

**THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD, 1945-1972:
THE POLITICS OF INDUSTRIAL CHANGE**

Stephen John Catterall BA (Hons), MA, PGCE

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the process of industrial change in the Lancashire coalfield during the post-war period. Industrial change refers to the processes of modernisation and rationalisation of the coal industry and the broader modernisation of the coalfield. As a regional study of a British coalfield in which industrial change was written large it sheds light on the under-researched process of the modernisation of a staple industry and the political imperatives which accompanied it. This study is unique because for the first time it undertakes a re-evaluation of industrial change in the coal industry through an appraisal of available historical sources. The thesis proceeds from the premise that industrial change was impelled by a longstanding socialist analysis of Britain's industrial dispensation and the post-war debate on Britain's perceived decline. It is argued that these two factors informed a desire for modernity in post-war Britain in which the coal industry was caught between the requirement to modernise and to provide a key role in wider economic modernisation. It is advanced that these factors saw the coal industry squeezed by government economic and political priorities in favour of the 'multi-fuel' economy. From this the thesis develops the theme that industrial change in coal was underpinned by a high degree of acceptance amongst industrial and political opinion including organised labour in the industry. A major part of the thesis is then devoted to an assessment of how the different levels of the NUM in Lancashire and the Labour Party in the coalfield deliberated upon industrial change and articulated a response to it. This thesis is the first substantive attempt to examine reaction to industrial change in coal in this way. Finally, this study assesses the consequences of industrial change in the Lancashire coalfield through a discussion of attitudes toward coalfield modernisation.

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PREFACE

The roots of this thesis are traceable to a childhood spent growing up in 1960s 'coal and cotton' Lancashire. I was conscious of the changes taking place around me in as much as what seemed to be old-fashioned was giving way to the new. Yet, I seem only able to recall times spent playing around empty cotton mills and derelict collieries. I can remember conversations between members of my own family, who had worked in coal and cotton, discussing the merits or otherwise of what was widely perceived as 'progress' during the 1960s. I was also made aware that this was an important time because of the passing of staple industries which for hundreds of years had sustained the community in which I lived.

Years later, after having been made redundant from a career in the insurance industry, I returned to full-time education and completed a History degree at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston in what proved to be a fruitful and vibrant environment for a 'mature' student. During my third year I was faced with choosing a research topic for the final year honours dissertation. Under the guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Rex Pope, my thoughts turned to the Lancashire coalfield where I was able to make valuable contacts, uncover sources for research and gain an understanding of some of the main arguments in coal industry historiography and labour history. After completion it was 'up the road' to Lancaster University supported by a university studentship to undertake an MA in Historical Research where I was fortunate enough to study in the History Department under the labour historian, Dr. Gordon Phillips. I benefited from the challenging rigours of the one-year MA course, the assistance of staff in the department and the stimulation of debate with other postgraduate students. Again, it was the Lancashire coalfield which attracted me as a topic for the substantive research dissertation. After leaving Lancaster I embarked on training for a career in teaching in further education after the failure of a number of attempts to secure funding for a Ph.D. I entered Bolton Institute to complete a PGCE in further education. This furnished me with an appreciation and introspective on some of the broader issues in further and higher education. While at Bolton Institute I made another bid for funding and was delighted when the British Academy agreed to provide this to support research for a D.Phil. in Politics at York University. Here I was able

to finalise my ideas for a research topic with Professor David Howell whose expertise on labour and industrial history and politics has proved invaluable together with his detailed knowledge of the Lancashire coalfield. I believe the choice of research topic has allowed me to produce a thesis which is a contribution to an important but vastly under-researched aspect of the modern British experience.

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I wish to acknowledge the assistance of a number of institutions and individuals in producing this thesis. First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisors Professor David Howell and Dr. Neil Carter for their advice and guidance during the past three and a half years. Secondly, I would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Board (formerly British Academy) for providing three years funding to enable me to complete the research, together with the Department of Politics at York University for accepting me as a research student.

This thesis has involved visits to a number of archival deposits and libraries in whom I wish to acknowledge the assistance I was given. In particular I would like to thank the staff of the Public Record Office for pointing me in the right direction during the leg of research spent in London in the summer of 1998. I am especially grateful to officials from the National Union of Mineworkers Lancashire Area: Paul Hardman (President), Billy Kelly (Secretary) and Perry Lomas (Trustee) for their assistance on my frequent visits to the union's Leigh offices. I am grateful to Dr. Lindsay Newman, Curator of Rare Books and Archives at Lancaster University, for her prompt responses to my requests and sterling work in assembling pamphlets and books from the WCA Gregory/Socialist Collection in the university library on my visits. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the technical assistance of Ken Phillips of the University of Central Lancashire in processing the thesis together with Ken Harrison, map librarian at Lancaster University, for his help in obtaining and selecting the maps. Finally, I wish to thank the staff at the Lancashire Record Office Preston, the Working Class Movement Library at Salford, the Museum of Labour History at Manchester, Wigan and Leigh College and Wigan Heritage Services as well as local studies library staff at Bolton, Burnley, Chorley, Farnworth, Leigh, Manchester Central, Salford and St.Helens.

No acknowledgement would be complete without mentioning friendships and continuing professional contacts made at York University. I am pleased to thank both Dr.Keith Gildart and Dr.Gidon Cohen, former research students in the Politics Department, in this regard. Finally, as this thesis is concerned with the demise of the Lancashire coalfield I wish

dedicate it to the mineworkers and mining communities which are now so much a part of its history.

INTRODUCTION

i. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This thesis looks at the process of industrial change in the Lancashire coalfield. It has been developed because of my belief that the structural decline of the staple industries has been one of the most important processes in the modern British experience. It was one which went largely unquestioned during the period with which this thesis is concerned. It therefore requires an historical and political re-evaluation. In examining industrial change the thesis takes as its focus a coalfield which has received relatively little attention in the huge amount of work devoted to the industry. Furthermore, the Lancashire coalfield was an important arena for the implementation of industrial change in the industry. The main focus of the thesis will be developments in the coal industry during the late 1950s and 1960s when it underwent a programme of intense modernisation and rationalisation. A major source of interest will be colliery closures. The more recent closures of the 1980s and 1990s have pre-occupied commentators. By contrast, the closures of the late 1950s and 1960s have produced less discussion. Central to the thesis will be an analysis of the role played in industrial change by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and Labour Party in the coalfield together with an examination of responses to industrial change by Labour, the union leadership and 'rank-and-file'. In this respect the study establishes new ground by providing a detailed assessment through the evaluation of available historical evidence. Although the primary importance of the thesis is one of historical and political re-evaluation it will throw light on a number of political processes. It is directly concerned with the management of change under public ownership, examining relationships between government, the Coal Board and the NUM. More broadly, the thesis assesses the notion of modernisation in the context of post-war political imperatives. Post-war political, as well as economic, priorities will be seen as important to the direction and momentum of industrial change in coal as will the influence of socialist notions of modernity seen in post-war re-construction and later in economic modernisation and planning.

The term industrial change includes the complementary processes of modernisation and rationalisation in the coal industry. Terms such as re-organisation and re-structuring are

inclusive metaphors for this twin process. In addition, modernisation in this thesis includes reference to two parallel processes. One is the modernisation of post-war Britain, which for the coal industry meant the challenge of alternative fuels such as nuclear energy, oil and natural gas. The other is the modernisation of the Lancashire coalfield including new investment and industrial diversification necessary to forestall the decline of the industry. The notion of modernisation carried with it both an economic and political dimension in determining industrial change in coal. The attraction of alternative fuels, with the shift away from a coal-based economy, was accompanied by political as well as economic priorities. The requirement to modernise the economy as a professed objective of socialism was also an important element which became a component of Labour's political agenda during the 1960s together with the need for economic modernisation to tackle perceived British decline. More specifically, modernisation was used in a number of ways as a manipulative political device in order to facilitate and legitimise the process of industrial change in coal. Modernisation encompassed a variety of issues so it meant different things to different groups at different times. For miners, modernisation during the 1960s meant the encroachment of alternative fuels, new colliery developments, the re-construction of others and the closure of many more. For the coalfield community it was expressed in a desire for economic and social opportunities through new investment in the coalfield to tackle the decline of coal. Examining the process of industrial change in this thesis involves an engagement with the 'high narrative' of industrial change rather than with a detailed examination of coal's metamorphosis under public ownership. It is therefore substantially concerned with the political decisions, processes and responses which accompanied industrial change rather than highlighting changes to the labour process or industrial relations which have already received considerable treatment from commentators.

A number of significant relationships are investigated in the thesis, notably the relationship between the NUM and the Coal Board and between the National Union of Mineworkers Lancashire Area (NUMLA) and the Labour Party in the coalfield. Coalfield politics were dominated by NUMLA-Labour Party hegemony. While Conservative governments held office for a large part of the period it is Labour which will be the focus of attention because of its authority in the coalfield. Equally, Labour Party involvement influences the chronological aspect of this work. The Labour governments of the 1960s were of the

utmost importance in the way they increased the pace of industrial change in coal. The return of Labour to power raised expectations amongst its political allies in the NUM over the scale and pace of industrial change. For this reason events up to 1965 and those between 1965 and 1972 form a distinct division in the chronology. In a general sense the choice of chronology is more arbitrary. 1945 is seen as marking the beginning of a more intense period of modernisation for the coal industry under post-war re-construction particularly with the advent of public ownership in 1947. 1972 was the year of the first national strike in the industry since 1926. The choice of 1972 is therefore as much a way of defining the boundary of the industry's post-war experience as one heralding the return of more settled conditions after a period of severe decline and rationalisation during the 1960s.

Industrial change in the coal industry was undertaken with a high level of support across the industrial and political spectrum in Lancashire as elsewhere. In this respect, it might be more accurate to describe this thesis as the 'non-politics' of industrial change in the sense that ideological differences were less influential in determining outcomes. Although such differences underpinned many of the cleavages which developed during the course of industrial change, issues of modernisation and rationalisation tended to subsume ideological divisions. Both the political left and right within the NUMLA accepted that there was a need for the coal industry to re-fashion itself into a modern viable industry in order to ensure its survival. The goal of modernity for the industry and the coalfield became of paramount importance during the late 1950s and 1960s. Questioning the process of industrial change only became a debate about its specific impacts and pace. Similarly, opposition to the process focused exclusively around the specific impact of industrial change particularly over colliery closures. The propriety of industrial change only became an issue as the ramifications of the process became clearer and as the contradictions which support for modernity produced became more evident.

The key hypotheses in the thesis flow from a belief that the momentum for industrial change was carried forward by a desire for modernity which, in turn, informed government economic and political priorities. Industrial change was accompanied by such a high degree of industrial and political acceptance that it was pursued to an extent that pushed aside any question of the costs involved even as some of its failings became apparent. As

an absolute and total priority it succeeded in as much as it transformed the coal industry in Lancashire, but industrial change, and attitudes toward it, contributed to an appalling economic and social legacy for the coalfield. The thesis will thus consider the supposition that industrial and political opinion in the coalfield endorsed industrial change. An important objective of this examination will be to determine whether the relationships between the NUMLA and Regional Coal Board and between the NUMLA and Labour Party in the coalfield were important in facilitating industrial change. Furthermore, the thesis will test the assumption that the relationship between the NUMLA and Labour Party in the coalfield was significant in managing and containing opposition to industrial change through the strategies both adopted. In this respect, opposition to industrial change will be scrutinised as will the impact industrial change had on the character and strength of opposition. Finally, the thesis will assess the impact that the experience of industrial change had on political change and industrial militancy during the late 1960s in Lancashire.

ii. THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD

The spatial characteristics of the coalfield reveal a high degree of diversity within a geographically confined area. There were two distinct coalfields in Lancashire. The larger, the South Lancashire coalfield, was wedged between the two conurbations of Merseyside and Manchester. A loop of the coalfield ran to the north and east of the Manchester conurbation and then into Cheshire and north Derbyshire. In the south of the Wirral peninsula there was an extension of the North Wales coalfield. For many years the South Lancashire coalfield was twinned with these disparate areas of coal mining activity in what was known as the 'Cheshire coalfield'. For this reason reference was made to Lancashire and Cheshire as one coalfield area. Mining in Cheshire ceased by the mid-1930s. The smaller of the coalfields was in North East Lancashire centred on the Accrington and Burnley area. This area had a distinct mining tradition with a local economy dominated by textiles. Although the South Lancashire coalfield was close to the two major cities it too developed a distinctive identity from that of the two major cities. It also displayed considerable intra-coalfield diversity. The heart of the coalfield was in the central areas of South Lancashire in the Wigan and Leigh districts covering a nebula of townships and

villages highly dependant on the coal industry with the greatest concentration of employment in the pits. This area was known colloquially as the 'Wigan coalfield'. The symbolic and administrative centre of the whole coalfield was Wigan, dubbed 'coalopolis', or 'king coal's throne'.¹ It performed similar functions for the Lancashire coalfield as Barnsley, Chesterfield and Mansfield did as respective centres of the coal industry in the Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire coalfields. The exception was that the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation (LCMF) headquarters was located in Bolton from 1914 to take advantage of the concentration of trade union offices in the town as a result of its textile predominance. To the east and west of the South Lancashire coalfield the coal industry rubbed shoulders with areas of mixed occupation. On the eastern fringes it met the Manchester conurbation. Here textiles and the engineering trades were important while 'mill and pit' Lancashire gave way to the metropolitan values of Manchester dominated by its commercial interests. On the western fringes of the coalfield lay St.Helens with its distinctive industrial concerns dominated by the glass industry. Nevertheless St.Helens was an important mining district. It was the only expanding area for coal in Lancashire during the twentieth century in a coalfield which experienced decline for much of the period. The particular industrial and political affairs which gave St.Helens its characteristic political culture have in more recent years been eclipsed by those of Merseyside as a result of demographic, local government and urban change. The high degree of diversity in the coalfield influenced the development of industrial and Labour politics.

iii. A POST-WAR POLITICAL PROFILE OF THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD

The strength of the case for the modernisation of the Lancashire coal industry was proven beyond doubt during the Second World War. It was one of the most dispute-prone periods in the coalfield's history because the industry was being asked to perform miracles of production while remaining in an antiquated condition exacerbated by wartime shortages.² The situation became so serious that the promising political career of Gordon McDonald, Labour MP for Ince, was curtailed as he was rushed back from parliament to Lancashire in 1942 to become Regional Coal Controller in an attempt to resolve the problems.³ Lancashire's wartime record became such a bone of contention that it led to conflict

between the NUMLA and the post-war Labour Government. It had become abundantly clear that the limited re-organisation of the inter-war Lancashire coal industry had failed to modernise the industry such that it cracked under wartime exigencies. That led to a stinging attack from Manny Shinwell when he was the Minister of Fuel and Power.⁴ This row, in part, contributed to clashes with his PPS, Bill Foster, Labour MP for Wigan. The conflict became just one aspect of a wider disagreement between Foster and Shinwell.⁵ However, these arguments led to a strengthening of the view that modernisation of the industry had to form the most important element of public ownership in Lancashire.

The war years were also significant in Lancashire for the rising importance of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). Hitherto, it had found difficulty in establishing a foothold in the coalfield. Support had waxed and waned since the General Strike.⁶ The problem facing the Communists was establishing a threshold against the increasing entrenchment of LCMF-Labour Party hegemony. The CPGB, as in other coalfield areas, had problems sowing the seeds of its theoretical and radical analysis against the strong pragmatic appeal of the LCMF and Labour. The coalfield became a sepulchre for theoreticians coupled with organisational deficiencies in the party.⁷ Communist successes during the inter-war period had coincided with particular crises such as the 1926 General Strike and its aftermath, when they were able to match theory with specific action through industrial and political campaigns. However, the party found it impossible to offer an attractive appeal outside periods of crisis in competition with a LCMF strategy of industrial co-operation and Labour's social 'reformism'. The high-water mark for the party came during the war when it was again able to translate its appeal into specific industrial and political issues helped by the troubled position of coal in Lancashire. In the political field, the Party was assisted by the popularity of its campaign for a second front in Europe.⁸ Moreover, wartime sentiments provided a more accommodating atmosphere in which it could operate. The LCMF's support for the re-affiliation of the CPGB to Labour in 1943 was one example.⁹ Rising support in Lancashire brought party re-organisation in the coalfield which provided a more effective base from which to campaign.¹⁰ The accession of leading Communist, Jim Hammond, to the post of full-time miners' agent for Wigan in 1942 was a major *coup* presaging the extension of its influence into key union branches.¹¹ Consistently an electoral irrelevance, the CPGB nevertheless made its presence felt within the coalfield.

The inability of the left to encroach upon NUM-Labour Party hegemony in political terms provided a good indication of just how far the union and Labour had advanced during the inter-war period. LCMF-Labour Party hegemony had been consolidated between the wars through the success of Labour at parliamentary and local government levels buttressed by LCMF support. Moreover, hegemony was achieved by successfully twinning a LCMF strategy of maximising co-operation with 'progressive' elements among Lancashire coal owners and support for Labour's social 'reformism'. However, it was the post-war period when hegemony reached a maturity that made it insurmountable. This process was assisted by what Howell describes as the emergence of a 'Labour machine' in the coalfield.¹² Elements of this had become apparent during the inter-war period. Patronage of office in the LCMF and Labour Party was one feature. The career patterns of leading union officials followed an almost familiar seamless pattern. For most senior officials it was a case of working in every grade in the pit, getting elected as checkweighman, then as branch union official and thereafter either to election as a full-time miners' agent or to a seat on the union executive. Subsequently, most activists chose between a union career or one in Labour politics by obtaining the nomination for one of the coalfield's safe seats, often supported by a district miners' association. The union career, rather than political office, was the usual preference. At the local level, union and political office often ran together. This succession of power through patronage became an established feature of coalfield politics. Leading union officials and Labour figures emerged from certain geographical areas of the coalfield through the support network of local branches, pits and district associations. For example, the Tyldesley 'machine' helped support the early careers of two union secretaries: Pemberton, secretary from 1927 to 1945, and later Vincent from 1971. In Labour politics it helped launch the careers of two coalfield MPs during the inter-war period: Rowson at Farnworth and Tinker at Leigh. During the post-war period it assisted the political career of Fred Longworth, an ex-miner and union official and first Labour chairman of Lancashire County Council.¹³

At the top of the union the key post was the full-time secretary followed by the full-time district miners' agents who held the next most important offices. These were permanent positions after election. The union president was less influential, particularly after re-organisation in 1944 when the NUMLA president was chosen by annual delegate ballot.

The presidency was a figurehead role with no effective authority apart from agenda setting and representing the union. It was the longevity of office of the full-time secretary and miners' agents which were important in extending and consolidating patronage. The LCMF and NUMLA had only five secretaries between formation in 1889 and the 1984 strike: Ashton, Pemberton, Hall, Gormley and Vincent. Succession of office was less a case of passing down the baton than passing down a Masonic bag of regalia in which the union's secrets of succession were held. In the same way, longevity of office for the full-time miner's agents allowed them to create fiefdoms in the coalfield from where they could extend power and influence. For example, Seth Blackledge was miners' agent for Wigan from 1917 until 1942, a post Jim Hammond then held until retirement in 1967.¹⁴ The formation of the NUMLA in 1944 reduced local autonomy with the dismantling of the district associations. Nevertheless, while centralising tendencies increased with the creation of the NUMLA the establishment of local panels of branches serving specific districts of the coalfield within the new union structures ensured that a tradition of localism was maintained in Lancashire. However, the Lancashire panels never assumed the same sort of political influence which they enjoyed in coalfield areas such as Yorkshire.¹⁵

The development of the 'machine' was replicated in Labour politics from the inter-war period. Miners' district associations were able to influence the selection and nomination of Labour candidates and give support to miners on trade councils while local Labour organisations could be 'packed' with a majority of miners for crucial votes. Similarly, Labour Party representatives with union connections influenced local government. Labour's domination of local government frequently resulted in uncontested municipal elections from the late 1930s as the Tories and Liberals withdrew. Only the occasional independent or ratepayer candidate tested Labour's domination in many areas. Post-1945 saw Labour making greater progress on Lancashire County Council, with mining and coalfield representation featuring more prominently.¹⁶ At the parliamentary level succession was often reduced to a 'rubber stamp' affair. For example, McDonald's nomination at Ince in 1929, following Walsh's death, hardly involved a credible contest, as did Brown's in 1942 in the same seat. It was a similar case in the same year when Foster replaced Parkinson at Wigan.¹⁷ The union was able to exert tremendous influence within local trade councils and constituency Labour parties. Although places like Wigan were inaccurately described as NUM "pocket boroughs", miners were able to exert a high

degree of influence over local Labour politics until well into the 1960s. The selection of Alan Fitch, an ex-working miner, at Wigan in 1958, following the death of the sitting MP was secured with the support of the Wigan miners and the NUMLA.¹⁸ The development of the labour 'machine', together with an NUM-Labour stranglehold, led to allegations of 'cronyism' and of mis-use of power particularly in local government during the post-war period.¹⁹

The strength of Labour's grip on the coalfield during the post-war years was even tighter than before 1939. Labour majorities were consistently high, while the Tories and Liberals found difficulty in finding candidates to contest seats. The Liberal candidature at St. Helens in 1950 was described as nothing more than a "courageous reconnaissance".²⁰ Labour hegemony was underpinned by a potent trinity: public ownership of the industry with a commitment to modernisation; Labour's wider programme for post-war re-construction; and the notion that Labour was the undisputed 'natural' party of the coalfield. On the industrial front NUMLA efforts were aimed exclusively at pursuing co-operation with the Coal Board to ensure that public ownership was a success, having in tandem with the Labour Party invested so much political capital in its establishment. Edwin Hall, NUMLA General Secretary from 1945 until 1960, exploited the unbridled domination of NUM-Labour Party hegemony to wield power. His tenure of office was characterised by a high degree of central control through which he maintained an iron grip on the affairs of the union.²¹ Sid Vincent's comment that Hall could pick up the phone and enforce compliance anywhere in the coalfield was some testimony to the power at his elbow.²² It was some boast, too, for a union whose affairs had historically seen such a high level of local autonomy.

