrogated by the decision of the National Negotiating Committee. Confronted with this confusion, the shacklers at Steer became "extremely dissatisfied" and began to go slow in January, 1956. Management alleged that they participated in this kind of action fifteen times during the following four months.

As early as 1948, both union and management had recognised that such problems as these were directly attributable to the anarchic wage structure which obtained at the two pits. The Board members alleged that the rate of wages bore little relation to the effort of the men and therefore they desired that a "proper" wage structure be introduced at the collieries whereby the men would be paid "in accordance with the items of work performed by them in their piecework contracts or in their price lists". In addition, the Board members made it clear that they would endeavour to take away from the daywage men those extra payments which they received in excess of the rates contained in the Conciliation Board Agreement. 16

The work of transforming the wages structure was entrusted in 1948 to three "umpires" who, after they had investigated existing conditions, submitted a register of new rates and price lists which the miners of Steer and East refused to operate and which consequently provoked a series of go-slows. The union's Area Executive Committee found itself with no alternative but to press the workmen to accept the terms of the findings as they

16. Ibid. See, also, Chapter 11, above.
had been made under the provisions of the Conciliation Machinery. Go-slow and strikes ensued, but, ultimately, the terms were accepted with only minor adjustments.

The reopening of Steer after the closure of 1949-50 was subject to the men's acceptance of yet another list of strict terms which had been drawn up after prolonged discussions between the Board and the Union. Similar to that which was accepted by the Pwllbach workforce, it cut deep into the layers of custom and practice.

17. The list was as follows:

"1. There should be a complete reassessment of tasks which must be agreed by management and workmen before work is resumed.

2. Where a workman consistently fails to complete the allotted task, his contract of service shall be terminated by the management, subject to the right of appeal by the individual under Conciliation procedure.

3. The price lists and Awards already made in respect of conveyor, shifting, packing, road formation, water infusion and repairing shall apply on resumption of work.

4. All grades of labour not covered by the above price lists or Awards shall be paid Conciliation Board rates.

5. All shift allowances and other forms of enhanced payment previously made will be discontinued and no payment should be made for the dual jobs performed during a shift by one individual, except when covered by the Conciliation Board Agreement.

6. The workmen must agree to submit to the discipline of the management, that is, they will pledge themselves to comply with all reasonable instructions given to them by the management in the course of operations and the Workmen's representatives will not support the case of any workmen who fail to do so.

7. The workmen will recognise the right of management to select men for special jobs.

8. The re-employment of labour must be done in such a manner as not to reduce the output now obtained from collieries where they are now employed."

Ibid.
but it ushered in a period of (relative) industrial peace, the like of which was experienced rarely at Gwaun-cae-gurwen and which lasted until 1953 when the position began to drift back to pre-1948 conditions. The incidence of strikes and go-slows increased considerably; "stints" were re-established and productivity began to fall off.

Paynter, for one, did not attribute this drift entirely to a lack of discipline amongst the workmen. He pointed out to the Porthcawl Conference in 1956 the fact that serious and difficult geological conditions obtained at the collieries and that "many deficiencies" had been revealed in management. Like the members of the Coal Board, however, he chose not to dwell upon these problems but concentrated, instead, upon the theme of labour relations. His address to the delegates resembled that which a coroner might have delivered to the relatives of a recently deceased reprobate whom they nevertheless had secretly loved for his outrageous ways and flamboyant disregard of authority. Miners' Agents, he said, had addressed

"... mass meeting after mass meeting of the men urging that a more balanced attitude be adopted at the pit".

But all was to no effect. Like other anthracite Lodges, the Steer and East men "... did not avail themselves" of the opportunity to revise their systems of payment and chose, instead, to reject the advice of the union's official and to continue "under the old anarchic wage structure".

18. The "stint", or "stent", in this case refers to the practice amongst colliers of agreeing amongst themselves as to what constituted a suitable shift's work - say, for example, clearing only a certain tonnage of coal - and refusing or conspiring to do no more than that agreed amount.

19. SYNUM., A.D.C.M., 14.5.56.
The miners' president went on to emphasise how ineffective the tactic of "go-slowing" had become. He claimed that it had failed to produce any results during the post-1953 period: "After each instance of go-slow the workmen have returned to work on their previous conditions"; and he declared that this was true, not only of Gwaun-cae-gurwen, but also of all other collieries in South Wales. With the solemnity of an admonishing coroner, he warned his audience that the sins and excesses of Steer and East were not lacking amongst those workforces which survived; indeed, he went as far as to warn the delegates of the dangers of flirting with those agencies which, as he saw it, had done most to encourage the downfall of the twin Lodges, namely the unofficial groups such as that which drank and plotted at the Shakespeare Hotel. The problem confronting the post-mortem Conference was, he declared, that of requiring for the union "some measure of discipline and loyalty to decisions by its members", and he ended his address by appealing to the delegates "to be sober in their consideration and contributions in this very serious matter".

In compliance with their leader's requests, subsequent speakers said nothing outrageous - unless a comparison made by a Mr. Tom Dutton could thus be described; in supporting the case put by Paynter, he declared that the President was "placed in a similar position to the Prime Minister in relation to the Commander Crabb episode". The Gwaun-cae-gurwen Lodge was not yet a headless corpse, however, though it was indeed an acute embarrassment.
Its Chairman and Secretary, not surprisingly, pleaded "bad management" as the cause of the pits' troubles. They claimed that colliery officials had not changed their attitudes since the days of private ownership: the Lodge Chairman alleged, for example, that management would

"... go behind the back of the lodge committee and concede allowances to men which they had refused to the lodge committee across the table".

This, he claimed,

"under-mined the authority of the lodge committee and the status of the Union at the pit, as men were able to obtain better settlements by taking their own actions than by reference of the dispute to the Conciliation Machinery. "Allowances", he said, "rose sharply during this period and output fell in a corresponding manner".

Both the Chairman and Secretary claimed that productivity had fallen

"... because of the physical conditions which had been brought about by the policy of the Board in seeking output at the expense of good mining practice".

This was a complaint which surfaced time and again in dispute reports and it is hardly surprising that it should do so. The introduction of new working methods in pits where the retention of custom and practice was strong almost inevitably resulted in conflict; not only because miners were physically displaced from their working places, but also because older miners frequently experienced a sense of attachment to the techniques with which they were most familiar for winning the coal. Neither was this merely

21 W.H. Thomas and Cliff Harry, respectively.
a display of obstinate conservatism. There is ample evidence which points to there having been tremendous technical difficulties hampering the mechanization of the idiosyncratic seams of many S. Wales pits: reports of machines sinking hopelessly deep into the soft floors of anthracite faces; of machines repeatedly becoming entombed within the debris of roof falls in "shallow" drifts like that at Tirherbert; and of machines rendered useless because of frequent "wash-outs" in the seams of the central and western sectors.22 There is, in addition, the allied and more complex problem of ascertaining the extent to which successful mechanisation was hampered by the refusal of the Board to invest sufficient capital in terms of the hardware necessary to provide a consistent back-up to the relatively small numbers of machines which were in service in the pits of S. Wales in 1956. At East pit, for example, the Lodge Chairman complained that there existed a lack of supplies, "... particularly in respect of the MacLain tippler"; the clearance of coal at pit bottom was too slow, he added, and there was a need for an automatic ram to push out the empties from the cage and for a system which would cart materials necessary for the pit's conveyor face.23 Similar deficiencies were reported in the Area NUM's Annual Report for 1956.

22. At both the Steer and East pits, for example, the seams were described by Paynter as "extremely difficult": "Considerable clod overlays the (Big Vein) seam and it .... comes down in huge stones making it difficult to clear the stints". NUM (S.W.A.) Minutes: A.D.C., 14.5.56. p. 455

Good sources for information of this nature are
1. the "Mechanisation Journal For Management", published monthly by the NCB, and
2. the Reports of the Inspectors of Mines (Both government and union inspectorates).

23. SWNUM., E.C. Minutes: A.D.C., 14.5.56.
as obtaining in pits right across the coalfield. So obvious and frequent were they, in fact, that increasingly they came to be explained away (as, indeed, was the backward overall position of mechanization in S. Wales) as being the result of a "political" decision by the Board to phase-out mining in coalfields known to contain workforces which were particularly prone to take "extreme" action in defence of their established custom and practice. No one at the Porthcawl "post-mortem" Conference was under any illusion however, that mechanisation, or the lack of it, constituted the main problem at Gwaun-cae-gurwen. Delegate after delegate stressed the need for the East and Steer workmen to envelope themselves within the cloak of discipline offered them by their elected Executive. Some speakers made no attempt to disguise their impatience with the "prima-donna" attitudes adopted by the dismissed workmen. Mike Griffin, delegate of the strong Penrhiwceiber Lodge of the Aberdare Valley, for example, said that although he supported the Executive's analysis of the Gwaun-cae-gurwen situation, he was obliged to ask himself the question as to why such occurrences took place "only in one part of this coalfield". There were, he said, men in every colliery who adopted go-slows or took other forms of unofficial action, but the mid-anthracite men were somehow different and he ventured to suggest that the situation which obtained at Gwaun-cae-gurwen was "symptomatic of a disease which has descended upon the pits in West Wales". He informed the delegates that his members in Penrhiwceiber felt that the anthracite miners were being treated "more favourably than in other parts of the coalfield" and he added that it was his opinion that "Men employed by the same em-
ployer should be treated in the same way throughout the coalfield and the men in the West had no right to expect anything different.  

Griffin, like many others in the sectors which lay to the east of the anthracite, resented the fact that earnings in these sectors lagged behind those of the West. He emphasised this with an astute observation regarding the nature of the Union's proposals for revising the systems of payment to piecerworkers. He said that it made no sense to argue, as the union was doing in 1956, that what was needed was a revised piecework wage structure, for such an argument failed to take into account the wide differentials which existed between the earnings of piecerworkers in the anthracite and non-anthracite sectors:

"A piecework structure", he reminded his fellow delegates, "would establish for men throughout the coalfield an equal wage for equal effort, and if this were done then the men of West Wales would secure a substantial reduction in the wages paid to them, or the men in the other parts of the coalfield would receive a substantial increase."

Griffin's words amplified the sense of immediacy which Paynter had long been struggling to impart to coalfield audiences in his advocacy of more effective working solidarity which, as he saw it, would develop naturally from the eradication of pieceworking and the substitution, in its place, of a uniform Wages Structure covering all facets of pit work in all geographical Divisions. Paynter responded at the Porthcawl Conference by announcing that he was "pleased with the tone of the discussion" and with the fact that the delegates had "realised the seriousness" of the position. He went on to emphasise that the post-nationalisation  

24. Ibid.
gains which the union had made brought with them "responsibilities", some of which entailed the need for large sections of the workforce to engage in a radical re-assessment of some of their most basic concepts concerning industrial relations. These "responsibilities" were, in fact, the price to be paid for increased "workers' control":

"In recent years", he said, the union had taken away from the Board the main punitive actions which they previously took against workmen for such actions. In the first place, we have established the unconditional minimum. Men are being paid the minimum wage in this coalfield despite the fact that they perform very little work when they are going-slow.

"Again", he continued, "we have taken from the Board by agreement with them their right to prosecute men for breaches of contract which means that the man is guaranteed his wage and also avoids punishment for the breach which he commits.

"In the circumstances, the only door open to management is to terminate the contracts of the men if they refuse to carry out the agreements between the Board and the Union. It could, therefore, readily be understood as to why the Board is taking the action it is up and down this coalfield".25

He argued that the union should concentrate on its "own deficiencies" and endeavour to correct them "rather than look for the mote in the other person's eye"; although he reminded the delegates that this did not preclude "constructive criticism" of the Board's activities, provided that is, that the criticism was approached "intelligently". He dismissed the isolated calls for strike action in support of the Gwaun-cae-gurwen Lodges, arguing that it would be impossible for the union to organise a strike issue for three reasons:

25. Ibid.
1. The position at Gwaun-cae-gurwen was largely indefensible. The workmen at the collieries had refused to give the union a platform to defend them.

2. To indulge in strike action on this issue, he argued, would disunite the coalfield from top to bottom.

3. Strike action had not been used as a weapon in the struggle in this coalfield for a quarter of a century and he was of the view that to engage in such action would call for much patient explanation in S. Wales as a very large percentage of the union's membership had not been involved in such a struggle before.

Instead, he advocated support for a series of negotiations which he had instigated and which were designed to secure a reopening of East and Steer. He expressed a hope that the workmen of Gwaun-cae-gurwen would "respond to the call of the Conference and give to the Area Executive Committee the platform to keep the collieries in production". For its part, the Conference backed him unanimously and authorised him to proceed in any way he deemed fit to secure a continuation of work at the pits. Thus armed, he proceeded to Gwaun-cae-gurwen where, on Sunday April 20th, he addressed a general meeting and reported that discussions with the Board had indicated that there was a slight chance of saving the collieries. He informed the men "bluntly" that they had placed the union in the "most invidious position experienced over the last quarter century" and, after a lengthy debate, the general meeting acknowledged that there had, indeed, been serious indiscipline by sections of workmen and that agreements and negotiating machinery had been disregarded, leading to non-cooperation and low standards of production. It was agreed, therefore, that the meeting should
instruct the Lodge Committee to implement a set of decisions which fulfilled their President's requirements. This included a joint re-assessment of tasks, an automatic withdrawal of union support for any workman who "refuses reasonably to undertake the tasks jointly decided upon", and a provision whereby any workman who engaged in go-slow or strikes in defiance of the Lodge Committee would be "withdrawn from their job and demoted for a period of time to be determined by the lodge committee and management".27

During his subsequent discussions with the employers however, Paynter was informed, "despite all .... pleadings", that the Board would not accept the assurances of the East and Steer workers and the Board Members informed him that they considered that any assurances made on behalf of the Gwaun-cae-gurwen men were not worth the paper on which they were written".28 Prolonged negotiations ensued which resulted in the Board issuing a statement declaring that they were not prepared to withdraw the dismissal notices, but would open one face in each pit and jointly with the Union establish a cycle of operations which would raise face and other standards to a satisfactory level. Once reasonable standards were established to the satisfaction of both parties, other faces in both pits would be progressively opened, on the same conditions, until all the men had been absorbed.29

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. NUM/NCB, South Western Division, Report of the Joint NUM and NCB Assessors on matters appertaining at East and Steer Collieries, Gwaun-cae-gurwen, Neath, September, 1956. U.C.S.
David Francis and Glyn Williams, for the Union, and S.J. Skidmore and D.J. Llewellyn, for the NCB, were appointed as umpires and observers jointly charged with the work of examining customs and practices and with re-assessing tasks at the collieries. Later, they assumed the responsibility of ensuring that the actual set tasks were being complied with and the recommendations implemented. Productivity improved, though not by the amount predicted by the Coal Board. The umpires confirmed many of the technical and geological difficulties which the workmen had spoken of during the Porthcawl debate and it increasingly became apparent that a great deal of capital investment was needed to transform the pits into efficient productive units. Consequently, equipment was obtained from other parts of the coalfield and from the manufacturers. Workmen were sent to other collieries to be trained as cutting machine operators and much experimental work was accomplished with the cooperation of the workmen and technicians. 30

The umpires emphasised in their reports that the conditions which they encountered exposed a position riddled with cases of non-cooperation, low standards, irregular working, lack of organisation and a prevailing low level of morale - all of which, apparently, had existed for a long time. They reported that neither the workmen nor officials had a proper conception of cyclic

30. Method study observers were brought in to study the surface circuits and haulage problems. Lodge Officers and Management visited Bedwas Colliery to see pulsed infusion blasting in operation and immediate action was taken to try out this process at East & Steer. In addition, research work was stepped up into problems associated with roof control, dust suppression and coal preparation. Ibid., p. 11.
working and the organisation and discipline required to make it a success. There was, they agreed, little wonder that the Divisional Board's request for increased productivity and a thorough, re-assessment of tasks should have highlighted so many failures in colliery organisation, machinery, roof control and "human relations". As a result of the joint actions by the Board and union, the umpires were able to report that improvements came about "gradually" as problems were solved and recommendations implemented. By late August they observed that conditions on many of the coal faces "bore little resemblance to those that appertained at the time of the first assessments".