Hegemony was further strengthened during the post-war period by an intensification of the perception that Labour represented 'progress'. It was seen to be delivering on promises to the coalfield, having defeated the dark forces of private capital. During the 1950s the future seemed bright. The iniquities of the past were a distant nightmare. The coal industry was being re-invigorated through a modernisation scheme under public ownership while coal remained in insatiable demand as the premier fuel against a background of post-war coal shortages and growing industrial demand as the economy reverted to peace-time conditions. Labour politicians interpreted these benign conditions in two ways. Firstly, this

state of affairs was seen as permanent. The post-war settlement in the Lancashire coalfield was expected to accompany 'progress' into the future. Secondly, they saw this as the final chapter in the natural law of political progression in which the Labour Party was triumphant. The level of confidence they displayed seems extraordinary half a century later. In 1956, at an auspicious event to celebrate 50 years of unbroken Labour representation at Ince and Westhoughton, Harold Wilson and local Labour leaders confirmed that the people of the coalfield had entered into a "compact" with the Labour Party. Labour continued to carry the orb of 'progress' before them on behalf of the coalfield. In return, it was expected that "their people" continued to support Labour. There was even talk of this "compact" in religious terms as Labour sought to "re-consecrate" the coalfield for generations to come.²³ This was NUM-Labour hegemony at its apotheosis without effective challenge. In another sense, hegemony was reinforced by a view held by both left and right that public ownership in the industry was a project which they should continue to support despite differences of opinion over specific issues. During the 1950s both the Communist and Labour parties agreed that modernisation of the industry in Lancashire under public ownership was absolutely essential. The only ripples of political disturbance during the 1950s and early 1960s emanated from the friction generated by Labour's own internal wrangles as it digested the lessons of post-war government and subsequent loss of power. One of the most damaging debates was over disarmament; a debate which set left against right, underpinning factional ideological tensions within the coalfield. Polarisation over disarmament also set elements of the 'rank-and-file' on a collision course with leadership.²⁴

The confidence of the immediate post-war years was shattered from the late 1950s by a dramatic downturn in demand for coal. The coal industry in Lancashire became engulfed in the requirements imposed by rationalisation. This posed an unprecedented challenge for the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield. The NUMLA was eager to maintain and extend its influence as the imminent decline of the industry brought a new urgency to this task. During the late 1950s, Hall and his executive wanted to see more NUMLA-sponsored Labour MPs in the coalfield in addition to the two at Ince and Wigan. Fitch was successfully supported into the Wigan seat. Gormley was destined for Burnley, to contest a by-election there caused by the retirement of the sitting MP. The NUMLA also had its attention fixed on St. Helens. The stage was set for what became known as the 'Driberg

Affair'. Hall asserted that St.Helens was a miners' seat.²⁵ Although a miner had not represented St.Helens since 1910, miners had played a prominent political role in the constituency. St.Helens was an expanding area for mining with a more optimistic outlook for the industry; one reason why Hall coveted it. In 1958, the sitting Labour MP retired, opening the way for a by-election. Labour HQ in London wanted Tom Driberg for the nomination. Hall and the NUMLA executive objected because their preferred candidate was Tom O'Brien, a miner from the right who was president of St.Helens Labour Party and Trades Council. Hall's first problem was that although the St.Helens party 'machine' and the NUMLA executive backed O'Brien, he was not the unanimous choice of Lancashire miners. The vote for the miners' nomination among NUMLA branches was divided. It even split the St.Helens panel, with many on the left opting for Ted Woolley, a Trotskyist from the Manchester area. Hall's second problem was that divisions within St.Helens ran much deeper. Ideological opposition from the left to O'Brien saw Sutton Manor branch nominate a left-wing 'rank-and-file' candidate against O'Brien. If that was not problematic enough there was a sectarian issue. There was a long-running debate over accusations of domination of the Labour Party and Trades Council by Roman Catholics which led to the resignation of a senior councillor and Labour Party official right in the middle of the nomination process. That provoked another rival nomination from outside the mining union on a sectarian ticket opposing O'Brien. Enter Tom Driberg. While Driberg could count on some trade union support in St.Helens, he mistakenly over-estimated the level of trade union support he could garner. Driberg's nomination and main support in St.Helens came from the Labour clubs and constituency members. This provoked a separate row between the 'political' wing of the party in support of Driberg against the majority of the 'industrial' wing in St.Helens.²⁶

One would have thought that given these circumstances the NUMLA leadership might have decided that it would be folly to pursue O'Brien's nomination and let Driberg take it, and in all probability the seat. It is some measure of the insistence of the NUMLA leadership in demanding this seat that it continued to support O'Brien. Hall did not want Driberg in St.Helens. The big guns of the NUMLA were turned on Driberg to demolish him even before short-listing. Hall felt that Driberg was unsuitable for an "industrial seat". He was condemned as an "intellectual" opportunist who was looking for a safe seat. The destruction of Driberg became for Hall a vitriolic assault. He despised Driberg by personal

inclination and political persuasion because of his intellect and as a representative of the left. Driberg's personality, style and sexuality lurked in the background of these attacks.²⁷ As a result of the weight of these assaults, Driberg wisely decided that he did not like the taste of this particular Lancashire 'hot pot' and withdrew his name before he reached the short list. Labour HQ was left with no choice other than to let Hall have full sway, given the influence of the NUMLA. The trouble for Hall was that in the process of demolishing Driberg he had fatally damaged his own choice, Tom O'Brien. The pro-Dribergists were so aggrieved that their strength and numbers swelled, with addition of a nominal pro-Driberg element consisting of left-wing 'rank-and-filist' miners and those supporting sectarian issues, all united against Hall's intervention in favour of O'Brien. Hall's attempts to stamp his authority on the seat had backfired. The outcome saw St. Helens Labour Party and Trades Council select a compromise candidate, Les Spriggs, a railwayman from the Fylde nominated by the NUR. Hall and the Lancashire executive were livid at the outcome they had so effectively orchestrated. They grudgingly endorsed Spriggs.²⁸ The affair demonstrated that the NUMLA leadership, dominated by the right, was so confident of its authority and influence that it had reached the point of arrogance. The events of 1958 also carried with them a hint of desperation as the NUMLA sought to extend and maintain its grip on Labour politics in the coalfield at a time when the industry in Lancashire was about to disintegrate.

The period of rationalisation was dominated two figures in the union: Joe Gormley from the right and Jim Hammond from the left. Each represented aspects of the union's attitude toward industrial change. They were ideological and personal opponents. However, the late 1950s and 1960s were characterised by agreement on how the industry should respond to the challenges it faced. Both were reconciled to a view that modernisation represented 'progress' toward a sustainable and viable coal industry in Lancashire. They believed a Labour government would be best able to carry this through. Gormley's rise within the union was meteoric. He assumed the post of secretary in 1961 at the relatively young age of 42, on Hall's retirement. Although Gormley had spent his early career in the Lancashire pits, including a spell as a union branch official, he had never sought a union career. His ambition was for a career with the Labour Party.²⁹ Gormley only turned his attention toward union high office when his political career had been blocked by his rejection for the nomination to contest Burnley in 1959. He never saw himself first and foremost as a union

leader, although paradoxically that was the role he etched out with great success. Gormley was a complex character. He could be blunt, mercurial and frequently pugilistic.³⁰ He was certainly a practical man. His combination of cunning and shrewdness, together with his ability to assume deceptive moods to suit the moment constituted a deadly combination. Socialism for Gormley was definitely not about 'means'; it was only about 'ends'. This was important in determining how Gormley interpreted 'working class' progress. In many ways Gormley espoused the antithesis of socialism by laying great emphasis on the ability of the individual to obtain improvement through the strength that trade unionism provided.³¹ Trade unionism and Labour politics were about searching for opportunities and exploiting them for the benefit of 'the lads', as he liked to call miners. This aspect of his character and political philosophy went some way to explaining why he became accused of playing fast and loose. The integrity question tended to follow him around. It certainly gave succour to his personal and political enemies.³² On the other hand, as a union official, Gormley's greatest asset was his ability to work in a business-like way with his enemies.

One aspect of Gormley's character was his ambition.³³ He was able to use his connections within the 'right wing' union leadership and Labour 'machine' to good effect. This sometimes got the better of him. He was so eager for a career in Labour politics that he slipped up badly in front of the Burnley selection committee. There were cogent reasons why Gormley was not selected. Dan Jones, an engineering union official and labour colleges tutor from South Wales was the preferred candidate, because he was seen as a better choice to handle the growing crisis in the textile industry and the modernisation of the area. Furthermore, it was unlikely that a miner would be selected because of internecine quarrels within Burnley Labour Party and Trades Council. In Gormley's favour, was the fact that although he was a miner supported by Burnley miners, he was an outsider to the area. However, Gormley transformed a reasonable chance of nomination into a complete disaster by arguing in favour of multilateralism. Disarmament was not the committee's first priority in selecting a candidate. Rather, its main concern was finding a good candidate who was strong on economic and industrial issues and who was acceptable to a majority of interests in organised labour in Burnley. Burnley was not, as Gormley suggested, a "hotbed" of unilateralism. Jones was not chosen primarily because he was a unilateralist. The subsequent row within Burnley Labour Party and Trades Council was

over the snubbing of a miner by the selection committee, which ignited local arguments. It was not, as Gormley later suggested, as a result of his multilateralism.³⁴

While Joe Gormley got the top job in the union in 1961, Hammond was seen as the second most important figure in the coalfield as the most prominent and one of the longest serving full-time miners' agents. He had unsuccessfully contested the position of secretary in 1945, losing to Hall. Pemberton had ensured that the succession went to Hall in order to keep the left out. Hammond's election in 1942 for the post of full-time miners' agent saw him record an emphatic win over the two candidates of the right. Hammond was a popular figure, not necessarily for his ideology. His main territorial base was in the Wigan area from where he hailed.³⁵ The area was hardly known for its militant politics. What Hammond could offer was a formidable and respected negotiator, meticulous on detail, and capable of tackling management in a highly effective way. He was also no mean orator and one of the union's more cerebral officials. As a pit lad, he was 'blacklisted' by Wigan Coal Company for his agitation. Hammond, as an embittered young activist, whiled away his days in Wigan Library among the history and politics books. He was going to get his revenge by being smarter than the opposition.³⁶ As an ideal recruit for the CPGB, he became a leading figure in the region until his resignation in 1956. Thereafter, he retained his left wing views, but worked for the return of a Labour government.³⁷ Hammond, laid a great deal of emphasis on "working class struggle" in which discipline and leadership were important. He believed that that 'working class' education, self-respect and solidarity were the key to political advance.³⁸ Jack Dunn, Communist leader of the Kent miners, entered the 'Jim and Joe' debate after Gormley had published his memoirs in 1982 with a stout defence of an old comrade. He observed:

"I knew both well - Jim was all that Joe wasn't, a dedicated committed socialist, well-read analytical, erudite, who didn't have to rely on gut reaction. He had a profound understanding of society and didn't need a ghost writer for his speeches".³⁹

For all his talents Hammond had a number of flaws. There were two Jim Hammonds. There was the highly capable union official and party comrade whom Bernard Crick once interviewed. Crick felt he had met "a shrewd old activist".⁴⁰ The other Jim Hammond was

touched with the Quixotic. He was a man in danger of intoxicating on his own rhetoric. His conference speeches were fantastic voyages that swatted everything under the capitalist sun. He liked to present the broadest picture to miners in terms of the issues facing the industry, in which he took the moral high ground of debate - worthy but not practical.⁴¹ The problem for Hammond was that rhetoric and reality rarely matched. He often appeared on the oblique side through his exaggerated claims. This did not go down well with phlegmatic officials and miners. Hammond's other drawback was his officiousness, made worse by the fact that he saw himself as the 'secretary who never was', having been twice thwarted for the post in 1945 and again in 1961. Hammond always liked to think of himself as a 'working class' strategist and theorist. He referred to his job as "his hobby".⁴² As Sid Vincent said of him, he managed to retain his popularity and respect but "never got anywhere" (did not achieve higher union office) in an eminently practical business.⁴³

There is a tendency to contrast both the personal and political differences between Gormley and Hammond. Emphasising the differences between the two became part of Gormley's own attempt to create and perpetuate the 'Gormley myth' so well expressed in his memoirs.⁴⁴ Moreover, it is easy to slip into a view of coalfield politics of the period which emphasises the differences between the two leading figures and strands of opinion they represented. This view became typified by the events of 1960-61 over the ballot-rigging affair, when matters came to a head. Gormley and Hall were accused of rigging the ballot in favour of Gormley's bid for the post of NUMLA secretary against Hammond. Hammond alleged that Gormley had convinced Hall that his support for his chosen successor, Arthur Bubbins, should be switched to Gormley because Bubbins had no chance against Hammond, thus letting in Hammond and the left. They then allegedly 'cooked' the ballot result. The outcome saw Hammond and his supporters picketing the Bolton headquarters of the NUMLA. Hammond felt that the right had duped him again, as he had been in 1945 when Pemberton 'arranged' Hall's succession. Gormley resigned the position and ran a second ballot in which the Electoral Reform Society counted the votes. The outcome saw a similar result to the first ballot. These events saw union business in uproar, recriminations flying and trench warfare breaking out between the two camps, as it was widely believed there had at least been some 'interference' with the first ballot.⁴⁵ It might be thought that this affair would have made it impossible to bring union officialdom back together again following the factionalism that ensued. Nonetheless while ideological

divisions were ever present, it is remarkable how the NUMLA maintained a high level of agreement over the issues facing the coal industry. This was particularly the case over the need to modernise the industry against the pressing demands of coal's rapidly deteriorating situation. This transcended all ideological disagreements.

The differences between Gormley and Hammond were relegated by their united approach to the realities facing the industry. Although there were difference of emphasis over industrial change, on matters of substance they were as one, including maximising co-operation with the Coal Board over modernisation and rationalisation. Both the right, represented by Gormley, and the left, represented by Hammond, highlighted aspects of modernisation. Gormley focused on modernisation as a pre-condition to improve prospects for his members within a re-fashioned industry, as part of a wider aim of 'working class' advance. Hammond saw modernisation in this light too, but focused more on its role in rationalising the economy and society as part of the wider aim of social progress. Both these objectives became intertwined as Labour's agenda for government unfolded with an emphasis on modernisation and 'planning'. Importantly, both believed that the problems of the industry could only be solved through modernity. This belief intensified as the coal industry faced severe rationalisation from the late 1950s, as alternative fuels encroached upon the industry's traditional dominance. It also increased their support for a return of a Labour government committed to modernisation of the industry in which coal would play an important part in a modern economy. The dilemma they both faced was that supporting modernisation inevitably meant a reduced role for coal by offering tacit support to the alternative fuels. They both felt able to square that particular circle by extending support for modernity to hold a belief in Labour's wider modernisation strategy. This included a commitment to oversee the consequences of industrial change in coal through modernisation of the coalfield, including a policy of industrial diversification. Support was further strengthened by a view that public ownership was the right framework in which industrial change in coal could be achieved effectively and without serious economic and social dislocation underwritten by future Labour government, working together with the Coal Board and NUM. This view accorded with the assessment of the Labour Party in the coalfield. The attractiveness of these arguments rested on the ability of the NUMLA and Labour to demonstrate the distinctiveness of the claims they made for a future Labour government. Modernisation and rationalisation of the coal industry in Lancashire meant

marking out a political space for Labour in which it was seen carrying forth the mantle of 'progress', even though this involved the dismemberment of the industry in Lancashire.

iv. THE CONTEXT OF INDUSTRIAL CHANGE

There were two themes which influenced the context of industrial change in the coal industry during the period under consideration. One was represented by a socialist vision for the industry through the 'progress' which planning, science and technology could offer. The other was one linked to the role of the coal industry in the post-war debate over Britain's decline. There were echoes of these themes in the evolution of Labour Party thinking on modernisation. By the 1960s both these strands became interwoven particularly, though not exclusively, through the development of Labour's plans for government.

The socialist vision of a modernised coal industry was not particular to the post-1945 period. As a political concept modernisation of coal was well established within the Labour Party during the 1920s when the party initiated a blueprint for modernisation based on a planned rationalisation of the industry as a second best to public ownership. This identified the need for re-organisation because the industry that had developed geographical areas of expansion and decline. An overhaul of coal through compulsory 'unification' was one element. Another was the planned movement of the young 'mobile section' of mining labour to the 'prosperous' coalfield underpinned by social planning. Finally, modernisation of the industry was to be spearheaded by the application of science and technology and scientific management and mining methods.⁴⁶ It was, however, during the 1930s and the Second World War that Labour developed its plans for post-war modernisation and reconstruction including the coal industry.⁴⁷ Labour's assessment of the experience of the inter-war years was important in shaping the future course of coal industry modernisation. twinned with its reading of British economic history. It entered into a discourse which examined the outcomes of industrialisation. It was believed that Britain had failed to advance because she had been left behind in the 'second industrial revolution' through an inability to develop new industries. The coal industry came to symbolise the chaos of a dark past under private capital characterised by industrial decline, strife and depression. An

assessment of the industry in this way was implicit recognition of the need for modernity in the economy more generally in which science and technology, directed and funded by government, would sweep away the “ancient misery” and replace it with “a new, happier and more contented order”.⁴⁸ It was clear that there was a desire to see a modernised and rationalised coal industry. In another sense, because the industry was seen as instrumental in producing working class misery there was a willingness to examine alternatives to coal as a source of fuel and power. Image and opinion on coal came together in a most profound way in favour of modernity which adversely affected attitudes toward the post-war industry.

Labour’s preparations for post-war re-construction emphasised the need for economic and social planning in which government would harness resources as it had done during wartime enunciated in the concept of “bold socialist planning adapted to the creative tasks of peace”.⁴⁹ A central role was accorded to coal under public ownership in planning for future economic needs. Again, this was based on an assessment of recent British economic history which held that the failure of “unplanned” and “unregulated capitalism” arose, in part, from its inability to exploit science and technology. In the post-war order this would be replaced by the central role of government in planning and deploying the resources of the scientific community.⁵⁰ Modernisation thus assumed a prominent role in plans for re-construction. In addition, wartime experience reinforced the desire for industrial modernisation because Britain was unfavourably compared with the “US economic giant”. It was believed the US model demonstrated that the application of science and technology led to dynamic growth in contrast to Britain saddled with her industrial past and older failed industries. The pressing need was to support new efficient and expanding industries.⁵¹ Thus the coal industry assumed a key twin role in the blueprint for post-war re-construction. Firstly, through the application of modernisation and planning to revitalise the coal industry itself and secondly in order for a modernised coal industry to support the new economic expansion envisioned.⁵²

It is notable that the impetus for the new order for coal was driven by ideas borrowed from abroad; some from the US mining industry but predominantly from the inter-war experience of European coal producers, particularly Holland, which influenced the future shape of the British coal industry.⁵³ Similarly, during the immediate post-war period

Britain looked to the Monnet Plan in France for inspiration in industrial planning in heavy industry.⁵⁴ It was tacit admission that Britain was so sullied by her industrial past that indigenous solutions were tainted. The key to modernity in the coal industry, as in modernisation generally, always seemed to lie elsewhere.

The yearning for a modernity increased as Labour's modernisation blueprint took shape post-1945. Its unfolding was punctuated by the economic and political challenges of the post-war period. On these occasions it is significant that there was a re-doubling of modernisation efforts. The first of these came with the monetary crises of 1947 and 1948 and the dislocation caused by the severe winter of 1947 which provoked calls for a more robust re-statement of socialist strategy based around a co-ordinated and systematic application of economic planning. These calls from the 'Keep Left' group criticised government policy on modernisation because it had not gone far enough. Existing initiatives were dismissed as "piecemeal socialism" in which the Labour Government had only undertaken "repair jobs" to a system requiring major overhaul. The coal industry was one sector cited as being in crisis because its dilapidation held back the whole economy. It exemplified the need for more forward and systematic planning to ensure it was rapidly modernised.⁵⁵ Another aspect of the experience of modernisation under Labour came with calls for an intensification of efforts aimed at deploying the scientific community and harnessing science and technology to modernise the economy. There was urgency in the requirement to embrace new scientific discovery and technology, for example, in the development of atomic power.⁵⁶ Planning and science were to be twinned to provide the quick fix political solution to economic problems.

These sentiments informed a deeper political crisis for Labour during the late 1950s and early 1960s when the party underwent a period of introspection following its third general election defeat in 1959. Labour focused more sharply on the theme of modernity; one which had been of increasing importance since the defeat of 1955. What emerged from Labour's internal debates was significant in shaping industrial change. Many of the recurring themes of the previous thirty years came together. Again, there was a belief that "science and socialism.... are dependent and inseparable" coupled with a view that Britain's economic history had been influenced in a negative way by a "flying start" in the first industrial revolution unmatched by effective participation in subsequent scientific and

technological advance. It was argued that the “workshop of the world” had now to become its “laboratory” and that socialists had to recognise that the “Coal age epoch is closed”.⁵⁷ Paradoxically, while the coal industry was to be modernised it was at the same time seen as a symbol of obsolescence.

The centrality of the scientific revolution in the post-war world was linked to the growing influence of the ‘decline debate’. There was a belief that Britain had fallen behind her main competitors during the 1950s in economic and scientific progress. There was a pressing need to make up for the “lost dynamic” through economic and social planning. Three outcomes of these assertions were government preparedness to oversee scientific and technical planning; to become involved in the control and rationalisation of industry through economic planning; and a national fuel policy as a recognition of the central importance attached to energy in economic planning.⁵⁸

At the same time, anxiety over loss of political power saw Labour immersed in a debate about its own relevance. It believed loss of power was linked to socialism having become unfashionable. It saw its own malaise as a reflection of Britain’s ‘stagnation’. The task of the 1960s was to enthuse a new generation of voters with Labour’s embrace of modernity.⁵⁹ Grasping modernity and using it effectively offered political salvation. Labour thus saw modernity as the litmus test of its own political relevance. Increasingly, Labour’s internal debates were linked to the broader theme of Britain’s declining economic and political status. Labour looked to France, Germany, Japan Scandinavia and the USA as examples of economic growth; as sources of new ideas; as exemplars of the planning ‘model’; and as successful export nations. What Labour perceived as the ‘new direction’ for the 1960s meant Britain catching up with her competitors by government taking a leading role in research and development and planning.⁶⁰

The outcome of these debates saw Labour committed to a modernisation agenda. However, the problem for Labour was that the basis for these formulations was a desire to break a political impasse rather than a coherent and considered outline of Britain’s future economic progress. They were intended to bring harmony to Labour’s internal wrangles. With the Conservatives shifting significantly toward a similar agenda, all roads led to Harold Wilson’s oft mis-quoted ‘White Heat’ speech at Scarborough in 1963. As Edgerton notes,

these debates, culminating in Wilson's dash for modernity, were primarily about "finding a political language to supersede divisions between 'traditionalists' and 'revisionists' " as much as they were about modernity itself.⁶¹ As a result, Labour's modernisation plans were ill conceived. The plans were based on an assessment of past experience rather than on a clear appraisal of future needs with a tendency toward partiality; even of political gimmickry. Labour's emphasis on the "prestige sectors" such as "atomic energy, aerospace, computerisation, and research and development" was its manifestation.⁶² Alec Douglas-Home, concluded, Wilson had become for Labour nothing more than "a slick salesman of a synthetic science" for whom "their vocabulary" belongs "to the thirties and their planning is a hangover from times of post-war shortage and rationing".⁶³ Under critical gaze many of Wilson's detractors were dismissive of the 'rhetoric' of modernity in the absence of clarity from Labour on how it was going to be achieved.⁶⁴

One of the thorniest problems was how Labour was going to take the unions with them on the journey to the promised land in terms of their attitude toward modernisation.⁶⁵ At the highest levels in the trade union movement the omens were propitious, based on Labour's experience of 'industrial modernisation' during the late 1940s.⁶⁶ Persuading the 'rank-and-file' proved to be a more difficult task which compounded Labour's troubles in government particularly during its second term after 1966.⁶⁷ There was always every likelihood that Labour would face difficulties over modernisation because of the dilemma it created for the labour movement in reconciling its embrace of modernisation with its commitment to defending member's interests. In opposition these issues were inadequately debated with the exception of the one key issue of prices and incomes policy.⁶⁸

Industrial change in the context of Labour's long-term objectives for modernisation was consistently highly problematic. Sure enough, there was a momentum created both by a longstanding socialist vision and Labour's political priorities, but it consistently lacked an essential credibility. Modernity was always an exercise in solving something, whether it was economic crisis or political impasse. Moreover, for Labour, modernity was, as Francis suggests, always about seeking to "recast both the economy and society along lines that were rational and functional: to replace private economic chaos with public economic order".⁶⁹ This, as Tomlinson notes, sprang from Labour's reading of past experience in which aspects of modernity arose out of nothing more than "an instinctive dislike of the

'anarchy' of the market" which required remedy. The post-war world thus became littered with the failure of this or that modernisation initiative. Although there was a genuine desire for modernity by Labour there was never any question of it amounting to a set of guidelines for the future shape of the economy and society, just a toolkit of useful political responses.

The second strand in the context of industrial change was the more general debate over Britain's 'decline'. By the late 1950s and 1960s it was of some significance in Labour's approaches to modernity. Post-war industrial change saw the final throes of the decline of the staple industries which had played such a vital part in the emergence of British pre-eminence. The post-war period coincided with increasing concerns over Britain's lost status across the political spectrum. This debate raged with a fierce intensity as Britain stumbled from one 'crisis' to another during the late twentieth century against a backdrop of plummeting economic performance, industrial militancy and the unravelling of the post-war political consensus. The 'decline debate' has involved economists and economic and business historians while political scientists have joined the debate through an examination of the political economics of 'decline' and a perspective involving a critique of the British state, its institutions and political processes. It is not the intention to join debate here. However, there are a number of aspects which have some relevance to the context of the industrial change in the coal industry.

The first point concerns the character of the debate and the terms in which it has taken place. This has essentially been a polemic engaging views from the political left, right and centre, often uniting both left and right on specific aspects of the 'debate'.⁷⁰ As Tomlinson, a leading exponent in the 'decline debate', has suggested, it has not been concerned with empirical evaluation. Similarly, the experience of specific sectors or regions has been largely ignored.⁷¹ This thesis seeks to remedy this deficiency. The 'decline debate' has also been restricted by its domination by British establishment concerns.⁷² 'Decline' can, like 'modernisation', mean different things to different people at different times. The terrain of the 'decline debate' has been pre-occupied over a long period by business and 'high' political anxieties that Britain was falling behind her competitors. It is traceable at least as far back as the late nineteenth century when anxieties were raised over Britain's economic eclipse.⁷³ For example, Chamberlain's "weary titan" ranks as one of the abiding

establishment sentiments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷⁴ The debate periodically ignited during the twentieth century when it became a popular political device for both Conservative and Labour governments around which political agendas and initiatives gathered and flourished. However, as Cannadine observes, absolute decline or perceptions of decline were less important than "relative decline" over a long period of time.⁷⁵ This has been the predominant experience of Britain's staple industries. Moreover, domination of the 'decline debate' by establishment concerns constitutes treatment of an important subject which is both partial and patrician. What is required, and what this work is directly concerned with, is a more specific debate which concentrates on the role of economic sectors, of management and labour attitudes within them, and of the regions and communities most keenly affected by the impact of decline.

There are two substantive aspects of the 'decline debate' of importance to industrial change in the coal industry. The first concerns the role of organised labour. One key argument in the debate, favoured by the political right, sees trade unions as an obstacle which has prevented Britain from matching the economic dynamism of her competitors. It has been advanced that trade unions were a force for 'stagnation' acting as an impediment to modernisation. The unions were one important group singled out for criticism 'in period' by Shanks in 1961 in his influential work *The Stagnant Society*.⁷⁶ Subsequently, trade unions have become the favourite whipping-boy for a generation of right-wing academics, commentators and polemicists. Barnett has identified the trade unions amongst his long list of bogeys in which he has accused them of aiding 'stagnation' by their opposition to 'change'.⁷⁷ The important claim made in this work will be the antithesis of these arguments. Organised labour in the coal industry was willing to participate fully in a programme of modernisation which had detrimental implications for trade union members.

The second perspective on the 'decline debate' for the coal industry was the way in which the staple industries became central to the notion of Britain having fallen behind. The Labour Party had consistently articulated one element of the 'decline debate' by advancing a variation on the 'early start' thesis proposed by a number of 'decline debate' protagonists. This argued that the first 'industrial revolution' had left Britain with a preponderance of older industries which compromised economic performance. Britain's competitors had stolen a march by immediately entering subsequent phases of economic

growth in newer more dynamic scientifically and technological advanced economic sectors. The antidote was to relegate the older sectors in favour of supporting modernisation with an emphasis on the new sectors. This was a view which gained considerable political support during the 1950s and 1960s. As Gamble notes, it was not only Labour who were involved as they battled with the Conservatives for the 'modernisation mantle'.⁷⁸ It was Labour, however, who emerged to offer a more emphatic approach to modernisation. One important area which highlighted the different approaches was planning. Although the Conservatives were at their most 'interventionist' during this period Labour paid more attention to planning as the key to modernisation by advocating indicative economic planning. There was also the sense, certainly from the late 1950s and early 1960s, that the initiative on modernisation lay with Labour with the Tories left in the slipstream.⁷⁹ The high level of political support for modernisation has meant that the 'decline debate' has characterised the staple industries since the 1950s as outmoded and old-fashioned sectors associated with economic retardation thereby demanding justification for their continued existence.

The coal industry in common with the other staples was at the centre of the push for modernity. Both Labour's vision of modernity and coal's negative position within the 'decline debate' meant that it was marooned as the tide of modernisation licked around it. As a key industrial sector in the drive for economic modernisation it faced the prospect of having to renew itself through a programme of modernisation and rationalisation to ensure it maintained its position and relevance. At the same time, coal faced the challenge of modernity in the shape of new fuels as it competed with them in a battle which came to symbolise "Britain's economic sickness and her hopes for a cure".⁸⁰ However, the coal industry occupied a special place against the onrush of modernity. It was a sector in which the NUM held traditional and strong links with the Labour Party. This was reinforced by a mutual desire to make a success of public ownership in coal. Consequently, the dimensions and perceptions of 'decline' and responses to modernity in the sector became much more nuanced. The coal industry was thus perceived by government, the Coal Board and organised labour as a sector in 'transition', undergoing change to a modernised industry, rather than one in absolute decline.

v. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The methodological issues which impinge upon this thesis fall into three categories: conceptual, procedural and practical. The conceptual issues relate to the notion of industrial change. In taking industrial change as the exclusive heading the thesis obviates other important processes of change taking place in the coal industry and in the Lancashire coalfield. Economic and social change was clearly of importance in altering perspectives. Structural change has been seen to be important in loosening allegiances and ties to the coal industry from the inter-war period, with an intensification after the Second World War. This was manifested through the industry's persistent problems of labour recruitment and retention. It might therefore be argued that industrial change was facilitated by fundamental economic and social changes taking place within mining communities. Moreover, it might be suggested that modernisation and rationalisation merely gave expression to a desire for modernity within the coalfield in an industry which was seen as outdated and outmoded. Thus, changing economic and social perspectives might have been important in helping to undermine opposition to industrial change. While it is not the intention in this thesis to dismiss the impact of economic and social change, a high premium is placed on the unique importance of industrial change as a more essential agency of transformation in the Lancashire coalfield during the post-war period.

If there is a conceptual problem associated with the notion of industrial change then it lies with one of its main components: modernisation. This concerns the motivation for modernisation. The political desire for modernisation was substantially based on an analysis of the past rather than on producing an objective blueprint for the future. In the case of the coal industry the engine driving modernisation from within the Labour Party and the NUM was based on righting the wrongs of the past by expunging the evils of private capital caused by the dispensation of the industrial revolution. Because the past hung like a millstone around the necks of the political generation of the post-war period there is a danger of reading too much into the modernisation agenda. In a broader sense, it could be argued that this was one reason why post-war modernisation did not meet with the expectations of its visionaries. It certainly led to misjudgements in the coal industry. Therefore, as a conceptual notion some caution is required with 'modernisation' because it was never an all-embracing political concept over which there was widespread agreement.

Nor was it practised in a uniform way. In the coal industry it came to symbolise a desire for a more competitive and productive industry which managed its affairs for the benefit of all including its workforce. That conclusion was reached as a result of an assessment of the past experience of the industry not through any accurate assessment of its future needs or role.

The procedural methodological issues concern three areas: the problems associated with researching and writing contemporary history; political assumptions; and the issues raised by an analysis of industrial change which focuses on the 'leadership' and 'rank-and-file'. The problem with contemporary history is one of proximity. Proximity can be more of an obstacle to historical enquiry than distance because it interferes with that most desirable of situations - objective judgement. On one level there is the problem that the recent past is one that we might have lived through. It is inevitable that we might have pre-conceived views on the events and developments of the period in question even if these are partial and occluded.⁸¹ In another sense, tackling the recent past of the coal industry is a problematic exercise because of a tendency to judge events 'in period' by the yardstick of the subsequent experience of the industry. Viewing the industry's experience through the prism of the last 30 years is likely to prove inimical to an accurate assessment of the period under consideration. This issue becomes problematic when passing historical judgement. Clearly, this thesis will make them. This requires respect for the unique qualities of the period in which these events occurred.

Historical judgements are linked to political assumptions. One assumption is to ascribe intent to historical actors in the process of industrial change. Taking a teleological view of industrial change might be one direction this would take. While there was a vision for the coal industry there was never any question of pre-determination or indeed any sense of destiny. One recent work on the British experience of post-war modernisation has suggested that it was one characterised by "ad hocery".⁸² There were certainly elements of this in industrial change in coal. On the other hand, it will be argued in this thesis that industrial change followed a clear set of economic and political priorities. It was influenced too by interventions intended to alter the pace of change or in order to use the coal industry to alter the direction of economic and social forces more generally. However, this was not

programmed change, it constituted a set of ill conceived and not particularly well thought out political initiatives and responses about which judgements can be made.

Another perspective on this theme is that industrial change was inevitable in the sense that the post-war economic challenges faced by the industry meant that its decline was guaranteed. The 'inevitability question' lurks in many corners of this thesis. Indeed, it has been the predominant notion shaping our perception of industrial change in coal. Economic considerations were clearly important in determining outcomes for coal. Yet, as this thesis will show, it was political agendas and strategies and the choices of political actors which were as significant in altering the development of the coal industry as much as economic ones.

This thesis lays a great deal of stress on the relationship between the NUM and the Labour Party in affecting the direction of industrial change. An important issue here is just how much influence the NUM had on the Labour Party by the late 1950s and 1960s. Certainly at the national level the NUM was becoming less important in Labour Party considerations by the time Labour returned to office in 1964; a process itself hastened by the decline of the industry. The NUM had less influence over fuel and coal industry policy. Gone were the days when a Labour minister of power had only to speak the language of the miners to succeed. At the regional level, however, where much of this thesis is focused, the NUM and the Labour Party continued to operate closely; loyalty to Labour maintained cohesion. Differences within the NUM and the Labour in the coalfield over the direction of industrial change were rare. In fact, industrial change *per se* as an issue was never debated. There was an assumption that it was a process which should receive unquestioning support. It was only debated as an issue in terms of its consequences. Tensions arose only as problems deepened over the impact and pace of industrial change. This was the case during the late 1960s in Lancashire when the united front on industrial change between the NUM and Labour Party began to fragment. For the most part, it is safe to assume that on the question of industrial change the NUM and Labour Party operated in tandem in the Lancashire coalfield.

The final procedural issue concerns the analysis of reaction and response to industrial change which looks at the question through the aperture of 'union leadership' and the

'rank-and-file'. This has been one of the perennially thorniest questions in labour history because of misgivings over the assumption of a clear dichotomy between the two in both a typological and substantive sense.⁸³ In this thesis, a distinction is made in the typological sense in as much as it is used to organise the material. In the substantive sense, it is accepted that there is no clear distinction between 'leadership' and 'rank-and-file' either by typology or by reference to behaviour. However, the term 'rank-and-file' is taken in this thesis to include union branch and more senior full-time officials. This reflects an appreciation of 'rank-and-file' which could be more accurately described as factionalism based on historical and more contemporary cleavages that have emerged in the Lancashire coalfield and elsewhere. It is not the intention to make general statements about theories or models of 'leadership' and 'rank-and-file' behaviour in this thesis.

The practical methodological issues affecting this thesis centre on the use of available primary historical evidence. The primary sources used have been derived from four main groups of material: those from the Public Record Office derived from central government particularly the Ministry of Power and Coal Board; those from the Lancashire Record Office which mainly include the historical records of the National Coal Board North Western Division (NCBNWD); the records of the NUMLA; and finally all other primary sources including the press. Clearly, because these sources were not created to aid historical research there is an issue over their efficacy, integrity and provenance. They are the detritus of government, public bodies and organised labour. As such they are imperfect in the sense that they contain deficiencies, limitations and gaps of coverage.⁸⁴ Some of the gaps in source material have been unavoidable because they arise from the statutory regulations covering the closure of public records. Other records are unavailable because they have not been released yet by the departments concerned or have not been catalogued. NUM material at the branch level remains extremely scarce in the public domain. These records would have been useful in advancing or supporting arguments in the thesis. Government and departmental records from the late 1960s would have helped in identifying the extent of the debate within the Labour Government over coal industry contraction. Branch union records would have been useful shedding further light on debates over specific colliery closures. Inevitably too, there has been a degree of selectivity involved in identifying and deploying these sources simply because of the constraints of space and time in undertaking a research project. They were chosen because they offered

the best available record of the process of industrial change in the Lancashire coalfield during the period. They have been relevant and effective in advancing the arguments made.

A second point on source material concerns its prioritisation in preference to others. One important innovative methodological contribution this thesis makes is to bring together source material from the governance and management of the coal industry with that from organised labour. This has been done in the belief that it offers the chance of a more complete appraisal of industrial change in the industry in terms of the decisions made and reaction to them rather than relying solely on sources from one side of the industry. In fact, it would be difficult to offer a fair judgement on the process of industrial change without such representation. It also stems from a more profound belief that business/economic historians and labour historians have been too sectarian in their choice of methodological approaches. In addition, on the occasions where the two approaches have been combined the results have been less than adequate in terms of a complete appraisal from both sides of the industry. Two separate works analogous to this thesis by Singleton, charting the demise of the Lancashire cotton industry during the post-war period, and Gouvrish, on the post-war decline and re-organisation of the railways, combined both sets of sources. These works, undertaken by business historians, were excellent in their examination of the economic and business failures of the respective industries but did not fully assess the reaction of organised labour because they said little about 'rank-and-file' responses.⁸⁵ This thesis attempts to obviate these inadequacies by deploying both sets of source material from which an appraisal of the role and responses of government, the Coal Board, union leadership and 'rank-and-file' ensues.