This level of union cooperation was extended even to the point where it aided the dismantling of some of the most cherished and "humane" of the men's customs and practices, including the system whereby face workers pooled their earnings in the East Pit so that there was, on pay day, an equal shareout amongst all men working at the coal face. The umpires recommended that this system should be replaced by one which required that the levels of wages be based upon individual effort. Their recommendation was implemented and extended to cover similar practices amongst other categories of workmen. Initially, it met with some opposition and, "in certain isolated cases", it provoked some kind of undisclosed "arbitrary action" from the men, but the umpires reported that this had been dealt with satisfactorily by Lodge Officials and Management.

31. Ibid., p. 12.
32. Ibid., p. 11.
By late Summer, the Coal Board can have entertained little doubt as to the honourable intentions of the Executive Committee of the miners' union, for the latter's behaviour during the whole of the Gwaun-cae-gurwen crisis had been both consistent and totally cooperative. Not even Will Lawther or Arthur Deakin could have proved themselves more amenable in that situation than had Paynter. It appeared as if he was determined to prove to the Board and to the public that, given half a chance, the union could play a very great part in transforming the coal industry into an efficient profit-making enterprise. But was this his aim in fact? If it was, he certainly did not declare it in those terms.

His line throughout the crisis was a consistent one: namely, that although there were apparent at Gwaun-cae-gurwen abundant examples of managerial and technical deficiencies, nevertheless, the primary task of union members was first to get their own house in order and only secondly to make what he termed "constructive criticisms" of existing mining practice. The alternatives open to him promised little. As can be deduced from Mike Griffin's contribution to the Porthcawl Conference, to call a coalfield strike would almost certainly have proved disastrous, for there was evidence of there existing amongst many of the "eastern" miners a good deal of animosity towards what they interpreted as the Board's "pampering" of their western counterparts. The response in these quarters to a strike-call would undoubtedly have been at best patchy.
Had Paynter responded to the Board's initial announcement (of
d dismissals) by appealing for help to the national officers of
his union, he would almost certainly have received a smart rebuff
or at least a non-committal shrug from the benighted shoulders
of that one-time radical, Will Lawther. Along with Arthur Deakin
and Tom Williamson, Lawther had been part of the ruling T.U.C.
triumvirate which had ensured that the Movement continued to favour
policies of wage-restraint and all-round "moderation" even after
the fall of the Labour Government. It is difficult to imagine
this man as harbouring anything other than the most unfavourable
of sentiments towards the committee men and militants of the
Neath Area (in which Gwaun-cae-gurwen was situated). Paynter,
then, had virtually no choice but to follow the path which led
eventually to the conditional re-opening of the two pits. As
he followed it he waved a banner upon which the word "Unity" was
written large enough to convince everyone that he and his Exec-
utive were dedicated to eradicating sectionalism from their union's
repertoire of industrial action. For during, and after, the crisis
at Gwaun-cae-gurwen the coalfield experienced one of the most
severe of its periodic rashes of unofficial strikes. Stoppages
occurred in every section of the coalfield: in Monmouthshire
and Rhymney as well as in the traditionally strike-prone areas
of Neath, Maesteg and the Rhondda. They took the form of walk-
couts and stay-downs and their causes were many and varied ranging
from mass disquiet provoked by an unsafe shaft-cage at Merthyr
Vale, to anger over the withdrawal of certain customary allowances
by management at Garw, to a protest over the alleged use of bad
language by a manager at Deep Duffryn.33 In the midst of this
apparently anarchic outbreak of unofficial activity, the Executive's
unimpeachable conduct at Gwaun-cae-gurwen served as an invaluable antidote to any potential deterioration of the union's responsible public image.

Paynter's tactics were not those normally associated with confident, aggressive trade unionism but they were tailored perfectly to fit an atmosphere in which the prevailing confidence and aggression had about it an air of unreality. Perhaps, during that early summer, his intimations concerning the impending decline of the industry were strengthened; he had, after all, stressed at the Annual Conference that unemployment amongst American minors was increasing and he had attached a great deal of significance to the less obvious warning signals implied in the severe dearth of mechanised mining in the pits of S. Wales. It took little imagination to realise that, in the event of a slump in the coal market, the most likely candidates for early closure would be these inefficient, unmechanised units and few were less mechanised than were East and Steer at Gwaun-cae-gurwen. They were perfect examples of the backwardness against which Paynter had been campaigning. 

But any rewards in terms of personal satisfaction which he might have reaped from his handling of the Gwaun-cae-gurwen crisis were almost certainly temporarily wiped out by the opprobrium heaped upon him as a member of the Communist Party by the Press and other hostile agencies during the Hungarian uprising and its immediate aftermath. As it did in every other area of the country, the

34 Steer and East remained open for another three and five years respectively: no mean achievement considering the fact that over forty other pits were closed before East finally ceased production on October 27th, 1962.
Communist Party received a mauling in South Wales during the last three months of 1956. Anti-Soviet pickets were reported as appearing at a small number of pit heads (including those of National and Penallta) and the Area Executive received a number of resolutions demanding the immediate resignation of all Communists who held official union posts. These and other, similar, actions received a great deal of publicity in the local and national press but appear to have presented Communists with few real difficulties in terms of retaining their elected positions on Lodge Committees and Area Councils. Much more serious was the effect which the Hungarian events wrought upon Communists themselves and upon the nature of their personal relationships with non-Communists both inside and out of the union. Paynter, for example, recalls that it became a risk for him to enter his local pub in Cardiff, despite the fact that for years he had been a regular customer:

"... this hostility against me", he wrote,
"threatened to become violent".35

Horner was similarly vilified in the press as well as by the non-Communist members of the union's national executive. Interviewed on the Panorama television programme by a suitably outraged Woodrow Wyatt, he described the Soviet suppression of the Nagy Government as being "regrettable" - a term considered insufficiently condemnatory both by Wyatt and by Horner's fellow executive members who subsequently dissociated themselves from his television performance.36

35. W. Paynter, "My Generation", p. 155. His children were harassed at school and his family suffered further as a result of a letter, written to a Sunday newspaper by David Llewellyn (M.P. for Cardiff North), purporting to associate him, as a Communist, "with the bloodshed in Budapest, the murder of little children and the other terrible things that were happening there".
He had been facing similar political criticism since the previous July when Sir William Lawther had issued a press statement in which he lashed out at the Polish authorities' handling of the Poznan workers' revolt: "These thugs and gangsters who masqueraded as Socialists", he declared, "must realise that never would they be accepted in the world of free men and women in view of crimes they had committed against workers". And Horner's public integrity was further challenged when Ernest Jones, Lawther's successor as miners' president, condemned Horner for announcing that he would not allow the events in Hungary to drive him from the Communist Party (which he described as "the only instrument through which genuine socialism can be ultimately realised"). Jones said that miners everywhere would "invite their secretary to review his position and to take his handcuffs off". Replying with typical pugnaciousness, Horner insisted that he was a "free agent" and that he would accept no restrictions of any kind which limited the free expression of his views .... "whether such restrictions emanated from the Communist Party or from the NUM".

Meeting in London on November 22nd, the national executive of the NUM carried by an overwhelming majority a resolution condemning the Soviet action in Hungary. They also voted to write to the president of the Soviet miners' union stating that British unionists could see little hope for successful cooperation in these "more tragic circumstances". This kind of indignant

37. Ibid., 12.7.56.
38. Ibid., 22.11.56.
39. NUM, E.C. Minutes: the committee also passed unanimously a resolution condemning the Anglo-French action in Egypt.
expression was not, however, particularly successful in weakening the rank-and-file support which Communists received. Few major resignations were forthcoming from Communist miners' leaders at any level in S. Wales, although a number of leading figures in other coalfields left the Party: notably, Bert Wynn, Alex Moffatt and Lawrence Daly. And whatever remained of local hostility towards Communists in the aftermath of the sordid Hungarian/Egyptian episodes was further dissipated by the arrival in South Wales of hundreds of Hungarian refugees earmarked by the Government as suitable candidates for colliery work.

3. Hungarians in Hirwaun

The Coal Board described its decisions to place Hungarians in British pits as a "humanitarian project" - surely, the first time in history that pits had been described as sanctuaries of humanitarianism. The rational executive of the NUM made similar noises and recommended its Lodges to do the same. Both the Board and the national executive emphasised that the employment of Hungarians was not intended as a threat to British labour and it was made clear that not one of the refugees would be employed in any British pit without the prior approval of the local branch of the NUM. 40

Individual Lodges however, responded far less warmly than did their national leaders and employers to the prospect of an immediate influx of foreign labour. Indeed, so cold was their response that it does much to explain how the union's Communists

40. C.G., 27.12.56.
managed to ride out the storm of criticism directed against them in S. Wales. The prevailing sense of animosity towards the Hungarian refugees combined admirably with the traditional expression of native hostility towards the employers to form an emotional barricade behind which Welsh Communists were shielded from the full force of the political backlash - despite all attempts by the British media to ensure otherwise.

The influx of Hungarians was the topic for a discussion which took place in Cardiff, early in March, 1957, between the NUM's Area officers and Lodge officials from pits which had been designated to receive the bulk of the refugees. Prior to the meeting, it had been discovered that the formula drawn up by previous national joint discussions of NCB and NUM officials (which had envisaged spreading the influx widely across the coalfield) was inapplicable due to the fact that accommodation was in very short supply. Offers of domestic lodging facilities had not been forthcoming and it became clear that the incoming refugees would have to be accommodated in hostels, of which there were discovered to be just two which were suitable: one at Hirwaun, near the Tower, Tirherbert and Rhigos collieries, the other at Rhydfelin near Pontypridd and the lower-Rhondda.

Bound by the decision of their national executive, the S. Wales Area officials of the union declared that they believed that they were "interpreting the point of view of the miners in the British coalfield" when they agreed to accept the employment of Hungarian refugee labour. "The surge of sympathy felt for these people at the time of difficulties in Hungary" was, they claimed,
"very intense" and the believed that no difficulty would be ex-
perienced in integrating them into the pits of S. Wales.41
Further, the Area officers argued that the refugees would help
materially to solve the manpower problem from which the industry
still suffered and, by helping to increase production, they would
make it increasingly possible to realise the reforms asked for
by the Union. It was stated that refugee labour would be ac-
cepted into the industry under the terms of the 1947 Agreement
by which it was provided for the Lodge to have the last word
in deciding the issue and, secondly, that if, at any future date
there were any redundancy at the pits concerned, then, the foreign
labour would be the first to be withdrawn.42

Despite these assurances however, the Lodge representatives were
"exceedingly critical" of their Area officers' proposals. They
offered the following observations on the problem:
1. The foreign labour which had been accepted into the industry
previously after the termination of the last war (i.e. mainly
Poles) had largely drifted to outside industries.
2. The kind of labour available from Hungary was considered to
be very unsuitable.
3. The behaviour of Hungarians already living in the hostels
"left a great deal to be desired .... Foreign labour already
in residence .... complained bitterly as to the conduct of
these people".
4. Native labour was being turned away from pits in the Aberdare
Valley where it was the intention of the Board to place many
of the refugees.

41. SWSNUM., E.C.M., 4.3.57.
42. Ibid.
5. The acceptance of those men into the industry in S. Wales would have an adverse effect upon the housing problem.

6. Foreign labour tended to undermine the standards of labour in the industry.

7. The impending introduction into S. Wales of power loading would "tend to reduce the number of men required" and could therefore, be the cause of serious redundancy in the near future.\(^{43}\)

The "vast majority" of Lodge delegates at the meeting intimated that their memberships were adamant in their refusal to accept Hungarian labour into their pits; to which the Area officials replied that the union had adequate safeguards in respect of their members' conditions of labour and, further, that apart from the alleged bad conduct of these particular refugees, the problems raised by the Lodge delegates were not insoluble. The executive members urged the delegates to return to their Lodges in order that they might seek a reversal of their members' previous decision not to accept refugee labour.\(^{44}\)

Of the seven major objections listed against the proposed influx, it was that which alleged "bad conduct" amongst the Hungarians which provoked most coverage in the local press. Lurid stories of Hungarian drunkenness and violence became commonplace: so much so, in fact, that the secretary of the Tower lodge in Hirwaun felt bound to report some of them formally to Paynter and the Area executive. He warned the elected leadership that if the bad conduct did not cease, then a "very serious position" would be likely to rise.\(^{45}\)

43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., 19.3.57.
The executive members were extremely sceptical of this and other such reports; they claimed that they were "greatly exaggerated by the press and local rumour." It was admitted however, that there was little prospect of either the Board or of the union winning the support of lodge members on the issue.

The executive’s scepticism and despondency were hardly surprising. Like most other communities which earned their bread by hard physical labour, Hirwaun had never lacked its share of stop-tap violence. The most likely explanations for the issuing of the complaints are to be found, firstly, by examining the politics of some of the more influential of the Hirwaun “complainers” and, secondly, by remembering that 1957 had brought to the pits of South Wales the first whiffs of job-insecurity to have floated across the field for over a decade.

46. SWNUM., E.C.M., Report of interview with Division Coal Board, 15.3.57.
47. Ibid.
48. An iron-producing community prior to it becoming a centre of coal production, Hirwaun was well-endowed with public houses and sections of its population had long subscribed to a code of social behaviour which owed more to the protection of bar-room honour than it did to any sense of Christian decorum which may have emanated from the pulpits of the village's many chapels. The "Hirwaun Boys" were a force to be reckoned with. They had, after all, participated in a succession of international skirmishes at the village's dance venues: skirmishes which had involved American troops (1944-45), Polish refugees (1947-48) and scarcely less foreign contingents from Dowlais, Resolven, Tirherbert and Penrhiwceiber.
Dealing with the politics first. It will be remembered that Hirwaun's largest pit, Tower, suffered a brief spell of Company Unionism during the early 1930s (See, above, Chapter 12, pp. 206-207)

Those who defected to this creed became known to the local SWMF "loyalists", not by their usual South Wales nicknames ("non-pols" or "scabs") but as "White Guards" - a title which gives a fair indication of the political complexion of some of the influential rank-and-file activists of this area. Though two decades had passed since these "White Guards" had been defeated, it is hardly fanciful to suggest that those same activists (or at least those of them who had survived) might not have been averse to fanning the flames of gossip which surrounded the Hungarians. For, as Chapter 2 attempts to illustrate, there existed in the minds of such activists in the 1930s a tendency to regard spencerite (Company) unionism as constituting the vanguard of fascism and, in 1957, the analysis applied to the Hungarian events by the Daily Worker was that they had been exacerbated by Horthyite fascist elements and reactionary Catholics, both of whom were alleged to be funded by the C.I.A.

On a somewhat more mundane level, it must be pointed out that there were other Lodges, like that of Lady Windsor Colliery for example, which had experienced no incursion of spencerite unionism and which were not renowned as havens for political radicals, but which nevertheless opposed the employment of Hungarians as vigorously as did the Hirwaun Lodges. There are two possible (and linked) explanations for this.

49. Recordings made in Aberdare, Trecynon, Rhigos and Hirwaun, 1975-78.
Firstly, there undoubtedly existed in the pits of S. Wales a number of variations of that universal distrust which workers exhibit towards any large influx of strangers into a workplace which has been tightly organised as a result of many years of effort by the native workmen. Secondly, it was becoming obvious, by 1957, that the post-war years of near-unlimited demand for coal were drawing to a close. Power-loading (or the promise of it) was waiting in the wings and the smell of mass-redundancies was in the air. The workforce had witnessed the partial closures of the Gwaun-cae-gurwen pits and the complete closure of no fewer than 55 of the Division's collieries since nationalisation.\textsuperscript{50}

Just how widespread these misgivings were can be deduced from a ballot which was conducted on the coalfield during the previous January. The workforce was requested by their national executive to vote for the removal of the Five-Day Week Bonus - an old demand which would ensure more consistent bonus earnings for all grades of miner.\textsuperscript{51} The Coal Board complicated matters prior to the ballot by indicating that they would remove the 5-Day Week Bonus only if there was a general acceptance of Hungarian labour into its pits. This served to transform the ballot so

\begin{enumerate}
\item List of Closures: Miners' Library, Swansea.
\item The "Bonus" consisted of payment for an extra shift if (and only if) the full five shifts were worked: so that if a miner worked the normal five shifts in one week, he would automatically receive six shifts equivalent pay. On the other hand, if he missed a shift or part of a shift he would then lose his bonus. The national executive wanted the substitution of this system by another which automatically attached a fractional bonus (e.g. one and one-fifth shifts) to each complete shift worked.
\end{enumerate}
that a vote against the original executive recommendation would be interpreted as a vote against the acceptance of Hungarians. 52

The result was that the recommendation was defeated by 451,000 votes to 266,000. 53 Under almost any other circumstances, this would have constituted an extraordinarily inconsistent result: the Five Day Week Bonus disqualification system had long been the object of universal rank-and-file distaste. But the result appears to have caused no surprise whatsoever to any of the National or Area leaders - such was the disquiet which the Hungarian question provoked.