The remaining practical methodological issues arising from the use of the primary documents involves the evaluation of sources through an assessment of their 'internal integrity'. Clearly, a thesis which is heavily reliant on documentary evidence is highly dependent on what is written and more particularly the context in which it is written. What is sometimes of greater importance is what is not written down in the divisional coal boardroom or the union meeting hall. Likewise, minutes of meetings and conferences are very often compromise statements of debates which have been something much more than 'lively' discussions. They frequently fail to convey the enmity or passion of debate. In a different way, a number of sources can demonstrate bias. Certainly press sources can

exhibit this characteristic. Local press reports from the coalfield during the post-war period are scarcer on coal industry matters than during the heyday of the Lancashire coalfield in the early twentieth century. They tend to be briefer and more factual in content. However, while they are likely to be less constrained by bias it is conceded that they can give a journalistic or political slant on articles about the industry. In this sense, the press represents a second class historical source but in another it provides the first rough draft of history.

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²⁴ NUMLA, ACM, 8 April 1961.

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²⁹ Gormley, J, Battered Cherub: The Autobiography of Joe Gormley, 1982, Hamish Hamilton Ltd, pp.34-35, 48-49.

³⁰ Adeney, M, 'Joe Gormley: For all his moderate label, he's never been a soft touch', Listener, 11 March 1982. Files on Individuals: Joe Gormley: Press Cuttings: National Museum of Labour History Archive Manchester: Financial Times 8 January 1972.

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voting delegate at a national NUM conference without proper authorisation or reference to procedures. Later, during the early 1970s, there were allegations of mis-use of union property by Gormley and his family and the mis-use of election funds resulting in a police investigation. Finally, during the 1970s there were allegations that Gormley had used undue influence in his position as NUM national president to facilitate use of the mineworkers' pension fund to finance property developments and to assist business friends. It must be stated that on no occasion was Gormley held to have been responsible for any criminal or civil misdemeanour nor any misuse or abuse of his office.

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³⁷ Wigan Observer 4 April 1980: Jim Hammond's obituary. Taped Interview with Sid Vincent. CPGB Prosopographical Database (under development), Gidon Cohen, Research Assistant, Department of Government, Manchester University. The timing of Hammond's resignation from the CPGB is disputed. Most accounts suggest 1956. His obituary in the local press suggests 1954, ahead of the mass resignations of 1956. CPGB records which might have helped clarify this matter have not yet been catalogued.

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⁴¹ Hammond's opening speeches to the Lancashire miners' annual conferences as union president.

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CHAPTER ONE

COAL: THE INDUSTRY; THE COMMUNITY; THE REGION - A

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a review of the existing literature relevant to this thesis. For the purposes of this examination it is divided into three sections, each dealing with an aspect of extant studies. The first section on industry assesses a number of studies of the experience of the post-war British coal industry and coal and fuel policy. The studies of the coal industry chosen for scrutiny have been those which have specifically looked at the industry under public ownership or have tackled the issue of industrial change in coal. The section on community provides a survey of a small number of studies which have analysed 'the coalfield community' under the impact of post-war modernisation and rationalisation. Finally, the section on the region is concerned with a review of those works on the Lancashire coalfield that have focused on characteristics of the coalfield which have some resonance to themes highlighted in this thesis.

1.2 THE INDUSTRY

Studies of the British coal industry have tended to focus on the challenges facing the industry under public ownership, industrial relations, changes to the labour process and the political influence of the NUM. There has been relatively little engagement with the broader issues of industrial change through post-war modernisation and rationalisation of the industry. The 'standard' work on the history of the British coal industry from 1946 to 1982 by Ashworth included treatment of industrial change. While not an official history of the NCB this monumental study was "supported and initiated" by the Coal Board.¹ As Kirby, a leading coal industry historian and the book's reviewer noted, while not

representative of the “view from Hobart House” (Coal Board headquarters) it was “broadly sympathetic” to the NCB in its stewardship of the industry; of coal’s transformation under public ownership and the challenges it faced.² Within what Kirby describes as Ashworth’s “grand themes” some prominence was given to industrial change. Ashworth noted that the nationalised industry was born with such high expectations held by the Labour Party and NUM that failure was unthinkable. It had to be made to work. Part of the process of making a success of nationalisation was industrial change. Both Ashworth and Kirby agreed that the NCB’s handling of industrial change, particularly the programme of contraction, was “cautious” and was complemented by a commitment to social amelioration. Notably, both agreed that industrial change was met by a high degree of acceptance or acquiescence by labour in the industry. This, it was argued, was because of the availability of intra- and inter-coalfield manpower transfer schemes; “national labour market buoyancy” and because of a commitment by government and the NCB to meet the social obligations of industrial change.³

The work has rightly been acclaimed as the definitive business history of the coal industry during the post-war period. However, as Kirby noted, it offered “little” which was “new or surprising”.⁴ Industrial change is one such aspect. A more questioning approach would have been welcome particularly in the treatment of modernisation and rationalisation, with analysis of the debates and decisions taken over industrial change especially as the NCB was itself rife with major disagreements under public ownership.⁵

Undoubtedly, in producing the ‘broad historical sweep’ and constrained by what Fishman described as “reasons of space and time” there was a danger of losing sight of the particular. One ‘particular’ would have been a stronger regional focus, bearing in mind that the Coal Board invested much in a divisional strategy with autonomy to match. As Fishman noted, our knowledge of the NCB’s divisions under public ownership remains inadequate.⁶ In this respect, the methodological approach of the work relied heavily on sources from the highest level of government and the Coal Board: Cabinet, Ministry of Fuel and Power and other government departments. These catered to a study which substantially appraised the post-war period through the activities and decisions of the leading organs of the industry. Importantly, there is little use of trade union sources either at national or regional levels. Consequently, there is no detailed insight into how industrial

change was received and what detailed reaction and response it generated in the coalfields. It is representative of a 'top down' history.

Another briefer but similar interpretation to Ashworth's came from Berkovitch.⁷ This study reviewed and reflected upon the record of the industry under public ownership with a chronological focus to 1972. Like Ashworth, Berkovitch saw the experience of the nationalised coal industry as one in which the NCB was forced to contend with, and respond to, an array of exogenous demands and pressures. Berkovitch's central argument was that attempts to modernise and re-structure the coal industry during the 1950s and 1960s were wrecked by plummeting demand for coal and government ambivalence towards the industry in what was spuriously referred to as an "integrated" fuel policy.⁸

As an 'insider' Berkovitch was sympathetic to the industry. This precluded an assessment which was too challenging or critical of the record of the Coal Board. However, to his credit, he offered a critique of the adverse way in which coal was affected by government fuel policy during the 1960s. In this regard, unlike Ashworth, Berkovitch was mindful of the ramifications of fuel policy on communities which depended on coal. However, Berkovitch contrasted the colliery closure programme under public ownership with closures under private control, which he argued resulted in the "virtual murder of villages". Berkovitch further maintained that the economic and social cushioning of coal industry rationalisation during the post-war period was "aeons removed" from the experience of the inter-war period. Certainly Berkovitch was right to make this point, but this argument tends to underline his sympathetic treatment of industrial change in coal. It was an argument frequently cited as a defence by government, the NCB and NUM leadership against critics of post-war industrial change in coal and its consequences.⁹ This approach points up the weaknesses in Berkovitch's work. There is a tendency to see the outcomes of industrial change for mineworkers and coalfield communities as an integral part of the process of contraction set in train by the challenges facing the coal industry. This avoided a detailed examination of how government, the NCB or the NUM influenced the process of industrial change. Crucially, while energy policy is discussed, there is no assessment of how contraction was 'managed' by these institutions or the influence which Labour's policy agenda on energy and economic modernisation had on the process of industrial change.¹⁰ Significantly, while Berkovitch argued that attempts at modernisation of the

industry were undermined by falling demand for coal he did not acknowledge that it was the modernisation agenda itself which did so much to marginalise coal and emphasise alternative fuels. This helped bring about the collapse in coal consumption from the 1950s and in turn led to a hastening of the modernisation process for coal.

Three major works completed during the 1950s by Baldwin, Haynes and Saxena, and one during the early 1960s by W.H.Scott *et al* typified how academic interest in the coal industry focused on the state of industrial relations under public ownership.¹¹ Industrial change was only tackled in as much as it brought alterations to work practices, systems of remuneration and technological change. For example, W.H. Scott *et al* produced a detailed study of industrial relations in the industry using specific collieries in the Lancashire coalfield as case studies. However, the work ignored the broader context of industrial change in coal against which industrial relations were conducted during the early 1960s with a modernisation and rationalisation programme in full swing, encompassing new colliery construction, re-construction and wholesale colliery closures involving large-scale re-deployment and some redundancy.¹²

Exceptionally, Haynes briefly touched upon the implications of post-war modernisation and planning for coal. His work carried the prediction that colliery closures would produce insecurity and tensions. He also believed that post-war planning for the coal industry was overly ambitious and optimistic based on the continuance of demand for coal against a background of persistent fuel shortages.¹³ Of the three studies conducted during the 1950s only Baldwin's assessed the wider issues of industrial change in coal through a rare study of colliery closure and manpower transfer. Baldwin's study of the Scottish coalfield demonstrated that opposition to closure did not come from the Scottish NUM but from local union branches and the coalfield community. The Scottish NUM were in absolute agreement with the Coal Board that 'uneconomic' collieries, mainly in the Clyde Valley, should close in order to facilitate colliery modernisation schemes and new constructions in other areas of Scotland. Moreover, Baldwin expressed surprise that the Scottish NUM's support for industrial change extended to its agreement to the "mass transfer of communities" subject only to "social guarantees". While Baldwin praised the NCB for its enlightened handling of transfers he indicated that the move of miners and their families

from Lanarkshire to other Scottish and English coalfields confronted transferees with immense economic and social problems.¹⁴

Important though Baldwin's case study was, it failed to address a number of key questions. While he indicated that opposition to closures was growing in Scotland, he did not show that supine acceptance resulted from anything more than confidence that guarantees of consultation in the transfer process and social measures would be met. Baldwin failed to show why the Scottish NUM leadership believed so strongly that closure and transfer was "absolutely essential". Was it that the push for modernisation had a higher priority for the leadership than members' immediate interests or did it believe that industrial change was the only feasible way of "protecting the mens' interests"? , because, as Baldwin inferred, the Scottish NUM leadership were oblivious to the problems manpower transfers created. The fundamental question which any study of the politics of industrial change in coal must address is what were the aspirations and motivations of the NUM leadership.¹⁵

A more recent study which tackled industrial change in coal during the post-war period, including the colliery closure programme of the late 1950s and 1960s, was a brief but valuable article by Turner.¹⁶ Turner, unlike Baldwin, analysed reaction and response to industrial change by the NUM. He correctly identified the period as a critical one for coal in which it met stiff competition from other fuels, particularly oil. As Turner noted, closures between vesting date and the late 1950s had been relatively light but fell inordinately in a number of declining coalfields; a trend which continued into the 1960s. Politically, Turner noted the operation of a bipartisan approach to coal by post-war governments. However, it was Labour who initiated industrial change because it was seen as integral to public ownership of the industry. Turner argued that industrial change saw a high degree of acquiescence from the NUM even though it opposed the rundown of the industry. Industrial action against colliery closures was, according to Turner, "never on the agenda". Like other commentators he considered the important question of why there was so little opposition to severe contraction in coal during the 1950s and 1960s. Reasons offered included relative economic buoyancy; specifically the availability of new economic opportunities in modern industries and the variation in experience of industrial change between different coalfields which undermined unity of action.¹⁷

Turner argued that divisiveness among the 'rank-and-file' in coal was a hallmark of contraction. For example, he noted the different experiences of industrial change between ages and grades of mineworker. He especially referred to older miners, who existed in a state of demoralisation, and the "young and fit" who either prospered within the modernised industry, or were more readily able to leave for new economic sectors. In considering the nature of opposition to colliery closures during the post-war period Turner leaves us with the helpful assertion that "Pit closures".... are a.... "divisive phenomena".¹⁸

Turner indicated that it was the return of a Labour Government in 1964 and its relationship with the NUM which was the most important element of industrial change in coal during the post-war period. As he observed, the NUM "invested enormous faith in the Labour Government" to assist coal and reverse its rundown. However, in government, Labour increased the pace of contraction because it "adhered to free-market considerations as regards a national energy policy" in which it endorsed a 'multi-fuel' economy based largely on a policy of cheap oil. Despite this, the NUM continued with its acquiescence and co-operation in industrial change because of its "loyalty to Labour" and because it "shared Labour's vision of a smaller more compact, competitive coal industry". Furthermore, Turner argued that the prevailing hegemony of "free-market ideas" and of "co-operation" under public ownership with government and the NCB resulted in its "permeation of the NUM". According to Turner, opposition to "hegemony" was weak but growing on the fringes of the NUM through attempts to create a "counter-hegemony" within the union against advocates of "capitalist logic".¹⁹

Turner's study established the main developments in the process of industrial change in coal including reaction and response.²⁰ Its main weakness was its brevity and lack of supporting empirical evidence. Moreover, as a study written in the aftermath of the 1984 strike it attempted to produce an overall perspective on post-war colliery closures comprising the closures of the 1950s and 1960s, when there was little opposition to closure, and those of the 1980s under the Thatcher government with its palpable reaction. It remains doubtful whether a view of post-war colliery closures can be effectively constructed in this way, because these periods of rationalisation in coal arose out of quite different industrial and political circumstances:

A further weakness was the chronological perspective. Turner identified the 1957-1963 period as one of severe contraction in coal as the industry felt the impact of major shifts in policy. While this period did correspond to a critical change of sentiment toward coal, followed by a heavy closure programme, Turner did not mention the importance of the 1959 Revised Plan for Coal which initiated a major scheme of colliery closures. Similarly, while Turner noted Labour's increase in the pace of contraction after coming to power in 1964 he failed to appraise Labour's adoption of an accelerated colliery closure programme in November 1965. Furthermore, while Turner indicated that Labour's shift on fuel policy emanated from its acceptance of a free market for energy underpinned by cheap oil, he did not discuss the significance of Labour's relegation of coal within its modernisation agenda nor the role of energy in Labour's economic planning.²¹ Finally, is Turner's interpretation of capitalist "hegemony" and the development of a NUM "counter-hegemony" an over simplified representation of what were more complex nuances on both sides of the industry under industrial change?

In a similar approach, Allen considered industrial change in coal within his study of industrial relations under public ownership.²² The work was a polemic from an avowedly Marxist perspective. Allen's thesis on industrial change in coal was based on his belief that successive post-war governments, the NCB and the NUM leadership deluded miners. He argued that during the immediate post-war period mineworkers were conditioned into believing that they had a stake in the future of the industry; that they were participating in the post-war reconstruction of the Britain and that industrial change was integral to this process. Later, from the 1950s, following the fall in coal consumption, Allen observed that miners were convinced of the need for industrial change because of the pressing requirement to modernise the industry to compete against alternative fuels. He further argued that miners accepted these prescriptions because they were forced to believe that in public ownership they had entered into a binding compact with both the Coal Board and the Labour Party. Miners were expected to show a depth of gratitude for nationalisation and more general post-war economic and social 'progress'. Allen argued in favour of an 'hegemonic project' which ensured that miners were unable to "stand aside" from a sustained propaganda campaign pursued by all post-war governments and the NCB which convinced them of the need for industrial change.²³

Allen believed that under industrial change mineworkers were deceived both by Conservative and Labour governments. Firstly, during the late 1950s, the Conservatives encouraged trade unions and miners to believe that colliery closures were only a short-term response to the fall in coal consumption rather than marking a shift of policy in favour of oil. However, Allen reserved his greatest opprobrium for Labour. Until 1964 the Tories could take the blame for coal contraction. In opposition, Labour promised a co-ordinated national fuel policy with coal as the predominant fuel. In government, Labour moved decisively against coal by backing alternative fuels and increasing the pace of coal contraction. As Allen noted, Labour pursued a slash and burn policy toward the coal industry as its “administrative axe swung wide and wildly across the low productivity coalfields of Britain” sweeping aside mining communities.²⁴ He argued that the NUM’s position throughout industrial change was one of “collaboration” with the NCB to the extent that it actively co-operated with the Coal Board in the “application” and “execution” of industrial change. For Allen, there was no basic difference within the NUM between the political left and right as both Communist and Labour supporters among NUM officials accepted the “prerogative of management” on colliery closures. The only matter on which the NUM intervened was over the “social hardship” caused by industrial change. According to Allen, there was also an overwhelming belief among NUM officials that industrial change was necessary in order to make the industry more “efficient” to compete with alternative fuels. Co-operation continued under Labour, even though it was clear that Labour had reneged on promises made in opposition.²⁵

The strength of Allen’s work was the boldness of his claims and the way in which he highlighted aspects of industrial change which have received little attention from commentators. The main weakness was the lack of detailed empirical research to support his claims. In one sense this is an important aspect of the work because, as it is written as a polemic, it invites detailed historical enquiry to validate or negate the claims. In this respect, a central plank of Allen’s thesis is that the ‘rank-and-file’ accepted industrial change because they were deceived and manipulated by capitalist hegemony. As Allen put it: “Miners were never free to stand aside”.... “to assess what they were being told about themselves and their work”.²⁶

Allen was correct to highlight deception and manipulation by government, the NCB and the NUM leadership over industrial change but the notion that mineworkers were unable to articulate a view of the process with any degree of autonomy is simplistic. Similarly, the idea that government and the NCB were united in their pursuit of industrial change requires scrutiny. For example, Allen argued that the NCB chairman, Lord Robens, acted in a double role; on the one hand sympathetic to mineworkers and the industry while at the same time doing the government's bidding on industrial change.²⁷ Allen's account left no room for disagreement or schism within government or the NCB, or between the two, simply because in his interpretation they were both party to the 'hegemonic project'.

Finally, Allen's thesis obviated other explanations for industrial change in coal. For example, while Allen was right to argue that post-war government's favoured alternative sources of energy, there was not the straightforward switch to other fuels which he suggested. Similarly, there was no perspective from Allen on how the post-war vision of modernity underpinned industrial change in coal or the way in which economic and political priorities impinged. Bearing in mind that Labour's role in industrial change in coal was a clear target for Allen's polemic it does behove some examination of its political agenda on modernisation.

In a comparable but more precisely theoretically located way, Krieger, offered an analysis of colliery closures during the post-war period within the neo-Marxist conceptual framework of capitalist legitimation and rationality crises proposed by Habermas and Offe.²⁸ Krieger argued that the crises afflicting post-war British capitalism led to a fundamental contradiction for government between "economic objectives" and "social responsibilities" highlighted by his case study of colliery closures in North East England during the late 1950s and 1960s. He rejected the view that post-war policy on industrial change in coal resulted from the "paradoxical and haphazard" but arose instead from the "contradictions of capitalism". Krieger was certainly correct to argue that economic priorities operated against coal for most of the post-war period, yet it is difficult to accept that industrial change in coal followed the pre-determined programme which accorded with the model established by the neo-Marxist theorists.²⁹

The drawback with Krieger's analysis became clear as he attempted to link the model to the empirical evidence. The evidence itself, like Allen's, is hardly overwhelming or conclusive. However, the major deficiency is Krieger's choice of the events of 1967-68 to support his claims. Krieger suggested that Labour, having embarked upon severe contraction in coal as an economic policy objective, was forced to compromise because of the social implications of colliery closures as the Government came under pressure from its allies in the NUM. Krieger attempted to show a government wracked by contradictions and conflict. However, he precluded the possibility that Labour's decision to defer a number of colliery closures in September 1967 was nothing more than a momentary response to short-term pressures developing against the Government in a particularly bad year. Indeed, as with all government responses under such circumstances, it might be argued that Labour was merely responding to temporal political expedients in acting as it did. In any case, Wilson's deferment of closures was a measure which only affected a relatively small number of collieries for a short period. It did not, and was not intended to, impede the thrust of Government policy on further coal contraction during the late 1960s.

What Krieger characterised as fundamental disagreements within government over coal contraction might have been nothing more than arguments about the 'management' of contraction and the economic and political strategies which accompanied them. Similarly, while Labour was aware of the need to pay attention to its social responsibilities on closures, Krieger did not produce any evidence to show that this was ever allowed to interfere with its priorities. Moreover, while Krieger argued that Labour was facing a crisis created by contradictions which emerged between its economic and social objectives was it not more a case that it was seeing its poorly conceived modernisation agenda running into serious trouble through the tensions raised over coal contraction?

An aspect of work on the post-war coal industry which has been largely absent are studies of fuel policy. However, one prominent work by Robertson offered an important perspective. His work assessed the events of the first three months of 1947 and subsequent fuel crises during the late 1940s and early 1950s. As his study revealed, their significance for policy extended beyond the "bleak midwinter of 1947"; the subject of Robertson's study.³⁰ The Labour government was faced with a serious fuel crisis caused by a severe winter and increased demand for fuel as a result of the economy reverting to peace-time

production. The coal industry was unable to cope with this demand at a time when it had just passed into public ownership exacerbated by labour shortages, industrial unrest and early re-organisation of the industry. The crisis of 1947 was for Labour much more than just an industrial crisis, it was a political crisis which tested its claims on economic management and questioned its ability to effect outcomes through post-war reconstruction and economic planning.³¹

At the centre of the crisis was the lacklustre performance of the coal industry. It was the last occasion during the twentieth century when a British government had to rely solely on coal in such a crisis without other energy sources at its disposal. Robertson's work identified the events of the late 1940s and 1950s as marking the first decisive shift away from coal in fuel consumption. Importantly, this shift was not entirely determined by economic considerations - it also carried with it a political imperative. Both oil and nuclear energy emerged from the fuel crises of the late 1940s and early 1950s as two alternative fuels in which there was a future. These events saw sentiment move toward oil by both government and consumers, while oil producers were keen to exploit fears over coal shortages. Thereafter, Robertson referred to the "headlong rush" for oil during the 1950s. Robertson concluded that the events of the immediate post-war years produced a critical influence on government thinking on fuel which for the first time tilted opinion away from an exclusive reliance on coal and prepared the way for the advent of a 'multi-fuel' economy.³²

One direction in which the shift from coal was taking was toward nuclear energy. As Hall notes in his examination of the emergence of nuclear energy in Britain, post-war politicians, particularly Labour politicians, were in thrall to the vision of modernity which the atomic age promised: "as the saviour of the world from energy shortages" and as a "clean source of power" in an industry in which "men in white coats replaced the hazards faced each day by the miner ". As one Labour minister put it, nuclear energy promised "the greatest breakthrough of all time". In one respect, as Hall observes, a small cabal of scientists oversaw the emergence of nuclear energy in Britain. On the other hand, it was propelled by a political establishment mesmerised by the notion of modernity during the immediate post-war period in which nuclear energy fulfilled a central role until it became tarnished as costly and ill conceived.³³

The importance of the studies by Hall and Robertson lay in the significance they both attached to the beginnings of a shift in sentiment against coal during the immediate post-war period. This arose from both economic and political imperatives seen through the development of nuclear power but increasingly, and more ominously for coal, through the growth of the oil economy.

1.3 THE COMMUNITY

Within the range of works dealing with the coal industry is a *genre* which have examined the 'mining community'. This tradition has produced studies of the post-war period focusing on the impact of coal industry contraction and its implications for mining communities. These have been largely undertaken by sociologists attempting to understand social change in such circumstances. An exception was Baldwin's case study of the Cannock coalfield in South Staffordshire and the Warwickshire coalfield during the early 1950s as part of his review of the coal industry under public ownership. The themes present in the study echoed predominant notions of mining communities in post-war Britain. Typically, a view prevailed which argued that the young were rejecting mining as a career in 'traditional' coal mining areas as new economic and social opportunities beckoned. Importantly, based on his research findings, Baldwin pointed to a more complex and highly localised pattern of recruitment and retention based on local employment patterns and travel-to-work opportunities. He contrasted the situation in the Cannock coalfield with that in Warwickshire. In Cannock, with relatively little new economic activity and transport impediments preventing access to new economic opportunities in adjacent areas of North Staffordshire and Birmingham there was more reluctance to leave the pits. By contrast, in Warwickshire, the engineering and car industries proved to be highly attractive. Baldwin found that the greater the distance mining communities were from centres of economic growth the greater was the reluctance to leave mining. The problem for coal was that manpower was in the 'wrong place' as exemplified by the case of the West Midlands. Cannock was a declining coalfield with an excess of mineworkers, while Warwickshire was an expanding coalfield with an acute shortage of trained and skilled miners. Baldwin's study thus highlighted the manpower dilemma with mining

communities in expanding areas for coal suffering from a perceived recruitment and retention crisis, particularly of young miners, while those in declining areas experienced a surplus of labour. As demonstrated by the West Midlands, these features were even apparent within the same NCB division.³⁴

From the 1950s the manpower question assumed a political dimension because it was absolutely crucial to plans to modernise the industry. There was a need to ensure that manpower transfers balanced the need for contraction with the requirement that the right level of skilled and trained manpower was available in expanding coalfields to sustain the drive for modernisation propelled by government and the Coal Board. Baldwin's study did not expand on this dilemma nor prefigure its political import for government, the NCB and NUM.

The problems created for mining communities through coal contraction during the late 1960s and early 1970s were the themes of separate studies of colliery closures by Bulmer and Sewel. Bulmer's case study of social change in Spennymoor, County Durham, made some highly significant claims. He found great reluctance to transfer from 'traditional' mining communities after colliery closure to other parts of the Durham coalfield or to other coalfields. The reasons offered included a general pessimism about the future of coal; intra-coalfield loyalties and community attachments and the costs of transfer. An important aspect of Bulmer's study included a detailed examination of the process of a colliery closure. Closure did not create friction within the colliery he examined because Bulmer believed that this was a 'family pit' in which there was a good working relationship, underpinned by social and familial ties. The main source of tension was involvement in closure by NCB divisional management who were seen as remote and bureaucratic and who, it was argued, handled closure badly through a lack of consultation to the extent of ignoring agreed procedures. However, although tensions were raised by the manner of closure, Bulmer noted that a majority of miners accepted "the inevitability of closure". Furthermore, although bitterness over closure was most pronounced among older mineworkers, it was this group who were most eager to leave the modernised industry. Tensions were thus generated not by closure *per se* but rather over the manner and terms of closure.³⁵

One of the most interesting findings concerned the experience of mineworkers after they left the industry. Bulmer found that a majority of ex-mineworkers wished to avoid re-training for a new job; most secured work after leaving mining not through the "formal and institutionalised" mechanisms but through informal social networks. However, the most important aspect of the closure for Bulmer was the non-involvement of the NUM who hardly figured in what it regarded as a *fait accompli*.³⁶ But, Bulmer's examination omitted an assessment of the role of the local Labour Party in closure nor did it examine whether or not the close relationship between the NUM and Labour was significant in the process.

Bulmer offered an insightful analysis of a mining community under the impact of colliery closure. However, there are two fundamental issues which arose from Bulmer's study. In the first instance, the assumption throughout is one of a closely-knit homogeneous and isolated pit community coming to terms with the end of its useful life. Bulmer was clear that he was looking at a "shared consciousness of common work experience, which was threatened by closure".³⁷ Undoubtedly, mineworkers through social, cultural and familial ties viewed the destruction of coal as analogous to the dismemberment of their community. Apprehension and sadness would certainly have stalked the pit communities of west Durham during the 1960s. But, is it realistic to assume that there was a "shared consciousness" within what is offered as an archetypal pit community - itself a contested concept? Indeed, some sections of the community may have welcomed the end of deep mining and yearned for modernity. Others would have been pre-occupied grappling with the insecurity set in train by contraction and the blighted lives, demoralisation and uncertainty omnipresent against a background of rising unemployment and de-population. These are characteristics associated with declining pit communities. Would it not be more realistic to talk of the fragmentation of the community and the divisiveness surrounding closure and transfer of mineworkers rather than "shared consciousness" in the face of contraction in coal?

A second issue with Bulmer's study concerned the process of colliery closure. While Bulmer offered a valuable understanding of colliery closure, the study did not offer a perspective on decisions and events leading up to closure involving the NCB, NUM, the 'rank-and-file' and local community. Closure of any work unit, including a colliery, is a highly 'political' event. Management and trade union attitudes are of great importance.

There is frequently a period of 'softening up' prior to closure with management, and often the union involved in explaining the efficacy of closure. There might be a great deal of cajoling, deception and manipulation taking place; even of hardening of management attitudes to enforce compliance. Certainly, this study failed to show how the NCB and NUM attempted to persuade mineworkers of the need for industrial change, specifically in this case, why a colliery needed to close to ensure modernisation of the industry in other parts of the Durham coalfield. Neither is it clear whether "shared consciousness", either among mineworkers or the local community, translated into any form of reaction to colliery closures or the manner of closure.

A different perspective in the study of social change came from Sewel who examined a specific colliery closure in a mining community suffering contraction in coal during the late 1960s in the Dulais Valley of South Wales.³⁸ In contrast to Bulmer, the important issue for Sewel was the fact that closure failed to ignite community interest beyond those mineworkers directly involved in it. He found that community attitudes toward industrial change were divided between those who were glad to see mining disappear, because modernisation was felt to be long overdue, and those who believed that mining had a continuing role to play in maintaining community cohesion. Again, unlike Bulmer, Sewel assessed local political reaction to closure and found that this was absent aside from the initial involvement of both the CPGB and Plaid Cymru who were accused by mineworkers of political opportunism in using the occasion to garner support. Initiatives to save the colliery came almost exclusively from the NUM lodge who appropriated the assistance of a reluctant local Labour Party. The latter had hitherto shown no interest in attempts to save the colliery. However, while Sewel noted that the 'campaign' to save the colliery rested on the important NUM-Labour Party nexus, there was no organised protest or confrontation. Rather, the 'campaign' waged by the NUM was manifested in a two-pronged industrial and political strategy. On the one hand, this involved the NUM seeking to maximise co-operation with the NCB to make the colliery viable, while on the other, it utilised the "special relationship" with the Labour Party to pursue the political case to save the threatened colliery. Sewel made the significant claim that the "special relationship" was highly problematic in resolving issues of industrial change in coal because the Labour Party was increasingly unlikely to "reflect the interests of miners" both nationally and locally during the late 1960s. Similarly, Sewel argued that the NUM were unwilling to

apply too much pressure on the Labour Party because of the existence of the “special relationship”. The relationship depended on NUM political support for Labour in spite of severe contraction in coal, while the NUM were reliant on Labour’s goodwill despite Labour’s disinclination to assist the industry. This was, according to a Sewel, a major source of “bitterness” for the NUM Lodge and ‘rank-and-file’ miners involved in trying to keep the colliery open.³⁹

The most valuable contribution of Sewel’s work was his finding that the strategy of the South Wales NUM during the late 1960s was exclusively one of attempting to tackle the consequences of closure in terms of the “run-down and transfer” of manpower while not opposing colliery closures in principle. In fact, Labour’s relegation of coal and its eclipse by alternative fuels tended the NUM toward greater levels of co-operation with the NCB and government. As Sewel rightly noted, the problem with NUM co-operation in attempts to make threatened collieries viable was that it underlined the weakness of its strategy on closures. In these circumstances the NUM, having accepted Labour’s economic and political priorities on fuel and NCB assertions, had no choice other than to accede to closure if the best efforts of mineworkers failed to attain agreed targets.⁴⁰

As Sewel further noted, the issue between the NUM, NCB and the Government was not about closure but the ‘management’ of closure. In this respect, Sewel made the significant discovery that questions of manpower transfer and redundancy assumed an industrial and political importance of greater prominence than closure *per se* with the strength to produce industrial action, albeit of a limited nature. Again, it is clear from Sewel’s study that it was not as much colliery closure which irritated mineworkers as the character of closure and closure outcomes.⁴¹ Transfer arrangements were not handled well, while travel-to-work distances increased together with reduced status and earnings for many. Redundancy fell inordinately upon older and ‘disabled’ miners, many of whom “felt that they had been pushed out of the industry” by the NCB in the quest for modernisation with its focus on a younger workforce.⁴² As Sewel found, for those leaving the industry opportunities were few.⁴³ Finally, new economic development through a policy of industrial diversification failed to provide adequate levels of new employment despite government assurances on the modernisation of declining coalfields.⁴⁴

Bulmer and Sewel provided contrasting perspectives of 'traditional' mining communities under the impact of coal contraction during the 1960s. Sewel's account did not suffer to the same extent as Bulmer's from assumptions about the archetypal pit community and tended to highlight aspects of division and indifference which the decline of coal produced. Similarly, Sewel gave a fuller account of the relationship between the NUM, NCB and Labour Party during colliery closure. Finally, Sewel provided a useful account of the issues which produced tensions for the 'rank-and-file' and an accurate assessment of the challenges they faced as a result of coal contraction.

If there was a weakness with Sewel's account it stemmed from his assessment of the changing relationship between mineworkers and the Labour Party during the 1960s. According to Sewel, this arose out of the *embourgeoisment* of Labour politicians who, it was argued, were increasingly distant from the interests of mineworkers.⁴⁵ While it is true that Labour politicians were less likely to have come from the ranks of the 'sons of toil' this remains an inadequate explanation of why Labour looked less favourably on the coal industry during the 1960s. There were wider issues of energy policy and economic modernisation to consider. The failure of the Mining Group of Labour MPs to effectively defend the interests of coal was less a case of *embourgeoisment* than a reflection of their impotence in tackling the Government as a result of Labour's relegation of coal in energy policy. Sewel's work could have done more to link his study to wider policy considerations and how these emerged from Labour's modernisation agenda.

1.4 THE REGION

Within the huge volume of literature on the British coal industry the Lancashire coalfield has been one major coalfield which has exercised academic minds least. It has remained an enigma in which its essential characteristics sit uncomfortably with traditional coalfield stereotypes. Nevertheless, the history of the coalfield provides a number of pointers which, while certainly not exclusive to Lancashire, are important in understanding its particular contours and features. One has been the treatment of 'rank-and-file' in Lancashire; the other has been an attempt to come to terms with diversity within the coalfield.

'Rank-and-filism' featured prominently in Challinor's study of the Lancashire and Cheshire miners during the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ Challinor saw 'rank-and-filist' tendencies emerging around a variety of cleavages such as religiosity and ethnicity. Other commentators such as Scott and Griffiths have also highlighted this feature.⁴⁷ However, an issue which arises from these accounts is the difficulty in defining centrifugal tendencies in Lancashire mining unionism as particularly 'rank-and-filist'. They are more accurately characterised as occurrences of 'factionalism' which arose from the relative autonomy, durability and strength of district mining unionism and district miners' associations in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Lancashire. A peculiarity of 'rank-and-filism' or 'factionalism' in Lancashire has been its incidence based around intra-coalfield territoriality. 'Factionalist' tendencies were also characterised by the participation and leadership of senior union officials at district and branch level. Even following the disintegration of district unionism the 'district' remained a powerful identity through which mining unionism continued to operate. Furthermore, the organisational and institutional strength of the district associations ensured that long after the formation of the LCMF in 1889 the 'districts' retained considerable autonomy and influence on the industrial and Labour politics of the coalfield. 'Factionalism' based on personality and territoriality was thus a re-occurring feature of the coalfield throughout twentieth century. There are even echoes of this in more recent times as assessments, such as Howell's, dealing with the events surrounding the 1984 strike testify.⁴⁸

Another issue confronting attempts to provide assessments of the Lancashire coalfield is the persistence of views stressing Lancashire's putative uniqueness as a British coalfield based on explanations of its urban morphology and absence of occupational concentration in coal mining.⁴⁹ Such perspectives have proved inadequate in assessments of a coalfield with such a high degree of economic and demographic diversity. While Lancashire did contain large industrial towns with a mixed occupational base, many areas of the coalfield, especially the central areas of South Lancashire contained high occupational concentrations in coal mining until the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁵⁰ Such approaches have been influenced by notions of the stereotypical or traditional mining community and flavoured by sociological concepts such as the Kerr-Siegel hypothesis of the 'isolated mass'. Lancashire contained many communities with characteristics of the 'typical' mining village. In any event, the validity of the 'isolated mass' hypothesis in terms of the

occupational and residential concentration of mineworkers as a model for analysing mining communities has been challenged.⁵¹ There is a need to move on from this model to what Gilbert describes as the “diversity of settings in which miners lived”.⁵² In a number of British coalfields, including Lancashire, this requires an appreciation of the significance of the ‘commuting miner’ and the import of travel-to-work issues on prospects for industrial change.

Arising out of the Lancashire case, with such diverse influences on its industrial and Labour politics, it has been possible to identify specific sub-regions of the coalfield which it has been suggested displayed certain distinctive features. Wellisz, in a study of strike behaviour during the immediate post-war period used Lancashire as the case study to point to variations in strike propensity which he argued were influenced by the particular character of the sub-regions. For example, he indicated that North East Lancashire, with its predominance in textiles, was quite distinctive from the Wigan district with its traditional reliance on coal, or St. Helens and Manchester with their respective and various industrial and commercial interests. Wellisz’s findings, although hardly conclusively, were of some significance in the more general debate over strike propensity in the industry. In another respect, while Wellisz failed to elaborate on the import of his findings, he argued that intra-coalfield diversity was an important factor in determining industrial outcomes through local economic specialisation; the distinctive culture of individual collieries and what he referred to as the “differences in the character of the communities”. Clearly, while Wellisz’s study was incomplete it did, in the Lancashire case, demonstrate a high degree of intra-coalfield diversity in a coalfield which commentators have tended to perceive as largely homogenous. The lesson to take from this work is that any study of industrial change in the post-war Lancashire coalfield has to recognise the importance of these variations.⁵³

1.5 CONCLUSION

It is clear from this review that while commentators have to some degree engaged with the question of post-war industrial change in coal it has remained one of the most neglected areas in what has been one of Britain’s most scrutinised industries. This thesis seeks to

redress that deficiency. Moreover, given that within the enormous quantity of work devoted to the coal industry, in which the treatment of organised labour has made up a large proportion, it seems remarkable that the reaction of organised labour to the unprecedented modernisation and rationalisation of the post-war industry has not attracted more scholarly attention. The position adopted by the NUM and how it responded to industrial change in coal is thus a *terra incognita* which this thesis seeks to explore.

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³ Ashworth, W, The History of the British Coal Industry, Vol 5 1946-1982: The Nationalised Industry, 1986, p.649. Kirby, M.W., 'Verdict on Coal 1946-1982', pp.69-72.

⁴ Kirby, M.W., 'Verdict on Coal 1946-1982', p.71.

⁵ Howell, D, 'Reading Alastair Reid': A Future for Labour History' in Social Class and Marxism: Defences and Challenges, 1996, N.Kirk (ed), Scolar Press, Aldershot. It is acknowledged that Ashworth was somewhat hamstrung because, as the author conceded, he was not in the business of offering criticism of the Board as the study was, in part, intended for consumption by the Coal Board and its employees.

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⁹ Berkovitch, I, Coal on the Switchback, 1977, pp.127-130, 131-153, 165-167.

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- ²⁴ Allen, V, The Militancy of British Miners, 1981, p.41.
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CHAPTER TWO

THE BRITISH COAL INDUSTRY 1945-1972: 'CHALLENGES'

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores political attitudes to the 'revolution' in energy supply and consumption in post-war Britain when the coal industry found itself increasingly marginalised. This process originated during the immediate aftermath of the Second World War when government was confronted with the inability of coal to meet fuel demands. It was expected that high demand for coal would persist indefinitely.¹ These were sentiments echoed *inter alia* in the influential Ridley Report published in 1952.² From the late 1950s the situation changed dramatically with a collapse in demand for coal mainly as a result of increasing competition from oil.³ Prior to the collapse in coal consumption government efforts were directed at maintaining adequate coal supplies and fuel efficiency. Government was also prominent in developing alternative sources of energy through the expansion of nuclear power and the oil consumption, such were the anxieties over coal shortages. As this chapter will demonstrate, government economic and political priorities saw intervention increase in favour of alternative fuels throughout the 1950s and 1960s, thus exacerbating coal's difficulties.⁴

The late 1950s witnessed a complete reversal in the fortunes of coal. Government concerns began to focus on the assistance it could offer to the coal industry. However, it is argued in this chapter that government assistance consistently obviated long-term support. Instead, it concentrated on short-term assistance prompted only by the need to meet economic and political expedients or immediate objectives with particular reference to the important market for power coal. Government policy favoured the alternative fuels because they accorded with wider economic and political priorities. Nuclear power offered an attractive long-term solution to energy requirements, a clean, modern and efficient image and the edge it gave to scientific advance in a post-war Britain while the expansion of oil offered a modern and relatively clean fuel as well as a cheap and plentiful alternative to coal. By

contrast both Conservative and Labour governments increasingly sought to relegate coal during the 1950s and 1960s. For Labour, demands for a national fuel policy emerged from within organised labour, particularly from the NUM, following the collapse in coal consumption.

For the NUM, a national fuel policy with coal as the dominant fuel became the touchstone of a government's commitment to the industry. However, in government, Labour confirmed coal's relegation in fuel policy through its endorsement of alternative fuels, particularly oil, as part of its economic modernisation and planning agenda. Labour's strategy on coal became one of 'managing' its decline and maintaining a policy of short-term assistance. Finally, this chapter will show that the 'challenges' facing coal highlighted key relationships which were important in determining outcomes for the industry. These included the relationship between the Labour Party and NUM and between the NCB and NUM.