By July, it was reported that there were 2,000-odd vacancies spread across 67 S. Wales pits. The Coal Board revealed however, that just 104 Hungarians had been placed in employment in eight pits, none of which were in the vicinity of Hirwaun. 54

52. Letter from Horner (NUM Gen. Sec.) to NCB, 25.3.57.
53. NUM (E.G.) Minutes, 10.4.57.
54. SWNUM., E.C. Minutes, 9.7.57. Collieries employing Hungarians:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Colliery</th>
<th>Numbers Acceptable to Pit Committees</th>
<th>Numbers Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bryn</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glyncorrgw</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Britannic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Albion</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Celynnon South</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Llanhilleth</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>230</strong></td>
<td><strong>104.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remaining 126 "acceptable" placings were to be filled by Hungarians who, in July, were still undergoing pit-training elsewhere.
It was late August before a number of the residents of the Hirwaun miners' hostel were found employment at the nearby Tirherbert Colliery. Employed on surface haulage jobs, they appear to have been isolated by the rest of the workforce so that they experienced only the most minimal contact with the Tirherbert miners during working hours. To illustrate just how complete this isolation was, in September the Area executive received a letter from the members of the Tirherbert Lodge Committee in which they contended that daywagemen were "obliged" to

"come into contact with Hungarian workers, inasmuch as the brakesmen handling the loaded and unloaded wagons and the locomotive drivers" were "bound to handle this traffic in immediate contact with the Hungarian workers".  

In reply, the executive council informed the Lodge members that their attitude was unreasonable and it advised them to "continue working with the Hungarians if such a situation arose in the future".

These were hardly the actions of men bleeding with sympathy for the crushed spirit of Hungarian democracy and they do little to vindicate the observations of certain commentators who have argued that the Communist executive officers of the miners' union were forced to cling desperately to their desks for fear of being forced from their positions by massive rank-and-file outrage at the scandalous behaviour of the Soviet government.  

As early as March 1957, the S. Wales executive agreed to pay for the in-

55. NUM (SWA) Minutes, E.C.M., 10.9.57.
56. Henry Polling is one of the worst offenders in this respect. His account of the events of 1957 (c/f. "The British Communist Party, op.cit., pp. 174-175) suffers badly from the limitations set by his adopted method of research; it is made up entirely of reports printed in the "Times" and "Manchester Guardian".
sertion of May Day greetings in the columns of the "Daily Worker" and, by the following August, it financed the visit to Hungary of three delegates in response to an invitation from the Hungarian Miners' Union. Delegations were also dispatched during the same year to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Moscow and S. Wales was not alone in this respect; delegates from the Scottish, Yorkshire and Derbyshire Areas also attended functions organised during 1957 by Communist Parties within Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe.

It is almost certainly the case that the gossip and rumour which surrounded the behaviour of those of the Hungarian refugees who were housed at the miners' hostels did a great deal to cloud the significance of the brutal events which had provoked their leaving of Hungary in the first place. Like an unexpected salve, it helped heal the wounds which Communist union officials had suffered during their initial November mauling. But to attribute to the influence of gossip and rumour the continued popularity of these officials would be absurd. Communists survived primarily because they continued to be rated highly as trade-union representatives; and no matter how much the Soviet action stuck in the throats of certain miners, they knew in their guts that what mattered more to them was the protection of the gains which they and their union - complete with its Communist leaders - had made in the decade since nationalisation.

57. SWNUM., E.C.M., 19.3.57.
58. Ibid., 20.8.57.
59. Ibid., 4.3.57. and 20.8.57.
60. Ibid., 2.4.57.
The hostility shown towards the Hungarians could be interpreted as a failure on the part of the workforce to put its money where its mouth had been for so many years - namely, on the side of those who sought to throw off the chains of imperialism or to rid themselves of repressive governments. It is true that the S. Wales executive donated £500 to the fund set up to relieve distress amongst Hungarian refugees and that this was exactly twice the amount which it donated to a similar fund set up in aid of Egyptians made homeless by the British and French invasion of the canal zone.61 But by the early months of 1957 it was obvious that there existed less enthusiasm amongst Lodge leaderships for attacking the Soviet action in Hungary than for attacking Britain's role in the Egyptian farce. The Annual Report of the S. Wales miners, (which was published in April) for example, contained references to both situations, but whereas the tone of its remarks concerning Hungary reflected the confusion which the Soviet action provoked amongst the miners' executive, its Egyptian remarks were unambiguously critical of the British Government's actions.62

At the Area Annual Conference, there was little mention of Hungary during the political debates, but overwhelming support was forthcoming for a Rhigos Lodge resolution attacking the British and French actions in the Middle East and equal support

61. SWNUM., A.C.R., 1957, pp. 116-117. The Area E.C. also issued an appeal to the lodges, which resulted in a donation in excess of £1,200 for the relief of Hungarian distress.
62. Ibid.
for a Seven Sisters' Lodge resolution which argued for an increase in the interchange of workers' delegations from both Communist and non-Communist countries:

"Workers do not always agree with their respective Governments", declared its proposer, "but workers themselves aspire to the same things all the world over, and that is Peace and friendship". 63

This "re-direction" of critical emphasis indicates clearly that the blow which the Communists had suffered during the months immediately following November, 1956, was a temporary one. At no stage after the initial crisis were they in danger of being rejected by the workforce, whether at Lodge or Area level. Indeed, the Agenda for the 1957 Annual Conference contained a large number of anti-TUC resolutions, many of which smacked of Communist-influenced authorship. The overwhelming support which these resolutions received at the Conference does not in itself constitute proof however, that the assembled delegates had somehow "forgiven" or exonerated those amongst them who were Communists. Neither does it mean that the coalfield's political conscience had been jettisoned as a result of Communist subversion. It indicates, rather, how marked was the degree of frustration generated amongst the Lodges by the TUC's insistence upon continuing with its policies of "moderation" and "peaceful co-existence" with the Tory government. This frustration eclipsed the indignation which the Hungarian events provoked amongst Labourites and, by the Spring of 1957, the Soviet invasion had become more a topic for polemical debate between Communists and non-Communists than a burning issue upon the outcome of which might depend the

63. Ibid.
political fate of the coalfield. Indeed, the major participants in this debate displayed what appeared to be a remarkable degree of unity in their attitudes towards a whole range of contemporary topics, some of which had seriously fragmented Labour Party opinion. The Annual Report of the S. Wales miners, for example, devoted a very large amount of space to explaining the case against Britain's retention of the H. Bomb. One of the dominant themes of the 1957 Annual Conference was one which stressed the need for unilateral disarmament and for a withdrawal of the country's forces from NATO. Speaker after speaker denounced, in the same breath, the Government's expenditure on "poisonous" armaments and its attack, as they saw it, upon the social services and living standards of the working class. Explicit and highly-popular criticisms were voiced of those in the parliamentary Labour Party and TUC who allegedly avoided open confrontation with the Conservatives: a Pentremawr resolution, for example, demanded that the TUC

".... take effective measures to combat the policy of this Tory Government. Our standard of living has been systematically reduced by every conceivable means, from the slashing of food subsidies to the Rent Bill; every measure brought by the Tories has been designed with the same end in view. The full power of this Organisation, with the TUC, should be used to bring about the downfall of this infamous Government at the earliest possible time".

Such was the degree of unanimity communicated by these debates, that an unwary observer might have been excused for believing

64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
that the unpopular domestic and foreign policies of the Tory Government had served to weld together previously opposing strands of coalfield opinion. For the first time since the initial flush of nationalisation had faded from the cheeks of the coalfield, there appeared to reign a sense of complete accord within the ranks both of the Lodges and miners' executive.

But the surface appearance flattered the true nature of this "unity". An examination of just two of the important "harmonizing" issues reveals that, even after ten years of nationalisation, the S. Wales miners' union continued to fracture into familiar political and geographical divisions. A new sense of "unity" had emerged, but it was to prove to be a belated unity which operated mainly along the Left-wing of the union and which was to prove its worth in the late 1960s and early '70s, rather than at the moment of its consolidation.

The first of these "harmonizing" issues concerned the opposition which was aroused on the coalfield by the Conservatives' Rent Bill. It provoked such anger that in one area, Aberdare, meetings were convened during March with a view to staging a one-day protest strike. Paynter and his executive announced that,

66. On January 11th, 1957, the Area Executive Committee convened a meeting with the Welsh Mining Members of Parliament to discuss proposals by the Conservatives to push through a Bill which would provide for (amongst other things) a considerable all-round increase in house rents as well as the decontrol of previously controlled houses when there was a change of tenancy. Security of tenure was to disappear in an enormous number of cases and house-rents were to be allowed to float upwards by as much as two-thirds if the landlord could prove that he had made changes or structural improvements to his property. SWNUM., A.D.C., 5.3.57.

67. Aberdare Leader, 1.3.57.
although they were fully aware of the "very strong feeling obtaining in the coalfield on this matter", they believed that it was too early in the campaign against the Bill to stage a one-day token strike. At a delegate conference convened in Cardiff on March 5th, he declared that the campaign should be "worked up gradually .... because if a one-day strike is not enough then the logic of the action is that more days of token strikes must be taken, and in the end a complete strike envisaged for the whole coalfield for as long a period as is necessary to secure a change in the attitude of the Government". 68

Arguing that "secondary action" would be ineffective after the political use of a strike, he urged the assembled delegates to cooperate in organising mass demonstrations to take place on Sunday, March 31st, and he announced that if they were well supported, "then a review of the position could be undertaken".

The debate which followed tended to polarise the delegates into two uneven camps. The first contained most of the Lodges and all of the executive; the second, most of the "unofficials" and some of their sympathizers who, like the Nantgarw Lodge delegate, expressed the opinion that Paynter and his colleagues were not going far enough in their proposals:

"The Executive Committee", he complained, "threatened the Government with a stoppage in this coalfield if they went to war over the Formosa incident and further threatened the Government over the Suez situation".

68. SHNUM., A.D.C., 5.3.57.
These were examples, he said, of "threats of strikes for political ends" and he went on to admit that it was true that ".... possibly millions would be killed if a third world war were started", but he argued that it was also the case that ".... aged people and those on fixed incomes were dying piecemeal of neglect and semi-starvation".

He was of the view that the Executive Committee should "seriously consider" bringing the coalfield to a stop, "in order to defeat the Government on this issue". It was, he claimed, "a golden opportunity for .... Labour .... to oust the Tories once and for all"; it was time, he said, that the Left "did something": the Conservatives were being discredited because of their own actions, ".... rather than because of positive policies being put forward by the Labour Movement."

A delegate from one of the most militant centres, the Dulais Valley, complained that the planned Sunday demonstrations "revealed a great weakness as far as the Executive Committee was concerned" and he stated that he was convinced, that if protest demonstrations were to be organised at all, then

".... they should be organised on a working day in order to demonstrate to the Government the depth of feeling prevailing on this issue amongst the miners of this coalfield".

The executive received its most severe criticism however, from Mike Griffin, delegate of the Penrhwiweiber Lodge and left-wing Labourite who described the executive's proposals as being "too

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69. Ibid. The delegate was named as a Mr. Norris. It was unusual to hear a speech of this nature from a Nantgarw delegate - Nantgarw having little tradition of any form of industrial or political militancy. Referring to its close proximity to Wales' capital city, the miners' leader Dai Dan Evans once defined its workforce as consisting of "Cardiff window cleaners".

70. Ibid. The delegate, Mr. Bowen, was from the Dillwyn Lodge.
insipid. He believed that the way to galvanise the coalfield into action on this matter was to "call for a token strike of one day and from such a strike the miners could march forward to greater heights of activity and protest against this Bill".71

Griffin's arguments failed to carry the day however, for Paynter succeeded in swinging the Conference behind him by declaring that he was "uncertain" as to whether or not the "overwhelming mass" of his members were prepared to take the kind of action suggested by the Penrhiwceiber delegate. It was out of line with Labour Party policy on this issue and he feared that he would be unable to mobilise many of those of the coalfield's Lodges which, in the past, had shown a greater willingness to support the proposals of the union's comparatively "moderate" and pro-TUC national executive, than they had shown willingness to support the proposals of their own Area executive.

Predictably, Griffin and his allies refrained from accepting defeat with even a modicum of grace. In true "unofficial" fashion, they proceeded, instead, to circularize Lodges, urging that they undertake a one-day strike on May 1st. So flagrantly did they advertise their intention to stop the pits of the Aberdare Valley, with or without the support of the rest of the field, that it caused a number of Monmouthshire Lodges -- amongst them Celynen South -- to remind the Area executive that it should "take a serious note of this position" and proceed to discipline the "unofficials" involved.72 The executive responded by issuing its own circular which reminded Lodges that they were obliged to reject all over-

71. Ibid.
72. SWNUM., E.C.M., 19.3.57., and 27.3.57.
turers from unofficial sources and to stick to the line laid down at the coalfield Conference. This, in turn, was rejected both by the Aberdare men and by several Dulais Valley Lodges including that at Seven Sisters which forwarded to the executive a petition, signed by every Lodge member, demanding strike action on May 1st. Once again, the executive threw out the demand and recommended all Lodges to partake in the demonstrations arranged for Sunday, March 31st.

The Dulais Valley Lodges obeyed, but those of Aberdare struck work as they had planned. Attendance at the demonstrations meanwhile, was "exceedingly low", despite the fact that the executive had undertaken considerable propaganda work by loudspeaker, leaflet and personal canvassing to ensure a good turnout. The best demonstrations were those held in the Maesteg and Swansea districts, but in the remainder of the field the response was poor. Not surprisingly, far more attention was paid by the Press to the unofficial stoppages which took place shortly afterwards in the Aberdare Valley. Successful inasmuch as they halted a number of important and productive pits, they also appeared to contradict the findings of the post-mortem which the executive carried out on the failed demonstrations. An executive spokesman declared that his committee was of the opinion that the Rent Bill was "not an issue around which one could mobilise mass opposition to the Tory Government", and, further, that his committee was "cognisant of the fact that no serious political campaigning had been done in this coalfield in the last 20 years" and that the

73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., Aberdare Leader, 5.4.57., Neath Guardian, 5.4.57., Western Mail, 1.4.57.
low attendance was therefore to be expected. He and his colleagues proposed that a fresh campaign be launched with a view to organising a "mammoth demonstration in Cardiff on Gala Day in opposition to the general policy of the Tory Government".

This apologetic retreat was attacked vehemently at the coalfield's Annual Conference by delegate-speakers from the Fernhill and Abercrafre Lodges as well as by the Penrhiwceiber Lodge delegate who declared that the decision of the Aberdare Valley Lodges to strike had been vindicated in the light of the failure of the tactics advocated by the executive council:

"To protest by calling mass-meetings and demonstrations was not enough" he declared. "If the working-class movement is to defend itself against the attacks of the Tory Government then the only way to do so is by taking industrial action. In the past", he continued, "the Tories have made direct attacks upon the workers by seeking reductions in their wages. In the post-war period, these attacks have been more subtle and have been made indirectly by means such as the Rent Bill, withdrawal of subsidies, prescription charges, etc." He supported a Fernhill resolution which called upon the union's national executive to "vigorously oppose the new Rent Act and, if necessary, organise a nationwide strike to defeat this oppressive measure of the Tory Government". Conference carried the resolution unanimously.