2.2. NUCLEAR ENERGY

The civil nuclear energy programme emerged from Britain's military involvement with nuclear weapons during the post-war period. The growth of nuclear energy was maintained through government interest in the weapons spin-offs which would accrue.⁵ In addition, interest was sustained by a belief that the rapid growth in electricity demand could not be met by coal. The decision to proceed with the first generation Magnox power stations, following publication of the 1955 White Paper on Nuclear Power, confirmed it as the long-term solution to energy needs.⁶ Government interest was maintained by close attention to the claim of the scientific community that nuclear energy was the power source of the future. Government shared a vision of modernity in which nuclear energy was seen as the solution to immediate and future energy needs as the cutting edge of technological advance underpinning post-war modernisation.

Nevertheless, concerns were expressed at the beginning of nuclear energy development over capital costs and competition from a buoyant and expanding oil market in power generation. This put the scale of the civil programme in doubt.⁷ However, Conservative

governments persisted in the belief that the programme was worth pursuing. This conviction remained undiminished despite Labour's attacks over the cost and delays to the programme. Labour's attempts to make political capital obscured the high degree of political support enjoyed by the nuclear programme across the political spectrum. Labour, in particular, signalled its continuing support by focusing on the value of nuclear energy in garnering a pool of highly talented scientists to boost the 'scientific revolution' which Labour believed was central to the modernisation of Britain.⁸

This political support fostered a resurgence of interest in nuclear power during the early 1960s as technological advance brought the prospect of a second generation of nuclear reactors - the Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactors (AGRs) - which offered reduced operating costs in electricity generation.⁹ Fred Lee, later Minister of Power in the 1964 Labour Government, described the AGRs as the "jackpot" for power generation.¹⁰ While there was a great deal of enthusiasm expressed about the AGRs, like the Magnox reactors they raised questions about capital cost at the development stage. Sir Christopher Hinton, CEGB chairman, blamed "adverse economic and commercial changes" for bringing the vision of modernity into conflict with economic 'realities'.¹¹ However, sentiment toward the AGRs became more favourable as cost concerns subsided. Construction costs compared well with the new generation coal and oil-fired stations, while the projected costs of the remaining Magnox installations were reassessed downwards.¹² Moreover, personnel changes within the CEGB had produced a new cohort of managers who, as Williams notes, were "nearly all bright boys with a nuclear background and training, very close to the Authority (UKAEA) in their thinking".¹³ The CEGB were influential in promoting nuclear power but it was government which continued to share the compelling vision of 'men in white coats' pioneering Britain's modernisation through a new, clean and efficient form of power generation in contrast to coal.¹⁴

The dying embers of the Conservative administration produced the second White Paper on Nuclear Power in 1964. This was a much more cautious document than the 1955 White Paper but only in terms of acknowledging the costs of the AGR and reserving judgement on whether to proceed with the AGR or the American designed water-moderated reactor. The AGR enjoyed lower operating costs but higher capital costs than the American design.¹⁵ Furthermore, there was scepticism about whether the AGR could maintain its cost

advantages against the new generation of coal-fired stations.¹⁶ However, despite these continuing misgivings, a view prevailed that the momentum behind the AGR was less about producing cheap electricity than about pushing nuclear research and development to its limits. The objective was advancing British economic modernisation by bringing benefits to other sectors of the economy and giving Britain a technological lead at a time when her economic, military and political leadership was waning.¹⁷

This was the major factor in maintaining interest in nuclear energy by the incoming Labour Government in 1964. It was instrumental in Labour's endorsement of the AGR. The second generation British reactors were symbols of the dynamic modern technologically based economy which Labour envisioned. Accordingly, the expected generating capacity of the AGRs was increased from 5 to 8,000 MW by Lee and Frank Cousins, the Minister of Technology. Political enthusiasm for the nuclear programme overcame continuing unease over projected capital costs and worries over the ability of the new technology to 'deliver'; encapsulated in Labour's second White Paper on Fuel Policy in 1967.¹⁸

The keynote Selsdon conference on fuel policy in May 1967 confirmed acceptance of the AGR. Clearly the AGR was an important element in Labour's long-term policy despite its acknowledgement of oil and natural gas as the leading fuels of the future.¹⁹ Labour was once again prompted to disregard misgivings over nuclear energy. As Lord Robens, the NCB chairman, caustically remarked, the Government "were not wise enough to take their own advice".²⁰ The Selsdon conference revealed powerful economic and political reasons for the retention of nuclear energy within Labour's 'multi-fuel' economy unrelated to questions of electricity generation. The need to produce a scientific and technological increment was a prime consideration. In addition, there was both the potential for a valuable export trade and the prospect of producing plutonium for use in fast breeder reactors which both the UKAEA and Government wanted to see as the next stage of the nuclear programme - all of which accorded with Labour's scientific and technological vision.²¹

In the space of ten years the proportion of nuclear generated electricity had risen to fourteen per cent by 1967, making significant inroads into coal's remaining major market in power generation.²² It was estimated that by 1970 nuclear power would have displaced

14 million tons of coal at the power stations resulting in the loss of 28,000 mining jobs.²³ However, although the threat posed by nuclear power during the 1960s was potent, it remained a distant though growing menace. As a delegate at the 1964 NUM annual conference noted “nuclear power is only knocking at the front door of the energy supply house”.... “but it is up and coming”.²⁴

Nuclear power thus remained a continuing threat to coal because of its ability to enthuse its supporters and the political establishment. From its beginnings as the short-term solution to Britain’s energy problems it was believed that it also provided the longer-term answer to future energy needs as a source of cheap and abundant electricity. Later, the AGRs were expected to have a life span until the end of the century to meet the forecast rise in electricity demand. The promise of nuclear energy and the icon of modernity it represented for post-war Britain proved beguiling for the political establishment. The enthusiasm it generated ensured that the civil nuclear programme was sustained in the face of its failure to stand up to scrutiny on grounds of cost and feasibility.²⁵

2.3 OIL AND POWER GENERATION

Oil posed a far more serious threat to coal as a primary source of energy than nuclear power. Oil’s direct competition with coal included its use in transportation, heating and lighting as well as power generation. Unlike the civil nuclear programme, the growth of the oil industry occurred outside the direct remit of government through the expansion of private oil companies, albeit under the auspices of government policy. Similarly, government economic and political priorities were important in influencing the success of oil relative to coal during the post-war period.

The enormous growth in the oil industry was a post-war phenomenon.²⁶ In Britain, political considerations entered into oil’s expansion. There were political concerns from both the ‘left’ and ‘right’ over the level of crude oil imports during the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. For the ‘left’, this meant domination of the oil market by the “stranglehold” of “monopoly capital” in which oil imports were controlled by a small number of international oil companies. Concerns were also expressed by both the

'left' and 'right' over the strain this placed on foreign currency reserves since transactions were settled in dollars, given the desire to "avoid dollar dependency" while oil imports had an adverse effect on Britain's mounting balance of payments difficulties. Finally, there were strategic concerns over the security of supply of imported oil.²⁷

These political concerns did not prevent a massive expansion of oil consumption during the post-war period overseen by the large private oil companies. It was, however, the role played by government which gave a fillip to this growth through the encouragement of home refining and reduction of duty on heavy oil to prevent the drain on foreign reserves and the balance of payments.²⁸ Similarly, threats to security of supply boosted oil expansion through the commercial consequences of oil 'crises' which persuaded oil companies to re-locate installations to Britain from abroad.²⁹ In addition, the Suez crisis in 1956 saw the expansion of oil "beyond normal capacity" to act as a baulk against future interruptions of supply while it encouraged oil companies to seek oil concessions in new regions and increase supertanker size still further.³⁰

Importantly, oil was given a huge boost by coal's inability to meet growing post-war fuel demands.³¹ Government intervention in favour of oil occurred against a background of coal shortages. The oil companies were only too eager to meet the shortfall under the aegis of government encouragement.³² Post-war governments entered into discussions with British Petroleum (BP) to expand home refining as an expression of government "grave concern" over the impact of imported crude oil on foreign reserves and the balance of payments. BP's expansion of home refining proceeded in tandem with a government objective of "displacing dollar oil with sterling" which produced what Bamberg describes as "an apparently happy coincidence of private and commercial objectives and Government policies".³³ Aside from government strategy on oil there were manifold benefits to the oil companies in home refining, notably the economies of scale in refining downstream. This, together with some alacrity in developing an effective marketing and distribution system, facilitated a huge expansion in post-war refining capacity which trebled in just eight years between 1947 and 1955.³⁴

Another factor facilitating expansion was the Middle-Eastern oil bonanza. The region achieved domination of world oil supply in a very short space of time. In just eight years

from 1947 to 1955 Middle-Eastern production nearly quadrupled. Britain received 15 per cent of Middle-Eastern output by 1955. Both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia quickly assumed the role of leading world producers with the UK as a major market. British interests in the Middle-East extended beyond the oil market - although this was considerable. During the 1950s British oil interests dominated the Middle-Eastern trade controlling 34 per cent of the region's output in 1955 with BP's entire output coming from Middle-Eastern wells. Underpinning Britain's formidable commercial presence was its military and political involvement 'east of Suez' including a treaty with Kuwait in which economic relations carried the advantage of operating within the Sterling area.³⁵

There were, accordingly, many powerful reasons why Conservative Governments favoured oil expansion during the 1950s. Furthermore, the Government held a 51 per cent stake in British Petroleum, which in turn controlled 80 per cent of the British oil market, while both BP and Royal Dutch-Shell operated from London headquarters.³⁶ The oil company lobby became influential during the 1950s as it sought to exploit Government anxieties over forecasts of increased demand for fuel set against post-war experience of coal shortages. The oil companies believed that oil was the only viable alternative to coal until nuclear energy could be deployed in power generation. During the mid-1950s the oil lobby maintained by B.P.Ltd-Shell Mex Ltd assiduously cultivated an effective influence through the Ministry of Fuel and Power by articulating the concerns of British industry over coal supply after persuading industrialists of the comparative cost advantages of converting to oil. The lobby, with powerful commercial and industrial interests in tow, carried considerable weight with Conservative Governments whose fuel policy was predicated on three fundamental principles: the need to maintain fuel supply; the need to obtain the lowest cost; and the freedom of consumer choice in fuel. Although coal-to-oil conversions were a matter for private choice the oil lobby was able to influence government against providing further protection for coal or imposing sanctions against oil. Additionally, both central and local government could directly influence choice of fuels for public buildings and installations since 'fuel efficiency' was a major pre-occupation of government during the 1950s. Coal-to-oil conversion was especially cost effective in commercial and public buildings.³⁷

Coal had the consolation that despite the loss of traditional customers to oil it still retained the lion's share of the power generation market which by the 1950s was its largest customer. Satisfaction was short-lived because the big prize for oil companies was displacing coal at the power stations. During discussions in 1954 between the Ministry of Fuel and Power, B.P Ltd-Shell Mex Ltd and the BEA it was evident that the BEA was eager to proceed with oil-fuelling. This was based on the cost advantages of heavy oil and the reliability of supply to power stations near large oil refineries whose development was expanding apace.³⁸ These opportunities, plus technological advances in oil-fired power generation, allowed the BEA to proceed with a programme of oil-fired power station construction with the intention of burning both coal and oil, with oil having primacy of fuelling. This marked the start of a policy of dual-fuelling.³⁹ At this stage, the Government's position was one of oil supplementing coal in power generation rather than displacing it.⁴⁰

Throughout the 1950s there was a gathering momentum in favour of oil. By 1959, while reservations remained over oil dependency, the sheer growth in the size of the British oil economy decisively tipped the balance in favour of oil. The Government described oil as "essential to the national economy" because of Britain's key role in the international oil trade; the reciprocal trade in oil through re-export of refined products from expansion of home refining and the reciprocal trade developing in exports to oil producing countries particularly in the Middle-East where the Government wished to retain an interest.⁴¹ Moreover, oil expansion was linked to improvements in living standards through the growth of private car ownership and road transport. Oil, like nuclear power, fulfilled a vision of modernity as a new and efficient fuel. There were further considerations in the fiscal contribution of oil and the growth of the petro-chemical industry. By the late 1950s there were clear economic and political advantages for government to support continued expansion of the oil economy.⁴² In a very short space of time Britain had become inexorably tied to the international oil trade. Above all, oil was able to sustain a ready supply of cheap fuel.⁴³ The scale of this dependency created a major challenge for coal.

Coal's eclipse by oil was reflected in the power trade. From tentative beginnings in 1954, power generation from oil grew throughout the 1950s, although in absolute terms coal continued to enjoy an overwhelming domination of the sector. The collapse in coal

consumption from the late 1950s was a huge blow to the coal industry. The Conservative Government came under pressure to intervene to provide help for coal by modifying the relative supply position in favour of coal against oil. Initially, the Government stuck to its guiding policy on fuel: "to leave to the consumer the choice between competing fuels".⁴⁴ The Government's ideological commitment to free choice in fuel at the best price meant that under pressure to act in favour of coal it only relented to the extent of offering short-term amelioration by placing an embargo on coal imports; limiting the small amount of Soviet oil imports; restricting open cast mining and imposing additional tax on heavy oil. These measures of relief were only undertaken in order to soften the blow of a massive colliery closure programme and only involved coal consumption at the margins.⁴⁵

Pressures on government also provided an opportunity to influence the market in favour of coal relative to oil in power generation through the flexibility created by dual-fuelling. Government intervention resulted in a number of oil-fired power projects being cut back, coal-to-oil conversions being deferred and an alteration in the ratio of coal and oil being used in the power stations.⁴⁶ Wil Paynter, the NUM General Secretary, accused the Government of taking these measures as a political expedient to shift policy in favour of coal during the run-up to the 1959 general election.⁴⁷ These peripheral measures in favour of coal allowed the government to influence outcomes for fuel without risking collateral political damage by leaving itself open to accusations that it had given the "wrong signals" against oil interests which "might prejudice interests at home and abroad". Similarly, it helped deflect pressure on the Government from an increasingly pro-oil CEGB and assuaged residual anxieties over oil dependency.⁴⁸

As a measure of the political importance this issue assumed, decisions on dual-fuelling went as far as the Prime Minister and Minister of Power. The NCB took full advantage of political interest at the highest level to secure a deceleration in the coal-to-oil power station conversion programme and an increase in the ratio of coal-to-oil consumption at the power stations. Although these measures did not greatly affect the amount of coal going into power generation or avert the fall in coal consumption, they did signal government willingness to intervene to stabilise the situation for coal in power.⁴⁹ Following the collapse in consumption during the late 1950s, the early 1960s saw some stabilisation, particularly in the power sector, assisted by a few severe winters. Although overall coal

consumption had fallen between 1956 and 1959, power coal consumption increased relative to consumption by industrial consumers between 1959 and 1963. After 1964, as coal consumption underwent further dramatic decline, its dependency on the power sector continued to increase to nearly 50 per cent of coal output by the early 1970s.⁵⁰

Despite these welcome developments for coal, government intervention in favour of coal in power was at best short-term and *ad hoc*. The early 1960s were characterised by the 'special preferences' for coal in power generation. According to Lord Robens, it was the "NCB's political and commercial campaigning" for the power market which had stopped the rot. The NCB scored further successes. For example, Richard Wood, the Minister of Power, agreed to the development of two large new generation coal-fired power stations.⁵¹ Undoubtedly the NCB was able to bring influence to bear where it mattered. But, it was more a case of the Conservative Government responding to short-term exigencies which favourably influenced coal's relative position than any desire to move decisively in favour of coal. For instance, the new generation of coal-fired stations attaining generating capacities of up to 2,000 MW were proving attractive in contrast to the floundering nuclear programme and delays in installing oil-fired capacity. The new coal-fired stations were attractive in as much as they had the potential to exploit low cost poor quality coal from the expanding coalfields of the East Midlands and Yorkshire.⁵² These developments were also linked to continuing concerns over oil dependency.

Another consideration in favour of short-term help for coal came with the modernisation and rationalisation programme in the coal industry which confronted the Government with colliery closures and loss of mining jobs during the early 1960s. With memories of the inter-war period still fresh in the political psyche the prospect of devastated industrial areas sensitized the political establishment bearing in mind that it was coalfields such as South Wales, Scotland, North East England and West Cumberland which were experiencing large-scale and rapid contraction. Accordingly, policy discussions involved the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, who had represented a North-East constituency between the wars and was said to have been 'moved' by what he had witnessed.⁵³ Policy toward coal was thus later described as the desire to "avoid a complete loss of confidence in the industry" and prevent a "higher rate of displacement of miners than would have been politically acceptable".⁵⁴

While the Government operated under the diktats of political expediency, an obstacle arose against even limited intervention in favour of coal. This came from the CEGB.⁵⁵ The 'special preference' was problematic because it depended on voluntary acceptance by the CEGB operating under managerial prerogatives reflecting an increasing preference for oil. This led to an uneasy relationship with the NCB during the early 1960s. Emboldened by the 'special preference' the NCB attempted to provide the coal industry with a greater degree of stability by negotiating fixed long-term supply contracts with the CEGB for the power stations. The CEGB resisted because it was wedded to a future in nuclear and oil power generation. The Government compounded the coal industry's frustrations because it supported the CEGB.⁵⁶ Two Conservative Ministers of Power, Wood and Errol, were keen to help coal for short-term economic and political reasons but refused to provide the long-term assistance which guaranteed contracts with the CEGB would have secured. Moreover, Labour governments of the late 1960s continued to resist this guarantee for coal because the rapidly changing energy market demanded flexibility on fuel. A further indication that sympathies were against coal was an objection by both Conservative and Labour Governments to guarantee the levels of power coal demanded by the NCB. In fact, the Labour Government believed this was too high and reduced it because of the need to "sustain UK refinery expansion at a desirable level" given that UK refining capacity was expected to nearly double between 1962 and the 1970s.⁵⁷

While both Conservative and Labour Governments provided short-term assistance to coal through the 'special preference', the NCB suffered another damaging blow because the 'special preference' was a flimsy device dependent on the fragile and lukewarm relationship between the CEGB and NCB. Agreements on coal-fuelling collapsed completely in 1964. The CEGB only burned coal because the NCB had agreed to rebate coal prices. As a result of delays in commissioning oil-fired capacity the CEGB agreed to take more coal, but, only at a higher level of rebate. This was rejected by the NCB resulting in a disagreement which hastened the demise of the short-term agreement scheme until its resurrection under Labour.⁵⁸

Short-term assistance for coal was certainly undermined by the CEGB's reluctance to burn coal but it was government which allowed the CEGB autonomy on this matter unless it felt

constrained to intervene because of political opportunism. CEGB antipathy toward coal was based on the higher capital costs of coal-fired power stations and the cost efficiency of oil-fuelling.⁵⁹ By the early 1960s oil fuelling was still marginal. In 1964 power stations burned 88 per cent coal or coke against only 11 per cent oil.⁶⁰ However, it was projections for longer-term fuelling by the CEGB which did most to damage coal. While the CEGB obtained coal at much lower cost than oil, particularly from the low-cost coalfields of the East Midlands and Yorkshire, oil competed extremely well against coal in terms of burning efficiency. This factor was potentially disastrous for coal in the long-term.⁶¹ During the early 1960s only coal-fired power stations of over 500 MW were able to compete with the modern oil or dual-fired stations.⁶²

The perceived saviour for coal were the new generation coal-fired power stations with capacities of 2,000 MW, although they faced major obstacles. Similarly, there were other cogent reasons why the CEGB maintained implacable opposition to coal-fuelling generally. The new coal-fired stations had to be big to compete. The project at Drax in Yorkshire was the largest coal-fired station in Europe, indeed it was so big, at 3,000 MW, it had to be scaled down for technical reasons to accommodate two stations of 2,000 MW each.⁶³ These developments incurred inordinate demands. They were costly and complex to build while there were only a limited number of sites available to accommodate them. To maximise their potential they had, with a few notable exceptions, to be built on or adjacent to the low-cost coalfields of the East Midlands and Yorkshire. They placed severe demands on available land and access to road and rail networks while they required huge amounts of water for cooling which restricted location to major rivers and posed a serious 'disamenity' to local residents.⁶⁴ Even coal-fired stations of 250 MW presented formidable problems let alone building up to 2,000 MW.⁶⁵ In its desperation to secure the future for coal in power generation the NCB put a great deal of misplaced faith in these projects. These large blots on the landscape stand as monuments to coal's last desperate throw of the dice in the 'power game'; one which it was destined to lose.