Sensing the mood of the occasion, Paynter delivered a presidential address which bristled with political barbs. The Tory Government,

75. SWNUM., E.C.M., 16.4.57.
76. Ibid., A.C.R., May 1957.
he said, was operating openly as the "political mouthpiece of
big business". Echoing Griffin, he declared that the old policies
of wage-cutting by the employers was now being replaced by
"indirect cuts in real wages by the employers' government".
Political means were being used, he said, to attack the wage
standards secured by the trade-unions, so were not the unions
"compelled to engage in political action against Government
policy?" By confining their activities to wage claims, he argued,
the unions were dealing with effects not causes and, inevitably,
they secured no final or effective solution to the problems of
their members.

It was, he said, equally erroneous to accept the viewpoint that
the unions should have to wait for a General Election to change
the Government. This policy of "acquiescence and passivity"
had never been the setting for victory by Labour in elections:
"To adopt this attitude", he argued, was to "allow the Tories
to determine the date and conditions for an election most fav-
ourable to themselves" and it gave them a license to proceed
with policies which could place any succeeding Labour Government
".... in such difficulties that progressive reforms would be
delayed and the prospect of a return for the Tories assured".

Such an outlook, he declared, had "no place whatever" in a
movement aiming to realise socialism in Britain. He did not ad-
vocate a General Strike, but called instead, for a "combined
campaign of opposition using the powerful resources of the Trade
Unions to mobilise public opinion against Tory policy".77

77. Ibid.
Given the circumstances and the recent failure of the Rents Bill demonstrations, he could have said little else. Had he called for a General Strike, he undoubtedly would have alienated those amongst his members who had expressed their distaste for the action undertaken by the Aberdare Lodges. Had he spoken more mildly in favour of preparing the ground in traditional fashion for the next General Election, he would have fallen foul of the union's "Leftists" who were demanding immediate action.

His alternative strategy was vague enough to pacify both sides. It combined elegant socialist analysis and rhetoric with deliberately fudged conclusions. For the moment, Paynter was slumming amongst the "Left-talkers": he was consciously wrapping himself in the banner of Popular-Frontism without appearing to notice that it had become as threadbare and as ineffective as a jester's suit in the court of a bankrupt king. He refrained from specifying whom, exactly, his members should front-up with. Did he believe that they should attempt to instigate a movement in which the Aberdare militants would be free to raise their clenched fists in unison with those in the great Gaitskellite wedge who were intent, at that moment, upon severing from the Labour Movement the last potent symbols of red-blooded socialism?

Almost certainly not. The idea was too preposterous. His words were not designed for careful analysis. They were meant to convey the impression that the miners' executive was firmly on the side of those who regretted the moribund nature of the opposition to Tory policies which the parliamentary Labour Party provided.
Nevertheless, they were carefully guarded words, calculated not
to raise the hackles of those amongst the union's Labourites
who, primed with indignation by the Hungarian outrages, inter-
preted every anti-Gaitskell murmur as having its genesis in
Moscow. Paynter's words were symptomatic of a malais which
appeared increasingly to afflict the elected political and in-
dustrial leaders of S. Wales. It manifested itself in public
as a loss of political direction. Some were afflicted more
severely than others: Paynter, for example, displayed relatively
mild symptoms, though they undoubtedly were aggravated by the
discomfort to which he was subjected during the Hungarian crisis.
A more obvious sufferer was Aneurin Bevan who appeared increasingly
to stumble from precipice to precipice like Lear attempting
to nullify the effects of losing Cordelia, his socialist child.
For comfort, he turned in his confusion to the halls of his
political enemies wherein presided Gaitskell and George Brown,
rearranging the realm as eagerly as had any Regan and Gonerill
before them.

Bevan and Paynter were dragging at their political anchors and
even less than in previous years did the Labour Party and the
miners' union provide them with safe havens. Whilst Bevan stru-
ggled to make sense of Gaitskell's assumption of power, Paynter
experienced another defeat at the hands of the predominantly
Right-wing national executive of his union. It was a serious
defeat and a frustrating one, in as much as it concerned the
second of the "harmonizing" issues referred to earlier: namely,

78. In 1957, Paynter was 54 years of age, Bevan was 60 and Horner 63.
79. Wilson was almost, but not quite, suitable for the role of
Edmund the Bastard, Michael Foot admirably qualified to pay
Lear's faithful Fool.
that of wages and of the executive's role as representatives of mass rank-and-file opinion.

By 53,450 votes to 31,300, the S. Wales miners rejected the national executive's recommendations to accept the proposed increase in wages which it had negotiated with the Board during the early months of 1957. In doing so, the miners supported the criticisms which Paynter had directed at the proposed deal. He had argued that the wages offer was "completely inadequate" and that it constituted no real improvement in the financial conditions of his members. More importantly perhaps, he declared that the proposed increase was framed in such a way that it "deviated considerably" from the agreed Wages Structure for daywage men and that it was "likely to permanently injure (the Union's) chances of securing uniformity in the rates of wages grade by grade throughout the country". The proposed differential increases between the wages of surface and underground workers would, he argued, tend to promote disunity within the workforce.

He was arguing the old S. Wales line and it drew its usual response from the Midlands and the North East: at the national ballot, the NEC's recommendations were carried by 495,000 votes to 231,000. It was not the dimension of the national defeat which concerned Paynter however, as much as the size of the South Wales minority which had supported the NEC and rejected the analysis of its own Area leaders.

80. SYNUM., A.C.R., 21.5.57.
The ballot exposed traditional Lodge divisions. Support for the Area executive was strongest in the west and weakest in the east. Table 1, below, lists the numbers of Lodges by District which voted for or against the NEC's recommendation: (Since the Lodges were of varying sizes, the vote entitlements differed and are included after the numbers of Lodges).

The diminution of support for Paynter's executive was remarkably even as one moved further away from the centres which traditionally had sustained the unofficial movements. This was the case even in the Swansea District where, of the five Lodges which voted against Paynter, four were situated in areas of the field in which organised unofficial action had been fairly scarce (i.e. in the far west and in the south of the Western District; the fifth was a Vale of Neath Craftsmen's Lodge).

In the Maesteg District, of the six Lodges which voted against the Area executive, five had never figured in lists of collieries which had taken an active part in the unofficial movements. Paynter's support in this District centred upon those areas which traditionally had supplied the most militant workforces: Maesteg itself, and the Garw and Ogmore Valleys.

In the Aberdare and Rhondda District, the picture was a good deal more complicated. As in the Merthyr and Rhymney areas, there existed in those valleys a number of relatively large and productive mines where high-wage piecerate workers were obviously

81 i.e., Blaenhirwaun, Carway and Wernos in the far west and Garngoch in the south.
Table 1

S. Wales Result of National Ballot on Wages Proposals

May 1957

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Lodges voting in favour of NEC's recommendations</th>
<th>Entitlement in votes</th>
<th>No. of Lodges Voting against NEC's recommendations</th>
<th>Entitlement in votes</th>
<th>Undeclared Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swansea</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maesteg</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdare &amp; Rhondda</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merthyr &amp; Rhymney</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmouth</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

reluctant to forego the opportunity to increase their earnings - even though the increase might be at the expense of their daywage colleagues. Numerically, the Lodges were split clean down the middle but, once again, of the 12 Lodges voting against Paynter's recommendations, only 3 (Tymawr, Naval and Penrhincaeib) were known to be fairly regular participants in unofficial movements, whilst 9 of the 13 Lodges which voted in support of Paynter were regular participants in such movements.\(^{82}\) The Lodges were not split in terms of size, productivity and potential earnings-capacity. Relatively large and productive pits like Abercynon, Cambrian, Fernhill, Lewis Merthyr and Tower voted in favour of Paynter's recommendations, whilst others of similar specifications voted against. (e.g. Penrhincaeib, National and Ferndale 8 & 9). Three of the Lodges which voted against Paynter (Albion, Aberaman and Fforchaman) were widely reputed to have never recovered their self-confidence as Lodges after their experiences at the hands of Powell Duffryn management in the years before nationalisation\(^{83}\) and, nebulous though this factor is, it nevertheless may help explain why a majority of Merthyr and Rhymney Lodges voted to play it safe and accept the ready-cash offered by the NEC rather than support Paynter and his executive).

For the most part, the mines in this district were amongst the largest and most productive on the coalfield. Few of them had partaken in any of the post-rationalisation unofficial movements and their elected officials were generally to be counted amongst those who stood to the Right on the Area executive. Of the 13

\(^{82}\) i.e., Cambrian, Fernhill, Glenrhondda, Lewis Merthyr, Glamorgan, Rhigos, Tirherbert, Tower and Tydraw.

\(^{83}\) See, above, Chapter 3.
pits which voted against Paynter; eight were ex-Powell Duffryn pits whilst amongst the eleven which supported him, only two had belonged to Powell Duffryn. Moreover, whilst only one of those pits which voted against him (Risca) possessed a post-war reputation as a consistently strike-prone Lodge, at least six of those which supported him had witnessed, during the previous two decades, a large number of serious disputes and conflicts. This was especially true of Bedwas, Nine Mile Point and Taff Merthyr, all of which had provided settings for some of the most fierce conflicts of the Miners' Federation's campaign to eradicate its rival, the spencerite Company Union.

In the Monmouthshire District, no such distinctions are obvious, although the most strike-prone Lodges tended to vote for Paynter rather than against him. In terms of pit size and output, of the eight Lodges in this District which contained memberships of 800 or over, four voted for Paynter and four voted against him. All eight produced roughly equal annual tonnages, so that there were no great differences between them in terms of earnings potential.

Throughout the rest of the field however, the correlations were much clearer and more consistent. Those Lodges which had participated in post-war unofficial movements tended overwhelmingly to support Paynter's line. In their role as "unofficials" they almost invariably had opposed the conciliatory methods favoured by the National Executive. The difference on this occasion was

that they found themselves in the happy position of having as their allies their elected President and his executive.

It was this reconciliation, rather than the patching-up of the quarrel over Hungary between pro-Communists and non-Communists, which did most to create upon the field a sense of the possibility of there re-emerging the kind of solidarity of purpose which might succeed in achieving a number of those primary objectives which had been close to the hearts, both of Paynter and of the "unofficals", for many years. They had long demanded the eradication of piece-working and of payment differentials between coalfields; they favoured an immediate extension of rank-and-file participation, both in the workings of the union and of the pits; and they advocated a swift phasing-out of regular overtime working and of compulsory arbitration.

Their chances of achieving these objectives were not enhanced, either by the size of the national vote against Paynter's line, or by the size of the South Wales minority which opposed him. The old geographical divisions of the coalfield remained very much in evidence. Nevertheless, receiving the support of the "unofficals" appears to have encouraged Paynter to throw caution to the wind, in as much as he began to state in public many of his privately-held doubts concerning the nature of the nationalised industry. By this, the tenth year of State ownership, he clearly had become tired of defending the kinds of unimaginative policies of "moderation" which for so long had emerged from a national executive dominated by Right-wingers who insisted invariably upon preserving their Divisional estates even at the cost
of national unity. Henceforward, Paynter's statements made it clear that he would not demure from burning down as many of his and other people's bridges as he deemed it necessary in order that he might move forward to construct new alliances and thereby to create a more powerful and efficient Union.

At the 1957 South Wales Miners' Conference, he subjected the nationalised set-up to the most comprehensive-and penetrating criticism it had yet received from any quarter. Harking back to the early part of the century, he recalled that Nationalisation had been "conceived by the pioneers of Socialism as a half-way step to socialisation and as an ally in the struggle to end private enterprise", and he reminded the delegates that the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act had been constructed "in far different political and economic circumstances" to those which existed in 1957. He reminded his audience that, in 1947, it had been believed that workers in the nationalised industry would exercise a decisive control in the running of the industry and that any benefits which accrued would be shared by the British people. The experience of ten years however, had "shattered these illusions" and he declared that the "new social order" appeared to be as far away in 1957 as it had appeared to be in 1947. He summarised the experience as follows:

1. "Nationalisation changed the form of control for the better, but fundamentally the industry remained a source of profit for the previous owners and big business generally.

2. "That those placed in control of the industry Nationally and in the Divisions were selected in the main from the Executive Staff of companies industrially or commercially associated with the old owners.

3. "That progressively the Trade Union men appointed to the Board were subordinated to control by production executives, a process accelerated since the Fleck Report."

4. "That the participation of the workers in control and direction of the industry is non-existent and consultation is superficial and largely window-dressing.

5. "That the wages and conditions of miners have not improved to the measure that could be reasonably expected". 86

His Summary was a sound one. Under the Nationalisation Act, the Board had not been permitted to accumulate substantial profits and its existing funds had proved insufficient to meet the reforms necessary if the industry was to hold and attract the required manpower. This situation had been aggravated by heavy interest charges and losses from imported coal which, together, liquidated the restricted trading profit. 87 Reorganisation and modernisation meant large capital expenditure; the Government provided the capital on loan; the industry, in turn, had to repay the capital plus interest. To those miners who attempted to unravel such mysteries, it must have appeared that the financial set-up of coal nationalisation was designed to facilitate their own exploitation in the interests of the State and big business.

* Fleck Report: see p. 381 below.

86. Ibid., p. 11.

87. The impositions on the industry were staggering. The Government purchased the mineral rights and the pits, but the industry was burdened not only with capital costs but also with interest payments to the Government. Before any of these payments were made from trading profits, profits tax had to be paid to the Exchequer.
The Coal Board openly admitted to selling coal to industry at less than its economic cost and it would have been difficult for any mineworker to conclude anything other than that the cumulative loss of £37 million carried by the industry since nationalisation had been artificially created and that it ought not to have been charged upon the industry.

In Appendix Two (below) it is described how the Coal Board came to be dominated by former directors of coal-owning or associated companies. Ten years on, those members had earned for themselves a reputation for continuing to execute the kinds of financial and administrative ploys which had distinguished them during the "private" era. This included price-fixing as part of a general policy laid down by the State, and little was done to counteract it by the sprinkling of trade union leaders appointed to executive positions on the Board. Except in one or two isolated instances, these individuals functioned in the industrial relations sectors and, even there, they found themselves hidebound on policy matters by collective Board decisions. Neither was their position likely to improve after 1957, for the Government had ordered an investigative body, known as the Fleck Committee, to examine Coal Board administration and it had advised against industrial relations personnel being recruited from the trade unions and particularly from the miners' union. The Board, in turn, had adopted the advice and in recent appointments in certain Divisions and National level, had selected people with no trade union background or with no knowledge of the industry. To Paynter, at

88. NCB "Tenth Anniversary Brochure", Hobart House, January 1957.
least, this trend, together with other administrative changes, tended to mould the organisation of the NCB "nearer to the pattern of big monopolies like Imperial Chemicals". At the 1957 Conference, he recalled Vesting Day and the speeches which were made at the pitheads on that historic morning:

"A new day has dawned for the miners - they were coming into their own in the industry".

But he claimed that the experiences of the subsequent ten years had disillusioned them; workers' participation in management by direct representation or through consultative machinery had, he argued, "proved an empty pipe dream", and he reminded his audience that none of the basic relationships existing within the industry had changed during the first decade of nationalisation: "A bad set of employers", he claimed, had been replaced "by a better set, but the relationship of master and servant still operates".  

He admitted however, that the union had secured more improvements during the ten years of nationalisation than it had secured "in fifty years from the old owners". But he warned that such a comparison was "absolutely superficial" if it was intended as an estimate of the changes that ought to have taken place. Among the main reforms achieved during the first ten years had been the Five Day Week Agreement. But this, in turn, had been encroached upon by the Extended Hours Agreement covering overtime-work and the Saturday shift. Two weeks paid holiday per year; a National Minimum wage; a new Wages Structure covering all Daywage

90. Ibid.
men; better wage levels throughout the industry and improved pensions for retired miners. These advances were greatly appreciated by the membership, but Paynter, for one, considered that they would have occurred "inevitably" in the conditions which prevailed during the decade following nationalisation. Full employment, a scarcity of mining manpower, and above all, a rising demand for coal to supply the needs of post-war industrial expansion helped compel these changes in the coal industry as they did in many other industries during these years.

The changes had not however, been sufficient to retain or attract the manpower which the industry needed and they had not succeeded in lifting mining to a competitive position in the labour market. The union's members had been aware, since the early 1950s, of an increasing hardening in the Board's responses to their claims for further improvement in wages and conditions. The Board had refused stubbornly to reduce the hours of work for surface-men— it had refused to modify its attitude on the issue of waiting-time payments for pieceworkers and negotiations for the removal of the Five-Day Week Bonus were hamstrung by the Board's insistence that the issue be placed before a National Reference Tribunal.

92. The union negotiated for parity of working hours: i.e. 8 hours per shift inclusive of mealtimes.
93. The union claimed that pieceworkers should be paid average piece rates for waiting-time. This was later modified (in the face of Coal Board intransigence) to a nominal figure between the day rate and the pieceworkers' average and finally modified to a claim that waiting-time should be calculated on a daily basis and not (as in 1957) on a weekly basis. Even this was turned down, however, and the claim submitted to a National Reference Tribunal.
The whole question of compulsory arbitration provoked a particularly violent antagonism amongst the ranks of the "activists" and their new allies; for, under the terms of the existing conciliation machinery, the union, which, by the nature of things, was almost always the applicant, was obliged to refer unsettled questions to arbitration or else to drop them. This state of affairs had been accepted by Lawther, Horner and the rest of the union's leadership back in the war years and they had not objected when it was carried over, intact, into the period of nationalised ownership. The philosophy underlying compulsory arbitration was that the National Interest was paramount. But, with the ending of the war, it became obvious to a great many dissatisfied members that the term "National Interest" needed a clear definition, especially if it involved (as it did in the coal industry) the abandonment of the right to strike on any issue and its substitution by a three-man Tribunal whose decisions were final and binding on the parties involved.

The "National Interest" obviously referred to the interests of everyone within the nation. But it was equally obvious that not everyone in the nation had the same interests. The interests of those who sold their labour for wages or salaries were not the same as those who bought that labour and used it to make profits for themselves. Paynter emphasised this distinction:

"Wages and salaries", he said, "are not identical with profits and dividends. Some people argue that it is in the National Interest that wages should be restrained, that consumption of goods should be curtailed and the economy kept solvent, and that increased wages are only possible if there is increased production."
"These are arguments against wages and other claims and the basis for the intervention of Arbitration Boards in industrial disputes. But all these arguments are, in fact, in defence of private interests and against the interests of the mass of people who comprise the nation....

"In a setting of this kind, no matter how well-meaning the members of Arbitration Boards may be, they cannot ignore the factors of Government policy, the pattern of settlements already made and the effects of any Award they may make upon industry generally. In the main they reflect in their decisions the policy of the State as already determined". 94

This was as true of the coal industry as of any other. But, unlike unions operating in other industries, the NUM had accepted arbitration by outside bodies as part of its conciliation machinery and consequently had found itself increasingly shackled in negotiations by the suspicion that the members of the Coal Board were prepared automatically to refer to the Tribunal any issue over which they and the union disagreed. Paynter considered that the only efficient remedy to this situation was one which restored the union's right to strike; this, he said, would give the union added power in negotiations and the right to decide finally whether arbitration should be resorted to. Such a change, he insisted, would lead, not to frivolous or irresponsible strikes, for the union was, in his words, a "responsible organisation and could not exist if it pursued policies that prejudiced the interests and well-being of its members". 95

95. Ibid.
Like the "unofficials", Paynter found himself struggling to interpret the significance of the changes which were transforming the face of the industry. As the shadows of impending pit closures deepened, new words and phrases entered the jargon of negotiation: words like "disillusionment" and phrases like "integration scheme", "Divisional Power Loading Agreement", "rationalised wages structure", "coalfield pieceworking disparity" and so on. Paynter and his allies attempted to make others aware of the meanings which lay behind this new language in the same way as Horner had attempted, some twenty years earlier, to force the union to come to terms with the changes wrought upon the industry by a decade of economic depression and near-monopoly ownership. To succeed, in 1957, Paynter expressed his determination to "eradicate once and for all" what he termed
".... the romantic nonsense spoken by too many people in the Movement, who would have us believe that nationalisation and the National Coal Board represent the millenium as far as the miners are concerned".

Compare these words with those which he had used regularly during the previous ten years to condemn the continuance of unofficial strikes: he pushes "irresponsibility" into the background; his allegations of "Luddism" disappear altogether; the soft words of conciliation become submerged beneath a new hardness. The language begins to communicate a sense of personal relief - as if suddenly he has decided that all of his previous "tactical" support for nationalisation constituted little more than a succession of hopeless compromises. He appears in these speeches to have gone
out of his way to gather up and bless the most virulent of the old criticisms with which the "unofficials" had sniped at him during the preceding decade. Evoking the spirit, if not the text, of the "Miners' Next Step", he gave notice of his intention to shrug off the largest remnants of industrial "collaborationism" and forcefully reminded his contemporaries that nationalisation was, as he put it, "... not an end in itself" but only a means to an end. Its role and function in the late 1950s, he argued, revealed the "end" as being nothing more than a "cheap product for capitalist industry to strengthen and perpetuate capitalism". 96

The preceding work paints a picture of a complex and divided labour force reacting to mass unemployment, the consolidation of "combine" ownership, war and nationalisation. Certain themes recur consistently: the efforts of miners to protect "custom and practice"; the residue of job-insecurity and mutual animosity between men and management; the conflicting loyalties of militant workers and union representatives: the union's inter-ecine conflicts and ideological tensions. In an attempt to discourage the formulation of too many easy assumptions concerning the nature of pit politics and trade-union leadership in South Wales, much of this thesis has concerned itself with explaining why it was that these themes were subject to so many variations in different parts of the coalfield.

It points out, for example, that only a minority of South Wales pits were strike-prone and that, even within this minority, there were few workforces which could be described as uniformly strike-prone. Detailed analysis of individual strikes reveals divisions within pits and even within pit-districts. (See, especially, the wartime Boys' Strikes and the "sectionalist" piece-rate workers' strikes of the 1950s).

The divisions appear most marked when statistical comparisons are made of the strike-proneness of pits situated within broadly
different geographical areas. Such a comparison shows, for example, that the anthracite area hosted a higher proportion of strikes than did the central steam-coal area. This has led observers to assume that there prevailed amongst anthracite workers a higher propensity to strike than prevailed amongst steam-coal miners. In turn, this has promoted a good deal of theorizing aimed at establishing correlations between strike-propensity and a number of possible determinants - ranging from the varying percentages of miners owning their own homes to the size and topographical location of collieries and colliery communities.

None of these correlations are convincing. For the most part, they serve to mask the real reasons for the variations. These are to be found, not amongst peripheral sociological variables, but in the coalfield's recent industrial history and, especially, in the statistics which trace the slumps and booms of the coal market.

Most miners find no difficulty in explaining the geographical variations (though they are never reticent in proposing theories concerning the importance of house-ownership). They argue that the anthracite area experienced more strikes than the steam-coal area during the 1930s because the demand for anthracite remained relatively steady whilst that for steam-coal floundered in the depths of depression. Overly-deterministic though this may sound, it is the correct explanation.

* Relevant maps are included at the end of this chapter, in Appendix One.
As any one of the strike analyses in this thesis testifies, anthracite strikes and go-slowes were identical to steam-coal strikes and go-slowes. There were just more of them. Part One attempts to explain why. It argues that the mass unemployment of the early 1930s knocked the guts out of the majority of important steam-coal lodges (which were already reeling from the impact of the defeat suffered in 1926) and that many of them barely survived the effects of the opposition ranged against them by the coal combine companies. For the greater part of the 'thirties, strikes were a luxury denied most of these lodges.

The prospects for strikes improved somewhat during the last third of the decade when the steam-coal market picked up and unemployment eased. By that time however, a new breed of union leader and a re-modelled union executive were consolidating important changes in the workmen's organisations and activities—changes provoked by the effects of the spread of combine ownership and the prevalence of mass unemployment. Not surprisingly, they had their greatest impact in the central steam-coal area—not merely because the lodges of that area were receptive to anything which might ease their miseries, but also because it was the area which housed the most talented and energetic of the ideological supporters of the workmen's new leader, Arthur Horner. His favourite political slogans—those extolling the virtues of "united frontism"—were translated into the language of Trade Unionism. He and his supporters attempted, whenever they were able, to kick aside the old barriers of the Federation and to strengthen the power of the central, lay, executive. To maintain that power, it was
necessary to ensure that a new sense of discipline prevailed amongst the workforce - a task which proved a good deal easier in the weak steam-coal lodges than it did in the strong anthracite ones where the new demands of the miners' executive were sometimes regarded as an irrelevant and unwelcomed imposition. The anthracite lodges could point, with justification, to their successful defence of custom and practice and to the relatively high earnings of their members.

The war perpetuated and even exaggerated this division. With just a few highly publicised exceptions, the steam-coal lodges maintained discipline and remained virtually strike-free until 1944. Wartime strikes, like those of the pre-war years, were concentrated in areas outside of the Left's central sector strongholds. The significance of this discipline is considerable when it is examined in the light of the tensions which arose - especially amongst younger miners - during these years. Following the example of Horner (after forgiving him his farcical display of political gymnastics, 1939-1941), the lodge leaders postponed "to the post-war Elysium" their most ambitious demands and, in so doing, exposed themselves to charges of "collaborationism" from their union's less accommodating members.

Apart from the odd, sharp confrontation (notably at Penrhiwceiber and across the coalfield as a whole during the Porter Award episode), this antagonism did not manifest itself in any coordinated and sustained form until the emergence of workmen's unofficial committees in the late 1940s. As the records of the steam-coal
lodges show, efforts were made by the militants of the central sector to link-up with their natural allies in the lodges of the Dulais and lower-Swansea Valleys in attempts to strengthen their challenge to the conciliatory policies favoured by the national and area executives. The "link-up" had been postponed by the election of a Labour Government pledged to nationalise the mines. Ironically, it was the anti-Soviet policies adopted by this government which eroded the loyalty and discipline of many Communist officials in the central lodges (as well as elsewhere on the field) and encouraged them to seek out new allies in the anthracite west.

The virtues of "disciplined unity" were challenged by militants from the very same lodges which, during wartime, had been their most enthusiastic champions. The existence of the union had long since ceased to be under serious threat from the employers. Coal demand everywhere outstripped supply and the militants of the central lodges reflected, in their actions, the prevailing mood of self confidence. Strikes began to occur in their sector with a regularity equalling that of the most militant of the anthracite sectors. The NCB consistently condemned three Welsh "black-spots" - the Rhondda, Maesteg and Neath areas - for their outrageously high strike records.

Once again however, examination of disputes - statistics reveal that, even within these "black-spots", there was never an even spread of strike-prone lodges. Most strikes occurred at the old centres of militancy like Fernhill, Cambrian, Parc and Dare and Glenrhondda. The same applied to the Maesteg area - as indeed,
it did to the lodges of the less strike-prone areas to the east: Aberdare and Rhymney. In these, the most quintessentially "Powell Duffryn" of all of the Coal Board's areas, the lodges which remained least affected by strikes were those which had all but disintegrated at the hands of Powell Duffryn management a decade and a half earlier. The most strike-prone, on the other hand, were those like Tirherbert, Tower, Bwllfa and Penrhiwceiber, which had maintained some measure of independence.

These are the exceptions which serve to modify any crude, economically-determined explanation for the area variations in the incidence of strikes. Each one of them has its own combination of variables to account for its consistent militancy. Some have been examined in this thesis: Fernhill, an "independent" colliery company, with a traditionally militant and somewhat isolated workforce, escaped the clutches of the big coal combines; Cambrian had long been the nucleus of one of the tightest and most formidable workmen's combine committees on the coalfield; Parc and Dare contained within its ranks an unrivalled concentration of left-militants; the Bwllfa pits had traditionally acted together and retained, within the Powell Duffryn empire, a strong sense of separate identity (they were only "acquired" by the combine in 1936). These were the lodges which often provided the union's area and coalfield leaders - men whose efforts to rebuild and to strengthen the union during the 1930s were aided immeasurably by the fact that they were sometimes able to operate out of relatively secure bases.
This long-term consistency of lodge militancy and the contrasts which it provoked (when viewed alongside the parallel absence of strikes amongst most lodges) gives some idea of just how heavily the shadow of the 1930s hung across the coalfield. Ex-anthracite miners recall how shocked they were — as late as the mid-1950s — at the "lack of union confidence" and "managerial authoritarianism" which prevailed in the ex-Powell Duffryn pits, like Aberaman, to which they were transferred. One miner declared that the workforces of these pits had "forgotten" how to strike and that Powell Duffryn had reduced their old "customs and practices" to harmless rubble. But, he added, this did not mean that these same workforces were not "solid unionists" nor even that they were "anti-militant". It was just that, since the mid-'thirties, they had transferred their "hopes" for advancement onto the shoulders of the coalfield's central executive — rather than subject themselves to the threats of dismissal and blacklisting which usually followed displays of militancy within their lodges.

This would certainly account for the somewhat anomalous elections of a succession of Communist and Left-Labour militants to the highest positions on the South Wales miners' union. After all, in government elections the coalfield invariably returned a solid phalanx of Labour M.P.'s — few of whom could accurately be described as socialist revolutionaries. In addition, the Communists and Left-Labourites were frequently opposed in union elections by pro-TUC Labour "moderates", many of whom were prepared to fight hard, and sometimes dirty, campaigns. Yet the coalfield supported Left-wing militants.
This apparent inconsistency was demonstrated most dramatically in 1956/57, during the controversy over Horner's reluctance to condemn the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary. Despite the torrent of abuse heaped upon him and his fellow Party members by outraged Labourites, the "threat" to his position lasted only as long as it took the South Wales miners to decide that the incoming Hungarian refugees posed a potential danger to their industrial security and organisational unity. Consciously or unconsciously, they checked their list of industrial and political priorities and plumped for protecting the union. Any political animosity they may have felt towards Horner's statements on Hungary took second place — so much so, in fact, that even as early as March, 1957, it was obvious that his efforts to overcome the Coal Board's attempt to postpone the abolition of the Five Day Week Bonus disqualification until the lodges had agreed to accept the Hungarian refugees* had more than won back for him any support lost as a result of his political associations.