While the promise held by the coal-fired power stations was tarnished the CEGB had already turned against coal-fuelling. As Lord Robens noted: "There was no scrap of evidence at any time that the CEGB wished to remain with coal".⁶⁶ While the larger coal-fired stations held some advantage because of their ability to compete with oil and nuclear

power at higher generating capacities, the existing generating system was awash with older coal-fired power stations of much lower capacity which were costly to operate and maintain. They were unable to compete against the new much more efficient oil-fired power stations being built or projected. Furthermore, the Ministry of Power and the CEGB encouraged more intense use of the newer oil-fired stations than the coal-fired stations. It was only increasing demand which kept the older stations in commission until more modern stations could be built. Building more low capacity coal-fired stations was also out of the question on economic and technical grounds.⁶⁷ Added to which, the CEGB was looking for more efficient ways of managing demand which the new oil and dual-fired power stations offered.⁶⁸ The CEGB wanted to begin closing the older low capacity coal-fired stations at the earliest opportunity. The future was in oil and nuclear generation. This was bad news for a coal industry tied to the poisoned chalice of new large coal-fired power stations and an uncertain future for power coal contracts right across Britain.

The hopes of coal during the mid-1960s were pinned on a change of government. The return of Labour in 1964 brought the much awaited Fuel White Paper in 1965. This was a gross disappointment because it did not bring the desired long-term relief for coal. Instead, it produced only an enhancement of existing short-term measures for coal in power generation. This was not prompted by any shift in government policy toward coal but in order to maintain power supplies because of continuing delays in installing oil-fired capacity. Again, the NCB was able to exploit a temporary opportunity to obtain more favourable terms from the CEGB for power coal. These were hardly of any long-term significance.⁶⁹ Richard Marsh's term as Minister of Power between 1966 and 1968 saw Labour move decisively against coal in favour of oil. The 'special preference' for coal at power stations was continued but subject to annual review. More ominously for coal, Labour produced a more explicit commitment to oil generation, asserting that "the case for oil-fired power stations might be overwhelming" because of cost and siting advantages. There was only a rather vague Government declaration to assist coal in power contracts because of the "heavy contraction of coal".⁷⁰

Indeed, it was only the intervention of political expedients for Labour, as concerns mounted over the contraction of coal, which prompted the passing of the 1967 Coal Industry Act. This, *inter alia*, formalised coal's 'special preference' in the power sector in

which the Government agreed to subsidise the CEGB to burn coal instead of oil.⁷¹ However, these were short-term measures brought about by mounting political pressure resulting from rising tensions with the NUM over the impact of the colliery closure programme.⁷² Furthermore, these moves coincided with renewed concerns over security of oil supplies as a result of war in the Middle-East together with economic and political difficulties faced by Labour during 1967.⁷³

In any event Labour acknowledged that the oil economy was central to energy considerations. The 1965 Fuel White Paper noted that "it is the national interest to accept a rapid growth in the use of oil". The fact that by 1964 the UK economy was oil dependent to the tune of one-third of primary fuel could scarcely be ignored.⁷⁴ The NUM recognised this as a fact of political life. Paynter warned mineworkers that whoever was in power in Whitehall "oil competition will not be relaxed in the near future"....in...."a climate of free competition".⁷⁵ Paynter was right. Oil dominated energy policy despite Labour's publicly stated commitment that coal would continue to supply the 'base-load' of energy needs.⁷⁶ Two further developments convinced Labour of the centrality of oil. One was the knowledge that for the foreseeable future global oil supplies were plentiful.⁷⁷ Second, oil was becoming cheaper.

A glut of oil on the markets during the late 1950s and early 1960s saw prices plummet to the extent that the oil companies were accused of 'dumping' in an attempt to expand market share. In addition, changes in the organisation of distribution and production saw the growth of the 'independents' in the oil market to break the domination of the major international oil companies. By the mid-1960s there were over 40 oil companies operating in Britain, Europe and the USA.⁷⁸ More competition helped force prices down still further while it tempered accusations of collusion with 'monopoly capital' by Labour as it sought to defend its acceptance of the oil economy.⁷⁹

For the remainder of the 1960s the policy of offering short-term alleviation to coal in the power sector continued together with CEGB resistance to coal-fuelling. There were indications of an even less favourable climate for coal during the late 1960s although one positive development was a Government decision to give the NCB some veto over CEGB plans for power station conversion to oil or dual-fuelling.⁸⁰ The NCB was for the first time

able to bring some influence to bear in determining the future size of the market for power coal. However, any gains for coal were outweighed by Labour's concession to CEEGB demands to proceed rapidly with oil and nuclear generation and de-commission coal-fired stations.⁸¹ That the thrust of policy was operating in favour of oil and nuclear energy became apparent during the late 1960s. For example, the delay in reaching a decision on the second phase of the Drax project confirmed suspicions of a more negative turn against coal in power generation by the Government who argued that it was responding to pressure from the CEEGB by prioritising nuclear power in future projects.⁸²

It was only toward the end of the decade that Labour under its last Minister of Power, Harold Lever, relented slightly on coal. The NUM suggested that it was Lever's preparedness to prevail in favour of coal which tilted opinion back toward coal.⁸³ Robens's fondness for Lever tends to support this view because Robens had an uneasy and often fractious relationship with other Labour Ministers of Power: Lee, Marsh, Gunter and Mason. Another possible explanation was increasing disagreement within Government over fuel and coal contraction policy given its inertia over power station decisions as pressure mounted from the NUM; as anxieties over security of oil supplies returned - vindicated during the early 1970s with the "oil price shocks" - and a general election neared.⁸⁴ Either way, this was a response both to NUM pressure and in order to meet short-term economic and political objectives rather than signaling any alteration in Government policy through a longer-term commitment to coal.

Despite a momentary shift toward coal at the end of the 1960s, events tended to pull the Government in a different direction. Although it re-affirmed its commitment to continue the ban on coal imports and maintain duty on heavy oil, the end of the decade saw a reduction in the level of support under the 'special preference'.⁸⁵ This was linked to anxieties caused by an unofficial strike in the industry in 1969. The dispute occurred at an opportune time for the CEEGB to press the Government - worried over interruptions to coal supplies - for an increase in the speed of the power station conversion programme. The strike raised the spectre of coal shortages while increased militancy within the NUM raised anxieties still further. Consequently, Labour - in its last year in office - and the subsequent Conservative administration operated under the threat and 'reality' of large-scale industrial action in coal. As a result, government altered dual-fuelling and conversion in favour of oil

as coal contracts for power became conditional on the continuance of supplies uninterrupted by the threat of industrial action. One result was an increasing gulf between the NCB and NUM over oil conversion in power generation.⁸⁶

A common approach between the NCB and NUM had helped secure some modicum of support for the industry to retain coal at the power stations. From the late 1960s the NUM argued against NCB willingness to enter into dual-fuelling contracts as a way of keeping coal in the power market. The NUM believed this amounted to appeasement under which coal contracts were being given away jeopardizing a key sector of business, and with it, the whole future of the industry. This schism allowed government and the CEGB to exploit divisions in favour of alternative fuels in power generation.⁸⁷

By the early 1960s oil was master. In the space of less than twenty years it had become Britain's chief primary energy source. The extent of the incursions oil had made into the market for coal was recognised by the NUM. Paynter noted that from 1957 they were "in a completely new situation where the market conditions were completely reversed".⁸⁸ The expansion of oil remained the greatest threat to coal during the post-war period. On the one hand, growth was the inevitable consequence of private commercial expansion. On the other, while governments did not "adopt a coherent and identifiable policy on oil" until the 1970s, they nevertheless played a leading role in facilitating growth.⁸⁹ Both Conservative and Labour governments offered only *ad hoc* or short-term relief to coal. Moreover, government preferences were increasingly turning toward alternative fuels in a diversifying energy market. This reached a crescendo under Labour. The 'fight' for the power sector was indicative of a wider battle to retain a viable coal industry. The desire to maintain coal against its competitors became the basis for the calls for a national fuel policy in which there was a demand for a longer-term solution to the plight of the coal industry.

2.4 TOWARD A NATIONAL FUEL POLICY

The 'fuel' debate which raged during this period led to the emergence of demands for a national fuel policy among organized labour and the Labour Party. For them it represented progress only because Conservative policies represented "fragmented objectives" whereas

a national fuel policy claimed to represent a coherent fuel policy even though its exact framework remained imprecise.⁹⁰ The position was further complicated by sharp differences over the relative merits of competing fuels. The course of the debate raised fundamental questions about the future of coal. For the NUM, there was a desire to see a national fuel policy in which coal played the dominant role. The NUM led a campaign on this basis in which it placed a great deal of faith in the return of a Labour Government to deliver. It was to be disappointed because fuel considerations had changed so much by the time Labour returned to office. In office Labour was pledged to a 'multi-fuel' economy in which coal competed with alternative fuels. This was a cataclysmic development for the NUM.

A national fuel policy first came to prominence in 1933 when the MFGB proposed the idea, arguing that oil interests would become increasingly influential at the expense of coal. The MFGB saw the emergence of "monopoly capital" in which oil interests threatened the future of coal. The response, according to MFGB, should be "defence of coal and miners' interests".⁹¹ With a more powerful threat to coal emerging during the 1950s, this was a theme to which the political left returned. The late 1950s saw both the Labour Party and trade union movement formulating a national fuel policy.⁹² Pivotal to these moves was the NUM's insistence that coal remained central to fuel policy. While there was some willingness to see alternative fuels accommodated within policy, the debate failed to engage with the notion of a fully integrated plan for fuel. At the same time, many on the left saw the future for energy in nuclear power while the concept of the 'peaceful atom' versus the 'profligate atom' divided the left.⁹³ Others believed coal's predicament resulted from the failure of Labour's public sector policy because the nationalised fuel and power industries lacked an overall strategy to deliberate between competing sectors.⁹⁴ There was thus a debate over what form a national fuel policy should take. However, the dominant argument was 'defence' of coal within a national fuel policy with the NUM in the vanguard arguing that coal should remain the paramount fuel. The NUM's campaign bolstered a parallel campaign waged by the NCB to promote coal against the alternative fuels thus producing a high degree of mutual interest between the two bodies.

The NUM believed that the Conservatives would not produce a fuel policy, let alone one which would prove acceptable to the union. Paynter, NUM General Secretary from 1959, virtually disregarded the Conservative Government because he believed it was unlikely to assist coal since it favoured competitive economic interests in the oil industry.⁹⁵ For the NUM, the only objective was a Labour government committed to a national fuel policy with coal at its heart. In opposition Labour gave succour to the NUM. Harold Wilson promised to defend coal because of the need to prevent the disintegration of pit communities and consequent social hardship; the balance of payments advantages of retaining an indigenous primary fuel and the strategic vulnerability of dependence on oil. However, Wilson was less than unequivocal in his support for coal because, as he noted, while it was a government responsibility not to let coal wither completely, its future role and size would be determined by a changing market for fuel.⁹⁶

In spite of this equivocation the NUM remained committed to the return of a Labour government from whom they expected a national fuel policy with coal dominant. With both the NCB and NUM campaigning for coal, attention turned to attaching specific commitments to an incoming Labour government on fuel. This included growing calls for a government subsidy for coal and re-structuring the industry's finances.⁹⁷ Another aspect involved both the NCB and NUM seeking specific assurances from Labour over the future size of the industry. Size was to be determined by a certain level of output based on the break-even point at which the coal industry would be profitable.⁹⁸ The NUM saw this as the touchstone of Labour's commitment to coal. The underwriting of coal based on 200 million tons output thus became a mantra for the NUM while it confronted Labour with a dilemma when it returned to office in 1964. In opposition this commitment carried with it clear political advantages. To the changed world of 1964 it was a millstone.⁹⁹

Fuel policy became intertwined with Labour's wider commitment to a modernisation agenda. Nuclear energy, oil and later natural gas were perceived as modern efficient fuels which offered more in presentational terms than the old fashioned coal industry. Linked to this was Labour's pledge to economic modernisation and indicative planning in which fuel was just one strand expected to deliver cheap and efficient energy to the rest of the economy. Similarly, economic planning called for the optimal use of resources which meant transfer from 'unproductive' to 'productive' sectors of the economy. Coal was on

the wrong side of this equation. Finally, economic arguments were prominent. The competitiveness of oil, and later natural gas, proved irresistible, not least to a Government experiencing considerable economic difficulties.¹⁰⁰

Shortly after Labour's return to office Fred Lee, the Minister of Power, met the NUM. The union was given an assurance that commitments made in opposition would be honoured. Lee reaffirmed Labour's pledge to produce an integrated national fuel policy in which coal would continue to play the central role in supplying the 'base load' of energy requirements. In the short-term this meant an output level of 200 million tons would be maintained. Lee, however, made one proviso, telling the NUM that the new fuel policy still had to be finalised by the Government. This 'commitment' was the nearest coal ever came to a guarantee on its future size and viability.¹⁰¹ During Labour's first administration questions of coal's future role became conflated with its pressing financial predicament. The Government denied that financial re-structuring of the industry was linked to downgrading its commitment to future size. Equally, it rejected demands for the 'subsidisation' of coal on the grounds that it might be "setting a precedent". While financial re-structuring provided another short-term palliative for coal, the all-important commitment to future size remained elusive.¹⁰²

The NUM tried again in early 1965 to secure a more formal guarantee through demands for a Government statement of its commitment to a coal industry based on 200 million tons. This prompted a bombshell from Lee who admitted that the Government was unable to provide such a guarantee because the scale of oil expansion precluded a Government commitment in a rapidly changing energy market even if this meant breaking pledges made in opposition and upsetting the NUM.¹⁰³

The NUM was shocked by this decision. The union's expressions of "grave concern" underlined its disbelief that this was Labour policy. It believed Labour had reneged on its commitments to the extent that it had put coal in a downward tailspin from which it was unlikely to recover. The state of disbelief can be gauged by the widespread view that Lee had been "got at" by Ministry of Power officials who had an antipathy toward coal. In pressing Lee for a public commitment, the NUM discovered that Labour was considering downgrading coal output to 160-180 million tons.¹⁰⁴ Although the NCB obtained firmer

assurances from Lee, there remained a great deal of evasiveness. Only under pressure to respond to growing accusations of betrayal was Lee forced to make an unconvincing Commons statement in an attempt to sooth matters in which he was only able to offer short-term assistance to the industry.¹⁰⁵

Lee's reticence came as the Government formulated its long-awaited fuel policy. It did not wish to create further hostages to fortune. Accordingly, anxieties over Labour's commitment to coal were confirmed with the 1965 White Paper on Fuel Policy. The document was final proof of the negative signals Lee had been giving out about coal for most of 1965. The White Paper was a huge disappointment to the industry. Policy had emerged with coal still important but with a much-reduced role. To deflate expectations further there was a commitment to capital and financial reconstruction but with an endorsement of the cabinet's decision not to offer a subsidy. However, the big shock was confirmation of coal output at 170-180 million tons by 1970 on the back of further expansion of oil. The size of the industry would be determined by its continued ability to modernise, mechanise, and improve productivity. An undertaking by the Government to ameliorate the social costs of coal contraction offered little consolation because it only served to reinforce the scale of rundown required to meet fuel policy. Similarly, the promise of a "streamlined" coal industry continuing to make a "major contribution to the strength of the national economy" had an ominous ring to it.¹⁰⁶ Thus 1965 marked the point of no return for coal, as Labour moved decisively against coal towards a 'multi-fuel' economy.

The mood of the NUM turned from shock to anger as accusations of treachery were levelled at the Government. Labour was sensitive to these accusations, believing that in the circumstances in which it had found the energy market the White Paper represented a good deal for coal. Moreover, the Government could claim that it had produced a coherent strategy for coal for the first time in which it continued to play a major role, rather than the fragmented chaos under the Tories which would have seen it driven to the margins.¹⁰⁷ Lee, in particular, rounded on his critics inside the industry who saw sinister forces gathering around coal. On a visit to the newly opened Parkside colliery in his Newton constituency in South Lancashire, he attacked those who made "grotesque suggestions that some machiavellian scheme was being plotted to get rid of coal".¹⁰⁸ Similarly, senior

Government ministers tried to defuse the growing row with the NUM by offering assurances over the future of the industry at every opportunity. Ahead of the announcement on fuel policy, George Brown, the Minister of Economic Affairs, promised Lancashire miners “a tremendous future for solid fuel” in supplying the ‘base load’ of Britain’s future energy needs in a modernised and efficient industry.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the new departure on fuel had, as Paynter noted, a “tremendous and dramatic effect upon our (the NUM’s) expectations as far as Government policy was concerned”.....“ it revealed completely new thinking”.¹¹⁰

Assessing the changed circumstances for fuel proved exceedingly difficult for the NUM. Criticism of the Government was tempered during late 1965 and early 1966 by the need to see the return of a Labour government operating with a slender majority. All the same, the NUM leadership’s muted response indicated that it struggled to come to terms with Labour’s new direction on fuel. It was only as the impact on coal contraction became apparent that the full implications of Labour’s fuel policy were recognised. Paynter’s retirement speech in 1968 reflected bitterness at the destruction of the mining industry in his native South Wales. Yet, even at this stage, Paynter and others in the NUM leadership accepted that Labour’s policy arose from having to operate within the ‘realities’ of a free market for fuel in a ‘multi-fuel’ economy.¹¹¹

Paynter’s reaction to the new fuel policy was circumspect bearing in mind he had spent the best part of the previous decade campaigning for a national fuel policy in which coal played the central role. He continued to blame the Tories for a situation Labour had inherited but stopped short of challenging the Government. Instead, he suggested that the Government was acting under the influence of poor advice from civil servants in the Ministry of Power who were directing policy. This view held a great deal of currency within the NUM as it fought to come to terms with the shift of policy. Many did not want to believe this was Labour policy. Furthermore, Paynter retreated on the major issues of ‘subsidisation’ of coal and longer-term assistance for the industry. Significantly, he shrank from criticism of the Government for failing to deliver on the key demand for a guarantee on the future size of the industry. Paynter’s judicious treatment of the Government was supported by a majority of NUM delegates albeit with more reservations, particularly as the scale of contraction in coal became clear. Only a small number of delegates on the left,

on the fringes of the NUM, attacked the Government over its betrayal and mobilised support for a lobby of parliament.¹¹²

With the print barely dry on one fuel white paper and with the debate still raging over what this dramatic shift in policy meant for coal, the 1966 Labour Government embarked on another review of fuel policy. This further increased tensions between the Government and the NUM. The discovery of North Sea gas promised to once again alter the course of fuel policy and necessitated a re-assessment of the Government's position. By 1967, natural gas had moved to centre-stage in Government fuel policy. The Selsdon Conference in May 1967 concluded that maximisation of natural gas production ought to be the long-term objective of energy policy.¹¹³ While the NCB and the NUM were initially dismissive about the potential of North Sea gas - in order to keep morale up in the industry - Government policy was set to turn another screw against coal coinciding with the appointment of Richard Marsh as Minister of Power.¹¹⁴ While Lee was ambivalent towards coal, Marsh's incumbency marked a turn for the worse as coal contraction produced a more fractious atmosphere, not helped by Marsh's ability to generate discord with leading figures from both the NCB and NUM.¹¹⁵

The 1967 White Paper on Fuel Policy marked the culmination of discussions within Government. Much had been decided at the Selsdon Conference and in a year of consultations prior to the conference. The blueprint for the long-term future of fuel policy and coal contraction had been decided. Further contraction was based on two principal arguments: the case for cheaper fuel and the need to support economic modernisation. The only issues for debate concerned the speed at which coal was to contract in order to allow for economic and social amelioration and what form short-term assistance for coal should take. One outcome was a continuation of short-term assistance for coal in power generation. Coal's future was determined, right down to the anticipated size of the industry at 150 million tons by 1970, and 100 million tons by 1980.¹¹⁶ Even Government concerns over the economic and social implications of further contraction in declining coalfields were contingent "on lines which would not disrupt the pattern of development of the energy sector". The only source of anxiety for Labour was the potential for rising tension with the NUM in which "outright opposition" might gain momentum.¹¹⁷

Coal's future was now just a matter of the cautious and humane management of contraction. There was much speculation over further contraction during discussion of the second White Paper on Fuel Policy. This underlined growing NUM distrust of Government motives.¹¹⁸ By the time the 1967 White Paper was published it was already evident to the NUM what it meant for coal. Although the paper envisaged that coal would continue to supply the 'base load' of primary fuel requirements it was clear it was being further marginalised. The output figure for 1970 of 152 million tons was not far above the 140 million tons of fevered speculation following Selsdon. The White Paper used the language of contraction to describe the future of coal which was only expected to supply just under 50 per cent of primary energy needs by 1970, with oil encroaching as the main provider. Coal was dealt with in terms of how the Government would manage coal's decline under what was euphemistically described as 'Policy for Transition'.¹¹⁹