The relationship between "formal" politics and pit-politics in South Wales has never been simple or straightforward. The Horner/Hungary episode raises many questions concerning the links which working men perceive between industrial experience and political practice. The examinations of strikes in earlier chapters deny the existence of convenient correlations between strike-proneness and political consciousness. Instead, they highlight the complexities of both phenomena. Strike-proneness (like strike-shyness)

* See, above, Chapter 14, Part 4: "Hungarians in Hirwaun".
was never an accurate indicator of the prevalence of this or that
state of political consciousness on the coalfield. To argue that
it was is to deny the strikes (and the strikers) their proper
historical and economic context. Left-wing militants in the
Rhondda lodges during the first years of the post-war Labour
government regarded the "sectionalism" of the anthracite and
Monmouthshire unofficial strikers with something just short of
contempt. Detailed examination of these strikes indicates that
the great majority had no more to do with the expression of
ideological passion than had a fart at the coal face - both could
be interpreted as modes of political protest but much would de-
pend upon the predilections of the interpreter.
APPENDIX ONE

MAPS
AND LIST OF
RELEVANT
COAL MINES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAP REFERENCE NUMBER</th>
<th>MINE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>WERNOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>PANTYFFYNON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>AMMANFORD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>CELLICKIDRIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>GLYDAACH MERTHYR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>CWMGORSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>GWAUN CAE GURWEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>CWMLLYNFELL</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>PWLLBACH</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>TARENI</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>VARTEG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>YNISCEDDWYN</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>BLAENANT</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>CEFN COED</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>SEVEN SISTERS</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>BRYNTEG</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>DILLYN</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>ONLLYN No. 1</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>ONLLYN No. 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>ABERPERGWWM</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>CWMGWBRACH</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>RHIGOS</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>GLYNCORRWG</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>NANTEWLAETH</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>DUFFRYN RHONDDA</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>CARRALI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>COEIGNANT</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>BRYN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>ST. JOHN'S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>INTERNATIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>GARW</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>GLENGARW</td>
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<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>FFALDAU</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>PENLLYNYNGWENT</td>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>WYNDHAM</td>
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<td>36.</td>
<td>WESTERN</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>PENTRE</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>ABERBAIDEN</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>WERN TARW</td>
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<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>CAMBIAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>BRITANNIC (TRANS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>TYMAWR</td>
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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>LEWIS MERTHYR</td>
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<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>NAVAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>GELLI</td>
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<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>PARC AND DARE</td>
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<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>GLENRHONDDA/TYDRAW</td>
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<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>FERNHILL</td>
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<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>MARDY</td>
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<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>FERNDALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>LADY WINDSOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>TIRHERBERT</td>
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<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>TOWER</td>
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<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>BULLFA</td>
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<td>56.</td>
<td>WERFA DARE</td>
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<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>FFORCHAMAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>CWMNEOL</td>
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<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>ABERAMAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>DEEP DUFFRYN</td>
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<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>ABERGORKI</td>
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<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>CWMCNYN</td>
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<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>PENRHIWCEIBER No. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>PENRHIWCEIBER No. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>ABERGYNON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>TAFF MERTHYR</td>
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<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>MERTHYR VALE</td>
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<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td>TRELEWIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>WINDSOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td>CWM LLANTWIT</td>
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<tr>
<td>71.</td>
<td>LLANEYRADACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.</td>
<td>PENALITA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAP
REFERENCE NUMBER  MINE

73. BARGOED
74. GROESFAEN
75. OGILVIE
76. MCLAREN
77. ELLIOT
78. POCHIN
79. MARKHAM
80. OAKDALE
81. WYLLIE
82. NINE MILE POINT
83. BEDWAS
84. RISCA
85. CELYNEN NORTH
86. MARINE
87. WAUNLWYD
88. GARN/KAY SLOPES, BIG PIT
89. BLAENLYCHAN
90. HAFODYRYNYS
91. BRYNHENLLYS
The Technical Advisory Committee which reported on the state of the coal-mining industry in March, 1945, consisted entirely of leading mining engineers who were all either acting managing directors of colliery companies or else former managing directors who had been appointed, like the Committee's Chairman, Charles Reid, to the directorate of the Ministry of Fuel and Power during wartime.¹

They produced a report which called for a thorough overhaul of production methods and organisation throughout the industry. Possibly because of their own present, or past, positions in the privately-owned coal industry, they did not actually recommend that the government should take it into public ownership, but their report nevertheless made no serious attempt to conceal the shambles which constituted a good part of the existing structure of ownership in the industry.

Some of the Committee members were, or had been, directors of several of the largest coal companies in existence at that time. Powell Duffryn, one of the very largest "purely" coal-mining concerns in the world, was represented on the Committee by its

¹ Charles Carlow Reid (after whom the Report was named) was, in 1945, Director of Production, Ministry of Fuel and Power. He was formerly General Manager and Director of the Fife Coal Company. The Report's official title was: "Coal Mining", Report of the Technical Advisory Committee, 1945; HMSO. Cmd 6610
Director of Production, Douglas Alfred Hann. He must have been somewhat amused at the rather envious statement issued by the Committee regarding the nature of coalmine-ownership in Britain as compared with that on some of the Continental fields:

"Ownership within the industries of the three continental countries (Germany, Poland and Holland) is highly concentrated. In the Ruhr, at any rate, this has rendered possible the closing down of many uneconomic mines or the merging of adjacent mines into a single production unit, and the fuller working of the economic mines.

"In Britain ownership is dispersed, and this fact has not been conducive to concentration at the more productive mines, and makes it difficult, if not impossible, under ordinary peace-time conditions, to ensure that the abilities of the best mining engineers are readily available".  

Douglas Hann's amusement would have arisen from the knowledge that, had he been asked to name one single colliery company in South Wales which had succeeded in overcoming the difficulties listed by the Committee regarding the rationalisation and concentration of production, he could have answered "Powell Duffryn".

**Voluntary and Involuntary Amalgamation**

The whole question of how best to centralize and reorganize colliery ownership had nagged the British coal industry like an abscessed tooth through the three decades preceding nationalization.  

By the mid-Twenties, the Government felt compelled to

introduce legislation designed to go some way towards aiding the process of amalgamation and centralisation of production and ownership. It formed the Coal Mines Reorganisation Commission and armed it with powers which required colliery owners to submit schemes for amalgamation in accordance with Part One of the Mining Industry Act of 1926. If the coal-owners failed to do so, then the Commissioners themselves were to prepare and submit a scheme.

The Commission issued a report on colliery amalgamations in 1931, and by the middle of 1932 had circulated amongst the coal-owners notes on the application of the scheme. During the following two years the general response of the coal-owners, in the form of schemes for voluntary amalgamations, was considered unsatisfactory, and the Commission took steps to prepare schemes of compulsory amalgamations in several districts.

At the end of 1934 a scheme for the federation of collieries in West Yorkshire was submitted by the Commission to the Board of Trade as a scheme of "partial amalgamation" under the Mining Industry Act of 1926, and the Coal Mines Act of 1930. This scheme was, in May 1935, rejected by the Railway and Canal Commission, both on merits and on law, without calling on counsel for the objectors. Subsequently the Board of Trade asked the Commission to refrain from initiating fresh inquiries in regard to possible amalgamations pending consideration by the Government of the whole position and power of the Commission.
On May 5th, 1936, a Bill was introduced into the House of Commons by the President of the Board of Trade to enable the duties of the Coal Mines Reorganisation Commission under part 2 of the Coalmines Act, 1930, to be more effectively discharged, and to provide for the continuation of Part 2 of the same Act until December 31st, 1942. Powers were to be given to the Commission to prepare reorganisation schemes to amalgamate certain properties and to settle the conditions of the amalgamations. At the second reading of the Bill in the House of Commons there was very determined opposition, especially with regard to the right of appeal against proposals of the Commission. In consequence the Government decided to withdraw the Bill.

On November 11th, 1937, the text of the Government's new Coal Bill was issued, and was passed into law as the Coal Act, 1938. This measure provided for the transfer, in amended and strengthened form, of the functions of the Coal Mines Reorganisation Commission to the Coal Commission set up under the Act. That Commission was given responsibility both for the acquisition and administration of coal royalties and also for endeavouring, where necessary in the interests of economical and efficient working, to effect a reduction in the number of coal mining undertakings. An outline plan for reorganising the coal mining industry into a smaller number of larger units was contained in a memorandum issued by the Coal Commission in June 1939. The Commission stressed the advantages of voluntary over compulsory amalgamations, and declared that the issue of the memorandum must be regarded as an invitation to the industry to co-operate with them in giving effect to the law. This matter was again referred to in the
reports of the Coal Commission for the years 1938 and 1939 under the Coal Act, 1938, issued in June, 1940. In this report it was stated that the Commission hoped to review the response to this memorandum towards the end of 1939, and early in 1940 to report to the Board of Trade on any areas which the Commission might think that conditions calling for the exercise of compulsion had risen. When war broke out the Commission decided, with regret, but without hesitation, that it was impossible to expect colliery-owners to address themselves to "these far reaching questions" at a time when the war had confronted them with so many difficulties in carrying on their ordinary business.

Despite the relative ineffectiveness of the Reorganisation Commission, however, a great many "voluntary" amalgamations occurred between 1926 and nationalisation. Those which took place in South Wales had a very special significance for the coalfield's workforce - in as much as they occurred during a period when the miners' union was reeling from the blows it had received during the 1926 Lockout and as a result of the mass unemployment which had followed the collapse of large sectors of the coal-export market. As the amalgamations and take-overs multiplied, so the economic well-being of scores of mono-industrial mining communities became dependent upon decisions which were being made by an ever-decreasing number of colliery-company controllers and directors.

Large coal mines require large capital investments and, in the depressed market conditions of the 1920s and '30s, few South Wales communities found themselves the recipients of such investments. When they did, they almost inevitably found themselves "indebted" to one or other of a small number of coal combine Companies - the only agencies capable of raising the necessary capital.

The Taff Merthyr pit - which, soon after its opening, hosted the most dramatic and prolonged battles between the Miners Federation and the spencerite Company union - is a case in point.

5. See D. Smith, op. cit.
Sunk in 1926, Taff Merthyr was the most up-to-date pit in South Wales. Compared to the vast majority of other pits on the coalfield, it was highly mechanised. It utilized the most advanced production systems, mechanical conveyances and communications networks—All of which were financed, during a period of considerable market fluctuation and doubt, by the two largest production companies on the coalfield: Powell Duffryn and Lord Davis's Ocean Coal Company.

Both companies were amongst the largest in Britain. At the end of 1926, the Powell Duffryn organisation exercised direct control over seventeen key collieries on the South Wales coalfield, in locations centred on Aberdare, Ystrad Mynach, and New Tredegar. The eleven collieries controlled by Ocean were centred on the southern Rhondda area.
6. Annual tonnages of the largest colliery companies in 1927:

**South Wales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Tonnage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Powell Duffryn</td>
<td>over 5,000,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Coal</td>
<td>2,750,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron and Coal</td>
<td>2,000,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nixons Navigation</td>
<td>2,000,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis Morthyr Consolidated Collieries</td>
<td>2,000,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cory Bros.</td>
<td>1,680,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tredegar Iron and Coal</td>
<td>1,250,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Davis and Son</td>
<td>1,250,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Anthracite</td>
<td>1,070,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds</td>
<td>1,000,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Great Britain (sample of the largest)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Tonnage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolsover Colliery Company</td>
<td>4,000,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorman Long (inc. Bolckow, Vaughn &amp; Co.)</td>
<td>3,350,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pease and Partners Ltd.</td>
<td>2,000,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airdale Castleford Collieries Ltd.</td>
<td>1,750,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowes and Partners</td>
<td>1,500,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1929 figure


7. Powell Duffryn and Ocean Coal owned pits in the following communities during 1926/27:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ocean</th>
<th>Powell Duffryn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abergwynfi</td>
<td>Aberaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treorchy</td>
<td>Aberdare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treharris</td>
<td>Abernant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ton Pentre</td>
<td>Abertridwr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaengarw</td>
<td>Bargoed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ynysybwl</td>
<td>Brithdir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nantymoel</td>
<td>Deri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Llanharan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Llantrisant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mountain Ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Tredegar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pengam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ystrad Ynach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: "Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory", Vol. 1927
The interests of both companies however, extended far beyond those collieries which they controlled directly.

The Chairman of the Powell Duffryn Board of Directors in 1927 was Joseph Shaw K.C. who, besides being a director of the Taff-Merthyr Steam Coal Company, (the owners of the Taff-Merthyr pit) was also at that time chairman of Chislet Colliery Limited on the Kent coalfield, and the Rhymney Iron Company which owned mines in Pengam, Deri and Rhymney. He was also chairman of the coal-owning and exporting firm of Michael Whitaker Limited of Leeds, President of the Humber Coal Exporters and Shippers Association, and had previously been President of the National Council of Coal Traders.

He was joined on the directorship board of the Rhymney Iron Company by five of his fellow Powell Duffryn directors: C.P. Ogilvie, C.B.O. Clarke, E.M. Hann, E.L. Hann, W.R. Hann and William Woolley. Indeed, the only non-Powell Duffryn director on the Rhymney Iron Board was Evan Williams, famous President of the Mining Association of Great Britain and leader of the coal-owners during the great dispute of 1926. He was also a director of Lloyds Bank, Chairman of the coal-owning Thomas Williams concern, and of the Pacific Patent Fuel Company. In addition, he held directorships in the Markham Steam Coal Company (which owned a very large mine in Monmouthshire employing 2,800 men), in the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company, and in the Blackwood firm known as Oakdale Navigation Collieries Limited.

8. The Sales Agent for Chislet were Stephenson Clarke & Co., of whom more will be heard later.
9. The greater part of the information in this chapter has been obtained from annual editions of the "Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory." Exceptions to this rule will be indicated.
Through Williams' fellow director on Rhymney Iron, C.B.O. Clarke, Powell Duffryn maintained a connection with the small, but important, coalfield of North Wales. (He was chairman of Ruabon Coal and Coke Company which controlled the large Hafod collieries near Wrexham). Links between Powell Duffryn and the Staffordshire coalfield were maintained through the figure of Sir F.K. McClean of Henley-on-Thames who was a director of the Cannock Chase Colliery Company, as well as being another of the Powell Duffryn directors on the board of the Taff-Merthyr Company.

The Agent, General Manager and Director of Taff Merthyr was Edmund L. Hann who also sat, as we have seen, on the board of Rhymney Iron. In addition to being Powell Duffryn's General Manager and a member of the extremely powerful family of executive managers and engineers, Edmund Hann was a member of the Central Committee of the Mining Association of Great Britain.

His assistant general manager at both Powell Duffryn and Rhymney Iron was Douglas Alfred Hann who was accompanied on the directorial boards of both those companies by his relatives, W.R. and F.P. Hann. Edmund and Frank P. Hann held additional directorships in John Lancaster and Co. Ltd., the owners of the Arrail Griffin, Six Bells collieries in Monmouthshire. Frank P. Hann also held the post of Managing Director of the following companies: Newport Abercarn Black Vein Seam Coal Co. Ltd., Powell's Tillery Steam Coal Co. Ltd., Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron and Coal Ltd., and Lancaster's Steam Coal Collieries Ltd., with collieries in Abercarn, Crumlin, Abertillery, Talywain, Ebbw Vale, Cwm and Blaina.
The Secretary of the Powell Duffryn Company, Alfred Read, M.B.E., served the same function in the Rhymney Iron Company.

The Chairman of the Ocean Board of Directors in 1927 was David Davis, (later Lord Davis) Liberal M.P. for Montgomery from 1906. Like Evan Williams, he was a director of a major national bank - in Davis's case, the Midland Bank. Besides being Chairman of the Welsh Council for the League of Nations Union, he was also a director of the Great Western Railway, Chairman of the very large colliery firm of Burnyeat, Brown and Co. Ltd., whose annual output from its Treorchy and Ynysddu pits\(^9\) topped the million ton mark, and for whom Davis's Ocean Coal Company was the sole Selling Agent. Davis was the Chairman of the Taff-Merthyr Steam Coal Co. Ltd., upon whose directorship board, as we have seen, sat so many Powell Duffryn directors. He was joined on that board by his fellow Ocean directors Sir Henry Webb and Thomas Evans, and the Secretary M.A. Anderson.

He sat as Chairman of United National Collieries Limited, the Board of which also included the Ocean directors A.E. Yarrow, A.J. Cruickshank, and Edward Edwards.\(^{10}\) The Ocean Coal Company was also the selling agent for United National.

Another of the Ocean directors, E. Jones, of Maesmawr Hall, Caerws, was connected with the South Wales colliery companies of Budds Blackwood and Gorsllan, and the Rusbon Coal & Coke Ltd., of North Wales. (The Chairman of Ruabon was Powell Duffryn's C.B.O. Clarke).
The extensive nature of Ocean's boardroom influence in the United National and Burnyeat, Brown companies was further strengthened by the fact that the long-standing Managing Director of both companies was himself a director of both Ocean and Taff-Merthyr.

**Economic Centralism**

The incidence of directorial permutation within the South Wales coal companies became even more marked as the motivation for ownership and management integration became directed as much towards the preservation of oligopoly positions through the acquisition of the "competitive fringe" by the largest of the coal companies as towards a process of consolidating the existing interests with the aim of achieving a higher degree of scientific management of the whole industry than had previously existed.

The process of acquiring the "competitive fringe" by means of mergers involved a series of multifaceted economic events which had differing impacts upon various numbers of interested individuals and groups. The relative impact of the costs and benefits resulting from a merger was not always evenly distributed amongst the interested groups. It may have had, for instance, a very uneven effect upon the smaller of the various merged companies — i.e., those companies which were being "absorbed" into the big conglomerates — simply because a merger was almost always an investment decision which would have been rationalised on economic grounds, promoted to serve narrow self-interests, and consummated for a variety of non-economic factors in addition to the usual economic ones.
Because the use of merger in the growth process is often such a speedy means of increasing the size of firms, some merging firms will grow faster in size than in profitability. Many firms that had a large percentage of induced growth followed a programme of "conspicuous investment" which had differentiated effects upon the interests of the various groups involved in those economic events and in the allocation of resources. Allegations have been made, for instance, that the Powell Duffryn organisation "starved" the mines in the Bwlfia Dare area of resources and capital too soon after acquiring them from their previous owners, the Llewellyn family. Powell Duffryn, on the other hand, would, no doubt, have argued that the measures which they took to reduce the size of the Bwlfia workforce and to concentrate production on Bwlfia Nos. 2 and 3 pits were dictated simply by economic necessity.

The Llewellyn family, long after the "takeover" had occurred, were regarded by their ex-employees as being almost "paternalistic" in their style of management when compared with Powell

It is ironical that there was, as we shall see, perhaps no other single figure on the coalfield who did more to promote the growth of colliery company amalgamation after 1926 than the leading member of the Llewellyn family, and owner of the Ewiffa Mines, Sir David Richard Llewellyn.

The 1925 Royal Commission on Coal laid great emphasis upon the necessity for company amalgamations as a means of achieving a vital reduction in the costs of production. Between 1920 and 1928 a considerable increase in the size of company units was noticeable. They covered in the period as many as 172 pits normally employing 126,000 workers throughout Britain. These pits comprised 17 different schemes, subsequently reduced to 14 by the amalgamation of the South Wales anthracite groups. By the time Neumun published his work on the organisation of the British coal industry (in 1934) "growth" had become something of an end in itself.

Neumun employed the normal measurements for growth, i.e., in terms of increased sales, assets, and numbers of employees. But it has been pointed out that companies which transform themselves through mergers and acquisitions often grow from bases that were originally relatively small, and in doing so tended to dominate any list of heavy gainers in percentage sales growth. Similarly,

16. Ibid.
19. Carol J. Loomis, op. cit.
a large company which suddenly becomes even larger does not necessarily undergo this transformation because of internally generated increases in productivity and overall output. Very few colliery companies could claim that almost all growth had been internally generated by the mid-'30s; it was the "competitive fringe" (or rather, in the case of South Wales, the "uncompetitive fringe") which was to provide the nourishment for the rapid growth of "combines" like Powell Duffryn and Ocean Coal.

In a declining market situation such as that which existed in South Wales during this period, a massive growth in sales for the expanding combine did not necessarily guarantee massive benefits to the stockholders of companies absorbed into larger concerns, and it certainly did not guarantee the brightest of possible prospects for the employees of those companies.

Historically, the promoters of mergers have operated in their own self-interest, and, except where mergers were motivated purely by production and distribution economics (as was the case with some of the South Wales mergers during this period), they appear to have been inspired largely by banks and other professional promoters. 20 Newman, for instance, quotes the £2,000,000 financing of the reorganisation of a number of Lancashire colliery companies which subsequently became known as the Wigan Coal Corporation Limited:

"All this regrouping was carried out under the patronage of the Bank of England .... through its subsidiary, the Securities Management Trust, Ltd., in cooperation with the City." 21


The directors of the new concern were nominated by the Bank of England.

Investment bankers appear to have been the largest promoters of mergers during the period 1927 to 1937, and for very obvious reasons. Many mergers, and some acquisitions, involve the flotation of new securities. "Reputable" business houses merely carrying on their business in "normal" times bring a very slight volume of securities for the banker to handle. But if these business houses can be brought together in a new organisation it may mean a large flotation of stock. In the U.S.A. during 1928 and early 1929, when there was an insatiable demand for securities,

".... some investment houses employed men on commission who did nothing but search for potential mergers .... A group of businessmen and financiers in discussing this matter in the summer of 1928 agreed that nine out of ten mergers had the investment banker at the core".22

This tendency was very much apparent in many of the South Wales mergers. The growth of the Amalgamated Anthracite Collieries Ltd., is a case in point. In 1927 this company, which, six years later, was to control over 75% of the anthracite output of the South Wales coalfield, "absorbed" United Anthracite Collieries Ltd. Whilst the latter company's annual production had only been in the region of 150,000 tons (compared to Amalgamated Anthracite's 1,070,000 tons), it must nevertheless have come as no great surprise to observers to witness the rise of United Anthracite's chairman, Sir F.A. Szarvasy, to the chair of Amalgamated Anthracite's board.

Although outwardly chairman of much the smaller of the two concerns, Szarvasy was deeply involved in the merger as an investment banker. He was chairman of the Anglo-Federation Banking Corporation, Gresham Mutual Indemnity, Ltd., and a director of Martins Bank Ltd., and of the 1928 Investment Trust Ltd. He was also chairman of British Anthracite Sales Ltd., and a director of the Daily Mail and General Trust Limited.

Neuman, in discussing the reorganisation of the British coal-fields,23 pointed to the kinds of inter-directorial links between the larger coal companies which have been outlined in this chapter. The links were, as we have seen, particularly common in the largest of the steam-coal-producing "combines" — like Powell Duffryn and Ocean Coal. They were no less common however, in the companies which mined the other two broad categories of coal found on the field — anthracite in the west and bituminous in the east.

More significant still, were the inter-directorial links which stretched across the geological barriers of the coalfield and transcended many of the old differences which had existed between the three coal-producing sections prior to the First World War.

A large number of different colliery companies there may have been in the various sections of the coalfield by the mid-'Thirties - especially when compared with the Ruhr - but the control of those companies lay in the hands of a relatively small number of major directors.

It is little wonder then, that the attitude of the controllers of the South Wales coal industry was, on the whole, extremely hostile to the various attempts by the government to legislate a reorganisation of the industry and to regulate prices and output. Szarvasy, for instance, chastised the Government's attempts to use the Coal Mines Act of 1930 to force through mandatory reorganisation. He reflected the general "condemnation" of "political interference" in the coalmining industry voiced by the mine-owners when he addressed a meeting of the Amalgamated Colliery shareholders in 1931:

"Legislative interference with business gives encouragement to lethargy rather than stimulation to individual enterprise and courage, which alone will in the end bring about a better set of circumstances and which, as we all know, have in the past proved the stimulating factors in any recovery and success achieved by this company". 25

The Llewellyns

If one definition of "individual enterprise" is the ability to collect as many individual directorships and chairmanships as is possible, then the Board of Directors of Amalgamated Anthracite contained a proliferation of enterprising individuals.

25. The Times, 29.4.31.
Szarvasy's deputy chairman on the Board was one of the most influential of all Welsh company directors and one of the prime manipulators of company ownership and organisation on the coal-field: the "salesman" of the Bullfa pits, Sir D.R. Llewellyn. The following list gives some, though not all, of the companies with which he was connected either simultaneously or at different times between 1926 and his death in 1941:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>Executive Position</th>
<th>Locality of Mines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Anthracite Llewellyn &amp; Sons Ltd.</td>
<td>Deputy Chairman &amp; Managing Director</td>
<td>Western Coalfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>North's Navigation Duffryn Aberdare</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aberdare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graigola Merthyr</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Maesteg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bwllfa &amp; Merthyr Dare</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hirwaun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynon Colliery Company</td>
<td>&amp; Managing Director</td>
<td>Pontyndulas</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Davis and Sons</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clydach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Troedyrhiw Coal Co.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bwllfa Dare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celtic Collieries Ltd.</td>
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<td>Port Talbot</td>
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<td>Imperial Navigation</td>
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<td>Ferndale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welsh Associated Collieries</td>
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<td>Tylorstown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bwllfa &amp; Cwmaman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maesteg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Llewellyn (Plymouth)</td>
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<td>Cymmer</td>
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<td>Llewellyn (Cyfarthfa)</td>
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<td>Mid-Steam Field</td>
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<td>Llewellyn (Nixon)</td>
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<td>(Eastern Coalfield)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blaen-clydach Collieries</td>
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<td>Bwllfa Dare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ynisarwod Collieries</td>
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<td>Cwmaman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vale of Neath Collieries</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Merthyr Vale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naval Colliery Company</td>
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<td>Troeddyrhiw</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aberdare Craig Coal</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Mountain Ash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albion Steam Coal</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Clydach Vale</td>
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<td>Brittanici Merthyr</td>
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<td>Resolven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glyn Neath Collieries</td>
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<td>Glyn Neath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest, Keen &amp; Nettlefolds</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rhondda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwaun cae Gurwen</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Aberdare</td>
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<td>Cwmaman Coal</td>
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<td>Gilfach Goch</td>
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<td>Rook Colliery Ltd.</td>
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<td>Glyn Neath</td>
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<td>South Rhondda Colliery</td>
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<td>Bedlinog</td>
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<td>Thomas Merthyr Colliery</td>
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<td>Focho'rhiw</td>
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<td>Welsh Navigation Steam</td>
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<td>Abercynon</td>
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<td>Glamorgan Coal</td>
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<td>Cwmbran</td>
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<td>Meiros Collieries</td>
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<td>Pontnewydd</td>
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<td>Cambrian Collieries</td>
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<td>Gwaun cae Gurwen</td>
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<td>Duffryn Rhondda</td>
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<td>Cwmaman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welsh Anthracite</td>
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<td>Glyn Neath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dillwyn Colliery</td>
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<td>Llanharan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henderson's Welsh Anthracite</td>
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<td>Merthyr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Powell Duffren (both)</td>
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<td>Tonypandy</td>
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<td>* F.D.'s both &amp; after 1935 merger.</td>
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<td>Llwynypia</td>
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<td>Llanharan</td>
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<td>Penygraig</td>
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<td>Abercrae</td>
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<td>Seven Sisters</td>
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<td>Ystalyfera</td>
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<td>Cwmllynfell</td>
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<td>Erynamman</td>
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<td>Garnant</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blaina</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Coalfield</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Llewellyn's co-deputy Chairman was Lord Melchett, formerly the Rt. Hon. Sir Alfred Mond St., Liberal M.P. for Carmarthen, 1924-1928. Melchett was Chairman of I.C.I. Ltd., Chairman of International Nickel Company Ltd., and of the Mond Nickel Company Ltd. He was a Director of the Westminster Bank, of the Industrial Finance Investment Corporation, and of the South Staffs Mond Gas Company, as well as being Chairman of the Economic Board for Palestine.

The Managing Director of Amalgamated Anthracite was Sir Alfred Cope, K.C.B., who sat, with a clutch of fellow Amalgamated directors including Sir D.R. Llewellyn, on the Board of Henderson's Welsh Anthracite Collieries Ltd., a company which had taken over Pwllbach, Tirbach and Brynamman Anthracite Collieries Limited. He also held a directorship, as did Sir D.R. Llewellyn and other Amalgamated directors, on another Amalgamated Anthracite subsidiary, Welsh Anthracite Collieries Ltd., which had been acquired by Amalgamated to take over mines owned by Ashburnham Collieries Ltd., and Gwaunclawdd Abercrage Colliery Ltd.

The directors of Amalgamated Anthracite included W.M. Llewellyn, brother of Sir D.R., and together they provided perhaps the most spectacular link between the anthracite and steam-coal areas. W.M.'s commercial links were only a little less numerous than his brother's. Both were to hold directorships simultaneously in both Amalgamated Anthracite and Powell Duffryn's.

In 1930 both D.R. and W.M. were involved in the formation of the second largest coal combine seen to date on the South Wales coalfield (P.D.'s being the largest). Entitled "Welsh Associated Collieries Ltd." , it had been formed by merging the coal interests of Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds with a large combination of companies including the Cambrian Collieries at Clydach Vale (purchased by D.R. on behalf of G.K.N. for £745,000, August 2nd, 1929), the Glamorgan Collieries, Llwynypia; the Naval Collieries, Penygraig, and the Britannic Collieries, Gilfach Goch. In addition, the Welsh Associated Collieries Ltd., acquired not less than 90% of the issued share capital of the following companies:

- Gucret, Llewellyn and Merrett Ltd. (the coal sales and exporting agency)
- D. Davis & Sons Ltd.
- Bwllfa & Cwmaman Collieries Ltd.
- Llewellyn (Nixon) Ltd.
- Llewellyn (Plymouth) Ltd.
- Llewellyn (Cyfarthfa) Ltd.
- Troedyrhiw Coal Co. Ltd.
- D.R. Llewellyn & Sons Ltd.
- Aberdare Graig Coal Ltd.
- Duffryn Rhondda (1929) Ltd.
- Cynon Coal Co. Ltd.

It was the creation of Welsh Associated Collieries which completed the transformation of the great majority of the most productive pits in the central coalfield into units of production of a major coal combine. As such, they became, theoretically at least, less vulnerable to local union pressure. The workmen's lodges of individual pits found themselves faced no longer with the task of

27. With the majority-held companies listed, W.A.C. was the largest combine ever seen to that date: 48 mines, 34,840 workmen. In addition, the W.A.C. owned approximately 25,000 coalwaggons (rolling stock).
confronting a small owner; they were now faced withersholl era
and directors who, like those of Powell Duffryn, were concentrated,
for the most part, in the exclusive residential areas of Mayfair
and Sussex. Under their new owners, the pits became subject to
whatever the combine's policy happened to be; pits like those
at Bwllfa became sideshows in a company circus which grew larger
as the coalfield upon which it played continued to slide irreversibly into decline.

The Ghost Combines and theIndependents.

There were, of course, a number of colliery companies which re-
mained independent of the combines right up to nationalisation.
Two such companies in the central part of the coalfield were those
of Fernhill and Cwmgwrach. However, a close examination of both
companies' directorships reveals two very different pictures of
"independence", for whilst the directors of the Cwmgwrach mine
(Cwmgwrach and Empire Colliery) had virtually no business in-
terests in any colliery companies other than Cwmgwrach and Empire,
those of Fernhill were as deeply involved in permutations of dir-
ectorships and chairmanships as any Powell Duffryn or Amalgamated
Anthracite controller. Fernhill Collieries belonged to what might
best be called a "ghost combine".

Fernhill was literally surrounded by the collieries of other
"combines" - those of Powell Duffryn, Cory Brothers, Ocean Coal,
and Glenavon Carw Ltd., whilst Cwmgwrach and Empire were situated
close to mines owned by Amalgamated Anthracite and Cory Brothers
in the Heath Valley.
The chairman and managing director of Fernhill was Sir John W. Beynon, Deputy Lieutenant for Monmouthshire, and it is around this figure that the nebulous substances of the "ghost combine" circulate. He was chairman of the two-million ton per annum Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron and Coal Ltd., Chairman of John Lancaster & Co. Ltd., Lancaster's Steam Coal Co. Ltd., Newport Abercarn Black Vein Steam Coal Ltd., Powell's Tillery Steam Coal Co. Ltd., and a Director of Ebbw Vale Iron & Coal Co. Ltd. The "independence" of Fernhill is called further into question when the directorships of the listed companies are examined. In all the boardrooms of the companies named, he was accompanied by F.P. Hann (who, besides being a member of that illustrious family was also, in 1930, General Manager of Powell Duffryn's), Sir Philip C. Henriques, L.F. Beynon (also a Director of Fernhill), Sir Frederick Mills Bt. (a past President of the National Federation of Iron and Steel Manufacturers,) and Robert Grant, a Director of the huge Dorman Long Combine of Yorkshire, Durham and Kent.

The only "local representation" (in the sense of a local man appearing on the Fernhill Board of Directors) was the inclusion of T.L. Mort of "Brynhradyn", Treherbert.

A similar lack of "local representation" was evident on the Board of Cwmgwrach and Empire. As early as 1926 the Board consisted of two members of the Braithwaite family of Bristol, accompanied by two ladies, Mrs. Brockett-Grover and Mrs. A. Jones, from Peterson-S-Ely and Hertfordshire respectively. The Board was completed by a Dr. Forsdike from Regents Park and a gentleman named Rees from Port Talbot. Mr. Rees was also a Director of
the Cilfrew level, which employed about 250 men. The C and E was then, the least "attached" in a directorship sense of all the colliery companies of any size operating within this area.

During the inter-war years, the coal companies of South Wales went almost as far as the railway companies in the width of the field from which they drew their directors. The railway companies had been exceptional in their choice, taking in finance, major customers, the peerage and the services, but the coal companies were not far behind; Powell Duffryn, for instance, before the merger, in the Spring of 1935, with Welsh Associated Collieries, possessed a Board of Directors which included one peer of the realm, three baronets, and three knights. All of these dignitaries had made their "pile" either from the coal industry or from allied industries. The Chairmanship and General Management of the company, before and after the 1935 merger, remained firmly in the hands of coal "career" men - engineers like the Hanns and H. McVickar who had previously been Powell Duffryn company agents on the coalfield itself.

Other interests were strongly represented however: the selling agencies for the new combine were represented on the board by the continuing presence, after the 1935 merger, of H.H. Merrett and W.M. Llewellyn - both directors and owners of the selling agency for Welsh Associated Collieries - and E.W. Ganderton, Lord Hyndley, Sir Stephenson H. Kent and William McIlgiray, all

of the firm Stephenson Clarke & Associated Companies Ltd., previously sole vendors of Powell Duffryn. Banking interests were represented, as we have seen, by Sir Evan Williams and E.L. Hann, both of whom were directors of major banks. (Lloyds and Westminster respectively)

There was a vertical connection with customers through Sir D.R. Llewellyn and Lt. Col. Hon. C.H.C. Guest M.P., both of whom were connected with the iron, steel and coal firm of Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds, Limited. The connection with the armed services was, of course, a strong one - in as much as the Royal Navy, amongst other navies, burned a great, though rapidly decreasing, amount of Powell Duffryn Associated Collieries' coal. Unlike the railway companies however, the Powell Duffryn board contained no admirals or even midshipmen.

The merger of Powell Duffryn and Welsh Associated Collieries meant that, by 1936, there were only seven coal companies, or ghost combines, producing over one million tons of coal per annum on the South Wales coalfield:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combine Tonnages in 1936</th>
<th>annual output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Powell Duffryn (with subsidiaries)</td>
<td>14,000,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The &quot;Beynon Interests&quot; (see p. 24)</td>
<td>5,900,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Anthracite</td>
<td>4,300,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean (with &quot;subsidiaries&quot;)</td>
<td>4,150,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cory Brothers</td>
<td>2,100,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tredegar Iron and Coal</td>
<td>1,400,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North's Navigation</td>
<td>1,000,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans &amp; Bevan Ltd. ('39 figure)</td>
<td>1,000,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of these companies, at least one, North's Navigation, was under control of the Llewellyn-Merrett axis.

The Final Mergers

These monopolising tendencies eased off only slightly during the ten years following the Spring merger of 1935. By 1939, Powell Duffryn's output had remained fairly steady, but both Cory Brother's and Ocean's had dropped back slightly from their 1935 levels.

In 1940, Powell Duffryn acquired the undertakings of Cilyc Collieries Ltd., of Tonyrefail and, in 1942, the undertakings of one of the largest of the Welsh colliery companies, Cory Brothers & Co. Ltd., complete with their productive Penriskyber Navigation Subsidiary.29

Glenavon Garw Collieries Ltd., had acquired the International Colliery Company of Blaengarw, and were now producing over one million tons per annum. By 1944, the Ocean Combine had become officially known as Ocean Coal & Wilson Ltd., comprising the parent company - Ocean - plus Burnyesat Brown & Co. Ltd., United National Ltd., and Ocean's share, with Powell Duffryn's in the Taff-Merthyr Steam Coal Co. Ltd. Ocean's had also acquired the whole of the issued share capital of the International Colliery Company, and had purchased the Nantewlaeth Colliery from Glenavon Garw Collieries Ltd. Government approval of these monopolising actions was very forthcoming: the Coal Commission quickly certified

29. Powell Duffryn output in 1942 was calculated to be in the region of 20 million tons; cited in J.W. Price, "A History of Powell Duffryn in the Aberdare Valley". Powell Duffryn Review, April, 1943.
a scheme to concentrate the control of the two secondary companies in Ocean’s hands with the aim of effecting, ultimately, a complete transfer to Ocean of the other two companies’ assets.  

The Monmouthshire area of the Eastern field had undergone an ownership reshuffle. Partridge Jones and John Paton had acquired from the Beynon "ghost" combine the Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron and Coal Company Limited, (including its subsidiaries: John Lancaster & Company Limited, Powell's Tillery Steam Coal Limited, and Newport Abercarn Black Vein Steam Coal Company Limited). The same company acquired the share capital of the Tirpentwys Black Vein Steam Coal and Coke Company Limited.

On the eve of nationalisation however, the Powell Duffryn company dominated the pit-ownership lists in the steam-coal area, and Amalgamated Anthracite owned a near-monopoly of the important pits on the anthracite field.

Powell Duffryn Collieries in 1946

**Rhymney Valley Area**

- Abercynon: Groesfan, Pidwellt
- Albion: Llanharan, Rhymney Merthyr
- Britgoed: Ogilvie, Senghenydd
- Britannia: Penallta, Nantgarw
- Elliot: Pengam, Windsor

**Northern Area**

- Aberaman: Deep Duffryn, Merthyr Vale
- Abergorki: Duffryn Aberdare (Tower), Navigation
- Bwllfa: Ferndale, Plymouth
- Castle: Forchaman, River Level
- Cwm Cynon: Lower Duffryn, Tirherbert
- Cwm Cynon: Mardy

**Rhondda Valley Area**

- Bertie & Trefor: Glamorgan, Trane
- Britannia: Margaret, British
- Blaenavon: Maritime, Maritime
- Cambrian: Pandy and Anthony, Cwm
- Cwm: Tymawr

**Western Area**

- Duffryn Rhondda: Ynysfaio

**Amalgamated Anthracite Collieries (1946)**

- New Cross Hands: Cawdor
- Tirydail: Cwmgorse
- Llandebiex: Gellicesidria
- Little Vein: Great Mountain
- Pontybram: New Dynant & Closyryn
- Carway: Jubiloe
- Aberpergwm: Rock
- Cwm Rhdygae: Cefn Coel
- Glaesmann: Yniscedwyr
- Garnos: Ystradgynlais
- Diamond: Ammanford
- Wernos: Pentremawr
- Gwaun-cae-Gurwen: Glyncorwg
The Board of Directors of the Amalgamated Anthracite had changed little in character since the early Thirties; Szarvasy still provided the main link with City finance through his Chairmanships and Directorships of numerous banking and investment corporations. There was however, a new link with other British coalfields in the figure of Major G.D. Mayhew, appointed Director of Amalgamated Anthracite whilst Chairman of the South Derbyshire Coalowners Association, Senior Partner in the firm of Mining Engineers, Mayhew & Mayhew of Tamworth, Chairman of Hall's Collieries Limited, (based in the Swadlincote area), and a Director of the Newdigate Colliery Company in Warwickshire, and of the Somorrostro Iron Ore Company Limited. Llewellyn representation on the Amalgamated Anthracite Board had disappeared by 1946; Sir D.R. Llewellyn had died in 1940, and his brothers, W.M. and M.H., had left the board in 1940 and 1944 respectively - for the pleasures of rearing showjumpers and packhounds. Griffith Llewellyn, another of Sir D.R.'s brothers, retained his place on the Powell Duffryn board until 1946.

Griffith had married one of the Hann daughters and, in so doing, had forged a familial link between two of the most powerful families in the history of Welsh coalmining. Sitting with him on the Powell Duffryn Board right up to nationalisation were three members of the family which he had married into. Between them, the Hann trio held the following directorships in addition to their Powell Duffryn positions: Cilely Collieries, Penrikyber Navigation, Cory Brothers, (all three companies being subsidiaries of Powell Duffryn) North's Navigation, Taff Merthyr, (in which
Powell Duffryn retained their controlling share with Ocean Coal, Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds, and the Westminster Bank. Through the figures of J.P. Stephenson-Clarke, E.W. Canderton and Sir F.K. McLean, Powell Duffryn continued its links up to 1946 with companies in the coalfields of Kent, Durham, Yorkshire and Staffordshire. Sir Evan Williams continued to maintain direct links with Powell Duffryn customers through his association with various industrial enterprises, including the Llanelli Tinplate Company, and he also retained his Directorship of Lloyds Bank.

The "ghost combine" built up by Sir John Beynon was maintained and continued after his death by W.A. Phillips who, as well as being a director of the Fernhill Colliery Company, was also a director of Partridge Jones and John Paton, Ltd., the combine which, as we have seen, had made considerable acquisitions amongst the coal companies of the Monmouthshire section of the field during the war years.32

Shortly before nationalisation, the "independent" Cwmgwrach and Empire Colliery Company received onto its Board a well-known consulting engineer named John Kane. Based in Cardiff, Kane had long been associated in an advisory capacity with Powell Duffryn's efforts to standardise and rationalise its production methods. He was also a director of Glenhafod Collieries, the North Rhondda Colliery Company and the Welsh Navigation Steam Coal Company.

32. When he died in 1945, John Wyndham Beynon left a will of £317,627; Colliery Guardian, 17.8.45.
His appointment caused, it seems, a good deal of disquiet amongst the employees of the Cwmgwrach colliery who saw it as a possible incursion by what they termed a "P.D. Big-shot", with his "P.D. system", into their workplace. 33

This disquiet implies that the colliery's workforce considered itself to be in a relatively favourable position - as employees of an "independent" company - when compared with the position of the employees of the type of combine company epitomised by Powell Duffryn. They most certainly expressed an extreme reluctance to become another segment of the "P.D. empire".

That empire was not destroyed on Vesting Day, January 1st 1947. Its title disappeared from the lists of British coal-owners, as did all other titles of the large coal companies, but the image of Powell Duffryn was indelibly smudged across the new ensign of the South Wales Division of the National Coal Board. Colliery surface buildings, winding towers, washeries, power stations, even streets, continued to bear the Powell Duffryn insignias. They haunted the communities of the Rhymney, Taff, Rhondda and Aberdare valleys as long as the collieries remained there. It was one thing for a government in Westminster to pass a Bill abolishing private ownership in the coal industry, but quite another for it to abolish the visual and political relationships which had evolved over generations between dominant companies and dependent communities in mining areas such as that of South Wales.

33. Taped interview with Glyn Williams, ex-Cwmgwrach collier; recorded Spring, 1975.
This sense of "continuity" was reinforced by the fact that the new NCB managerial hierarchy was chosen almost entirely from the ranks of the incumbent "private" managerial hierarchy. Four out of the NCB's six newly-appointed Area General Managers, for instance, were ex-Powell Duffryn Agents or General Managers. Not one colliery manager in any of the collieries under special study in this thesis was replaced during the transference of ownership in the industry in 1946/47, and it must have come as no surprise to the ex-employees of Powell Duffryn to find that their new boss - the man appointed to the Coal Board's highest position (that of Chairman) - was himself an ex-Powell Duffryn director, Lord Hyndley.
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The Mineworker
Communist Review
Labour Monthly
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Colliery Guardian "Guide to the Coalfields"
Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory
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"Colliery Engineer"
B. Miners’ Trade Union Records

i. MFCB
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   Minutes of Executive Committee Meetings

ii. SVMF
    Conference Reports
    Minutes of Executive Committee Meetings
    Lodge Minute Books of following pits:

    Abercynon  1937 - 1957
    Ammanford  1934 - 1957
    Blaengwrach  1946 - 1948
    Brynhenllys  1937 - 1939
    Caerau  1937 - 1957
    Cambrian  1937 - 1944
    Cefn Coed  1937 - 1957
    Coegnant  1937 - 1957
    Elliot  1939 - 1957
    Ferndale  1937 - 1957
    Forchaman  1938 - 1957
    Lady Windsor  1937 - 1947
    Maerdy  1937 - 1944
    Nine Mile Point  1937 - 1957
    Onllwyn  1946 - 1957
    Parc and Dare  1938 - 1957
    Penallta  1945 - 1957
    St. John’s  1937 - 1957

iii. Official correspondence relating to the following lodges:

    Aberaman
    Abercynon
    Aberpergwm
    Bedwas
    Blaenant
    Brynteg
    Britannic
    Bwlf
    Caerau
    Cambrian
    Cefn Coed
    Coegnant
    Cwmcoynon
    Cwmgwrach
    Cwmllynfell
    Cwmneol
    Deep Duffryn
    Dillwyn
    Duffryn Rhondda
    Elliot
    Ferndale
    Fernhill
    Ffaldau
Garw
Gelliceidrim
Glengarw
Glenrhomnda
Groesfaen
Gwaun-cae-gurwen
Hafodyrynys
International
Lady Windsor
McLaren
Merthyr Vale
Nantewlaeth
National
Nine Mile Point
Parc and Dare
Penallta
Penrhiwceiber
Pwllbach
Rhigos
Risca
Rock
St. John's
Seven Sisters
Tareni
Tirherbert
Tydraw
Varteg
Werfa Dare
Werntarw
Western
Windsor
Wyllie
Wyndham
Yniscedwyn
Ystalyfera

iv. SWMF Dowlais District minute book 1935 - 1943

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viii. MSS of Professor Ronald Frankenburg, formerly Education Officer of the South Wales Area of the NUM, including extracts from Executive Council Minutes, 1937-1953, questionnaires and transcripts.
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x. Correspondence relating to the workmen's "combine committees" of the following companies:

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Ocean Navigation Colliery Workmen's Institute Minute books 1937 - 1957
Onllwyn Miners' Welfare Association Minute books 1955 - 1956

Ystradgynlais Miners' Welfare Hall Minute books 1937 - 1954
Ogmore Vale Workmen's Hall & Institute Minute books 1937 - 1957
**F. Oral Material**

Use was made of the large collection of interview-transcripts deposited at the South Wales Miners' Library in Swansea. (see Final Report of the South Wales Coalfield History Project, 1974, for index of transcripts.) In addition, I used material from recordings (made by me, 1973-1977) of the following individuals (the list represents only a small part of the total number of interviews I conducted):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewee</th>
<th>Place of origin or experience</th>
<th>Reasons for Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stan Addiscott</td>
<td>Hirwaun</td>
<td>Long-time Tirherbert and Tower Lodge official; ex-Communist and leader of unofficial stay-down strike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Brew&quot; Davies</td>
<td>Trecynon</td>
<td>Worked in both anthracite and steam-coal pits. In-veterate &quot;rank-and-file&quot;; allegedly blacklisted for &quot;belligerancy&quot; during the late 1930s. ex-Powell Duffryn NCB miner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Francis</td>
<td>Onllwyn</td>
<td>Ex-General Secretary of the South Wales miners; ex-Miners' Agent for the Aberdare Valley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hector Garrett</td>
<td>Trecynon</td>
<td>Ex-unemployed miner; emigrated to Midlands car factories; returned to pits after nationalisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin Greening</td>
<td>Abercwmboi</td>
<td>Ex-Communist; unemployed miner; subsequently teacher and long-time chronicler of S. Wales political life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Hopkins</td>
<td>Penywaun</td>
<td>Young colliery electrician, lodge committee member; descriptions of recent production techniques and pit practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Howells</td>
<td>Rhigos</td>
<td>Ex-Powell Duffryn NCB miner; Labour Party; descriptions of work and labour relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Howells</td>
<td>Trecynon</td>
<td>Ex-Llewellyn/Powell Duffryn NCB face worker; descriptions of changes after nationalisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan John</td>
<td>Clydach</td>
<td>Ex-member of South Wales miners' executive; worked through the war as miner and member of the Communist Party; detailed account of Shakespeare Hotel unofficial movement - of which he was an elected leader and organiser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idris Jones</td>
<td>Trecynon</td>
<td>Ex-Llewellyn/Powell Duffryn/NCB miner. Descriptions of work in &quot;weak-lodge&quot; pits like Cwmneol and searching for work in 1930s. Description of changeover from hand-getting to mechanised techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Paynter</td>
<td>Rhondda</td>
<td>Ex-President South Wales miners; ex-General Secretary National Union Mineworkers; ex-Rhymney Miners' Agent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thom Thomas</td>
<td>Hirwaun</td>
<td>Veteran of the Block Strike; long-time Tirherbert and Tower Lodge committee member; descriptions of rank-and-file organisations and of evolution of production techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Williams</td>
<td>Cwmdare</td>
<td>Colliery Under-manager; ex-faceworker; description of changes in industry seen from managerial point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glyn Williams</td>
<td>Merthyr</td>
<td>Ex-steam coal and anthracite miner; descriptions of the differences in organisation and work-methods between steam and anthracite coal mines. Accounts of working in strong and weak lodges: Cwmgwrach, Merthyr and Aberaman.</td>
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</tbody>
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