Although there was a great deal of anger within the NUM throughout 1967 and 1968 over coal having been jettisoned in this way, the union concentrated its efforts on tackling the Government over the outcomes of policy rather than its priorities. However, more dissonant voices emerged within the NUM demanding a more strident response than that adopted by the NUM leadership. For many on the left within the NUM the developments of 1967-68 marked a fundamental break in the bonds which tied the union to Labour, particularly as the impact of further contraction was being felt. Kane, from Yorkshire, argued for direct action against the Government, with only the Scottish delegates in support. Arguments against taking industrial action were based on a belief that this would be a fruitless gesture which would only inflict further damage on the industry. The calls from Kane presaged increased militancy led by the Yorkshire coalfield. Significantly, it was Yorkshire delegates who articulated an aggressive critique of the NUM leadership's 'collaboration' with Government, prefacing a more potent challenge to the NUM leadership with Yorkshire in the vanguard. These were important developments ahead of unofficial industrial action in the Yorkshire coalfield in 1969 and again in 1970. For the majority within the NUM there was a mood of resigned acceptance of Government priorities on fuel and further coal contraction with the only 'challenge' coming over the consequences of policy shift.¹²⁰ For the Government a long-term strategy to ensure the future viability of the coal industry was never an option despite publicly stated declarations

to the contrary. Labour had decided from its earliest days in office that coal would cease to occupy the dominant role in energy in favour of a 'multi-fuel' economy.¹²¹

2.5 CONCLUSION

As evidenced by this chapter, events during the immediate aftermath of the Second World War shaped subsequent developments. Challenges to coal's domination originated in experience of post-war coal shortages in which it was felt coal would be unable to meet the demands placed upon it. Nuclear power was initially seen as the answer. The development of nuclear energy had a momentum of its own propelled by political enthusiasm for modernity and only impeded by questions of cost and feasibility. The massive expansion of the oil economy was largely initiated and pursued by large private oil companies. The scale and rapidity of its growth and importance to the economy meant that it could not be ignored. However, in the case of both nuclear energy and oil, government economic and political priorities intervened to support their development. As this chapter has shown, post-war governments were involved in affecting the direction of the energy sector in favour of alternative fuels in a reflection of their economic and political interests. Intervention in support of coal was never a long-term consideration. It was only undertaken in pursuit of momentary economic and political expedients and short-term objectives. In the case of Labour this included pressure from the NUM.¹²²

It might be argued, as this chapter has suggested, that government attitudes and decisions were less important than those of the CEGB or civil service. The CEGB were certainly influential in determining outcomes for coal in a negative way. The battle for the power sector was the essence of the more general battle for the coal industry.¹²³ The CEGB was mindful of the commercial opportunities and pitfalls in the conversion debate. But, what the CEGB thought or did was less important than a government perspective which reflected the CEGB's increasing preference for oil and nuclear power. Government, like the CEGB, was convinced of the need to move to other fuels.

Another commonly expressed view is that post-war fuel policy was largely determined by

civil servants and technocrats or, in the case of nuclear energy, by the scientific community. Certainly, as Bromley notes; Richard Crossman has been notable for advancing a view which argued that the determination of fuel policy under Labour was the work of the civil service.¹²⁴ This was a view enthusiastically advanced by the NUM leadership. It is true that energy issues were not at the forefront of policy considerations at Cabinet level while officials within the Ministry of Power were influential in advising government on fuel policy through the specialist or technical knowledge they possessed.¹²⁵ However, government ministers were involved to a greater degree in initiating, influencing and executing the thrust of fuel policy. Under Labour, this was undertaken because fuel played such a vital part in wider government economic modernisation and planning policy considerations. Moreover, the triumvirate of Brown, Wilson and Lee, and later Marsh at Power, were closely involved in Labour's new direction on fuel and coal contraction in furtherance of these objectives.

This chapter has indicated that the national fuel policy was important in marginalising coal. It was also instrumental in testing the relationship between Labour and the NUM. As a much-vaunted Labour policy objective it was eagerly anticipated by the NUM. It was a misplaced judgment based on a continuing belief in the centrality of coal carried forward from post-war conditions. By the time Labour returned to office in 1964 the energy market had altered considerably. Labour accepted a free market for fuel and accordingly responded to the situation as they found it. In this sense, it might be argued that Labour obtained the best possible deal for coal within fuel policy. However, it was its attitude toward coal within its wider agenda for economic modernisation and planning which affected the coal industry in a negative way. In addition, Labour felt able to 'manage' criticism of its fuel policy because of strong and traditional links with the NUM. The NUM leadership's political support for Labour ensured that criticism of the Government was measured. There was never any question of the NUM leadership challenging the Government over its priorities on fuel, only on the outcomes. The Labour Governments only anxiety was that tensions within the NUM over fuel policy and further coal contraction might result in loss of control by the leadership to the left in specific coalfields.

Another important relationship highlighted in this chapter was that between the NCB and NUM. An already close relationship was cemented as the 'challenges' to coal intensified.

These brought a common response from both organisations expressed through attempts to compete with alternative fuels. Enabling coal to compete was an important aspect of the post-war modernisation and rationalisation of the industry which aimed to improve performance and reduce excess capacity. The 'challenges' to coal thus had an important parallel in the 'transformation' of the industry between 1945 and 1972. The 'transformation' of coal during the post-war period is the subject of the following chapter. This should be seen as having a fundamental concurrence with developments detailed here.

¹ 'Questions of Fuel Policy', Planning, Political and Economic Planning Working Group, Vol XXXI, No 487, June 1965, pp.187-188.

² Report of the Committee on National Policy for the use of Fuel and Power Resources (The Ridley Report), Ministry of Fuel and Power, September 1952, Command Paper 8647, HMSO. A Fuel Policy for Britain, 1965, Political and Economic Planning Group Publications, pp.14-15. McVey, G.L., 'A Policy for Fuel', Political Quarterly, Vol 35, 1965, p.46.

³ PRO, File COAL 30/82: Statement by NCB to NUM 25 March 1958.

⁴ PRO, File CAB 21/446: Cabinet Registered Files: Coal Industry 1949-1961: Ministry of Fuel and Power to Cabinet Office 23 June 1956, 21 September 1956, Cabinet Office to Prime Minister 19 December 1956, Ministry of Power to Cabinet Office 4 May 1959, Cabinet Office to Ministry of Power 14 May 1959, Cabinet Office to Prime Minister 24 October 1960. A Fuel Policy for Britain, 1965, pp.71, 72, 163: Lurgi process discussed – gassification of coal. Bailey, R, 'The Energy Perspective', Westminster Bank Quarterly, February 1965, p.13. Colliery Guardian 5 February 1959: article 'Underground Gassification'.

⁵ Gowing, M, Independence and Deterrence: Britain and Atomic Energy 1945-1972, Vol I, 1974, Macmillan, *passim*. Dutton, D, British Politics since 1945: The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Consensus, 1991, 1997 Second Edition, Blackwell, Oxford, p.45. Bromley, S 'Energy' in Industrial Policy in Britain, 1996, D.Coates (ed), Macmillan Ltd, Basingstoke, pp.87, 93.

⁶ A Programme of Nuclear Power, February 1955, Command Paper 9389, HMSO.

⁷ Hinton, C, Sir 'Nuclear Power', Three Banks Review, December 1961, No 52, pp.6-10, 11, 17. Hartshorn, J.E., 'New Power for Britain - at What Cost? Fuel Strategy Reconsidered', The Banker,

February 1957, Vol CVII, No 373, pp.103-107. Williams, R, The Nuclear Power Decisions: British Policies, 1953-78, 1980, Croom Helm Ltd, pp.68, 72.

⁸ Hansard Vol 619 House of Commons Debates, Session 1959-60, 7-18 March 1960, Written Answer to Question, 18 March 1960, Roy Mason MP to Minister of Power. Young, M, Labour's Plan for Plenty, 1947, Victor Gollancz Ltd, Left Wing Book Club, WCA Gregory/Socialist Collection, Lancaster University Library, Catalogue No 7 RDea.YHL, pp .89-92: Discussed the role of atomic energy and research in moving forward the 'scientific revolution' and producing economic and social benefits through its part in the 'second industrial revolution' by bringing productivity and standard of living improvements.

⁹ Penney, W, Sir 'Atomic Energy', National and Provincial Bank Review, No 76, Nov 1966, p.7. Penney, W, Sir, 'Nuclear Power Development in the United Kingdom', Lectures to the Japanese Atomic Industries Forum, Tokyo by Sir William Penney, Chairman of the UKAEA, 20 September 1965, Atom (Journal of the UKAEA), No 107, September 1965.

¹⁰ Williams, R, The Nuclear Power Decisions, 1980, p.124.

¹¹ Hinton, C, Sir, 'Nuclear Power', 1961, p.17.

¹² Penney, W, Sir, 'Atomic Energy in the UK', 1966, pp.7, 10. Penney, W, Sir, 'Nuclear power in the United Kingdom', 1965. 'Second Nuclear Programme increased to 8,000 MW', Atom, No 110, Dec 1965: news article.

¹³ Williams, R, The Nuclear Power Decisions, 1980, p.153.

¹⁴ CEGB, Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1963, HMSO.

¹⁵ The Second Nuclear Power Programme, April 1964, Ministry of Power, Command Paper 2335, HMSO. 'Dungeness "B" AGR Nuclear Power Station', Atom, No 107, Sept 1965.

¹⁶ 'The Nuclear Nettle: Why the Government decided to open Britain's new atomic power programme to American bids', Economist, 18 April 1964.

¹⁷ UKAEA, Ninth Annual Report for the period 1 April 1962-31 March 1963, HMSO. 'The Nuclear Nettle', Economist, 18 April 1964.

¹⁸ Fuel Policy, October 1965, Ministry of Power, Command Paper 2798, HMSO. Fuel Policy, November 1967, Ministry of Power, Command Paper 3438, HMSO. 'Dungeness "B" Power Station', Statement by the CEGB, Atom, No 104, June 1965. Extract of Letter from Frank Cousins, Minister of Technology, to Sir William Penney, Chairman UKAEA, Atom, No 104, June 1965. Penney, W, Sir, 'Atomic Energy in the UK', 1966, p.10. 'Dungeness "B" AGR Nuclear Power Station', 1965. 'Second Nuclear Programme increased to 8,000 MW', 1965.

¹⁹ PRO, File POWE 52/119: Ministry of Power: Coal Division, 1967: Conference with Nationalised Industries, Selsdon Park Hotel, 18-20 May 1967 (The Selsdon Conference), Ministry of Power: Electricity Division brief: 'The Importance of Keeping the Second Nuclear Programme Intact' 15 May 1967, Conference on Fuel Policy: Summary of Conclusions 18-20 May 1967.

²⁰ Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972, Cassell and Company Ltd, p.191.

²¹ PRO, File POWE52/119: Ministry of Power: Electricity Division brief: 'The Importance of Keeping the Second Nuclear Programme Intact' 15 May 1967, Conference on Fuel Policy: Summary of Conclusions 18-20 May 1967.

²² Ministry of Power Statistical Digest: 1967, 1968, HMSO, pp.30-31, 143: Table 7: Fuel Consumption, Table 87:Electricity. 'Nuclear Power Development in the United Kingdom', 1965.

²³ Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972,p.186.

²⁴ NUM, Annual Conference Report, 1964: Resolution 33: National Fuel Policy Debate.

²⁵ Penney, W, Sir 'Atomic Energy in the UK', 1966,p.10.

²⁶ Noreng, O, The Oil Industry and Government Strategy in the North Sea, 1980, Croom Helm Ltd, p.37. Simpson, E.S., Coal and the Power Industries in Post-war Britain, 1966, Longman, p.101.

²⁷ Fuel and Power: A Study in Industrial Organisation and Control, June 1945, Prepared for the Fabian Research Group under the chairmanship of GDH Cole, Fabian Publications Ltd and Victor Gollancz Ltd, pp.11-12. PRO, File CAB 129/99/c (59) 180: 1959: Cabinet Memoranda: Policy For Fuel: Memorandum by the Minister of Power: Oil 7 December 1959. Williams, M.E., 'Choices in Oil Refining: The Case of BP 1900-60', Business History, No 3, Vol XXVI, Nov 1984, p.321.

²⁸ British Fuel and Power Industries, October 1947, A Report by Political and Economic Planning, Political and Economic Planning, pp.208-209. PRO, File COAL 31/24: NCB: Chairman's Department 1953 April-1962 February: Fuel Policy: Ministry of Fuel and Power policy, 28 May 1953: Oil. A Fuel Policy for Britain, 1965, p.96.

²⁹ Williams, M.E., 'Choices in Oil Refining', 1984, p.323.

³⁰ 'OEEC Report: Implications and Lessons of the Suez Crisis', Economist, 18 January 1958.

³¹ Robertson, A.J., The Bleak Midwinter 1947, 1987, Manchester University Press, Manchester, *passim*. British Fuel and Power Industries, 1947, pp.207-209. A Fuel Policy for Britain, 1965, p.92.

³² Williams, M.E., 'Choices in Oil Refining', 1984, pp.322-323.

³³ Bamberg, J.H., The History of the British Petroleum Company: Vol 2, The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954, 1994, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.311, 322.

³⁴ Bailey, R, 'The Energy perspective', 1965, p.15. Dixon, D.F., 'The Development of the Solus System of Petrol Distribution in the United Kingdom, 1950-1960', Economica, Vol XXIX No 113, 1962, pp.40-52. Dixon, D.F., 'Petrol Distribution in the United Kingdom, 1900-1950', Business History, Vol VI, No1, 1963, p.19. Williams, M.E., 'Choices in Oil Refining', 1984, p.324.

³⁵ 'Middle-East Oil: Europe's Lifeblood?', The Banker, Nov 1956, pp.688,693,696,700,701.

³⁶ PRO, File POWE 17/81: Ministry of Fuel and Power: Petroleum Division: Substitution of Oil for Solid Fuel: Victor Butler to Sir L. Watkinson 19 January 1954. Marsh, R, Off the Rails: An

Autobiography by Richard Marsh, 1978, Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, pp.103-104. Jones, G, The State and the Emergence of the British Oil Industry, 1981, Macmillan, London and Basingstoke, pp.5,7-8,15,9-31. BP had been a nationalised company in as much as the British government held a controlling interest since the early twentieth century because of military and strategic reasons. To all intents and purposes it functioned in much the same way as any other large international private oil company. However, Government interests and the relations BP maintained with the Ministry of Fuel and Power Petroleum Division ensured that Government always played close attention to BP.

³⁷ PRO, File POWE 17/81: Substitution of Oil for Solid Fuel: Coal Division to Petroleum Division: Note regarding debate in House of Commons, Hansard Col 2453: Ministerial Statement 28 October 1953, Undated letter C. M. Vignoles, chairman Shell-Mex and BP Ltd, to Victor Butler, Petroleum Division Ministry of Fuel and Power, Victor Butler to Sir L. Watkinson 31 December 1953 with reply 1 January 1954, Butler to Watkinson 19 January 1954, 3 September 1954 including reference to Vignoles forthcoming address to the Association of Chambers of Commerce 14 September 1954 regarding potentialities for oil compared with coal as a source of power, Fuel Efficiency Advisory Committee to Rt. Hon Aubry Jones MP, Ministry of Fuel and Power : Advise to Ministers 19 March 1956.

³⁸ PRO, File POWE 17/81: Substitution of Oil for Solid Fuel: Butler to Watkinson 3 September 1954. Simpson, E.S., Coal and the Power Industries in Post-war Britain, 1966, p.78. BEA, Sixth Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1954, HMSO. Bromley, S, 'Energy', 1996, p.88.

³⁹ PRO, File POWE 37/555: Ministry of Power: Review of NCB Organisation: Oil Burning Power Stations: Supply and Consumption of Oil and Coal: Report of the Departmental Working Group on Dual Fuelling 7 August 1959. Simpson, E.S., Coal and the Power Industries in Post-war Britain, 1966, p.78. NUM, Annual Conference Report, 1959: Address by NCB Chairman, Sir James Bowman. Bromley, S, 'Energy', p.88.

⁴⁰ PRO, File POWE 17/81: Coal Division to Petroleum Division: Note regarding House of Commons debate Hansard Col 2453: Ministerial Statement 28 October 1953.

⁴¹ PRO, CAB 129/99/c (59) 180: Cabinet Papers: Memorandum by the Minister of Power: Oil 7 December 1959.

⁴² PRO, CAB 129/99/c (59) 180: 1959: Memorandum by the Minister of Power: Oil 7 December 1959. 'Something for the Chancellor', Petroleum Information Bureau: News letter January 1963. 'Focus on Road Transport: Road Transport in Britain', Petroleum Information Bureau: Newsletter October 1962. 'Oil in the Export Drive', Petroleum Information Bureau: Newsletter November 1962. 'Sixty Years of British Motoring', Petroleum Information Bureau: Newsletter January 1963. 'Petroleum Chemicals in the UK', Petroleum Information Bureau: Newsletter August 1963. 'Britain's Soaring Oil Demand', Petroleum Information Bureau: Newsletter March 1965. Bromley, S, 'Energy', 1996,p.95.

⁴³ Noreng, O, The Oil Industry and Government Strategy in the North Sea, 1980,p.37.

⁴⁴ Report of the Committee on National Policy for the use of Fuel and Power Resources, September 1952. Ministry of Power Statistical Digest 1967, 1968, Table 86: Fuel Use: Electricity. A Fuel Policy for Britain, 1965,p.206: Table 12: The UK Public Electricity Industry, 1950-64. Bromley, S, 'Energy', 1996,p.88: Both the Simon Report (1946) and Ridley Report had emphasised the need for competition between alternative fuels on the grounds of "fuel efficiency". This accorded with the Conservative's ideological preference for free competition in fuel.

⁴⁵ LRO, Preston, Deposit No NC.acc.7950 No 46: NCBNWD Deputy Chairman's Office: 1958-1959 Jan: Closure of Maypole Colliery: Statements of policy and notes of meeting held with the various unions in the division regarding arrangements for closure, NCB Press Office to NCBNWD Deputy Chairman re: NCB Output Plans for 1959: Consultation with unions 3 December 1958, Report of Meeting with NUMNEC at Hobart House, London re: "Prospects for 1959" and pit closures 12 December 1958. PRO, File No POWE 52/119: Brief prior to Selsdon Conference 18-20 May 1967: Ministry of Power Coal Division: Support for Coal. PRO, File POWE 37/480: NCBHQ: Reorganisation and Development Programme: Closure of High Cost Pits: 1959: General: Ministry of Power memorandum: Measures to assist NCB July 1959. Buxton, N.K., The Economic Development of the British Coal Industry: From the Industrial Revolution to the Present Day, 1978, Batsford Academic, p.239. The ban on Soviet oil imports was hardly a significant step during the Cold War while the amounts involved were insubstantial. Likewise, even though coal imports were growing - partly as result of the need to meet post-war shortages - they were still at the margins of overall consumption. Similarly, open cast restrictions were at the margins of coal production.

⁴⁶ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1959: Address by NCB Chairman, Sir James Bowman 9 July 1959.

⁴⁷ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1959: Address by NUM General Secretary, Wil Paynter re: Situation in the Coal Mining Industry.

⁴⁸ PRO, File POWE 37/555: Report of the Departmental Working Group on Dual Fuelling 7 August 1959.

⁴⁹ PRO, File POWE 37/555: Report of the Departmental Working Group on Dual Fuelling 7 August 1959, Ministry of Power to NCB Deputy Chairman 2 December 1959, Ministry of Power: Estimated Annual Fuel Oil Consumption for the years 1960-1970 by the CEGB. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1963: Address by NUM General Secretary, Wil Paynter, re: Situation in the Coal Mining Industry.

⁵⁰ Fuel Policy, October 1965, Command Paper 2798, Ministry of Power, HMSO. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1971: Situation in the Industry debate. Bromley, S, 'Energy Policy', 1996,p.88. A Fuel Policy for Britain, 1965: Appendices. Coal was losing out in its traditional markets in industry and on the railways as a result of 'dieselisation' and to a lesser extent electrification. The Clean Air Act 1956 undermined its market in domestic coal although this sector remained relatively robust for longer than other sectors of the market.

⁵¹ Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972,p.67. The stations were at Cottam in Nottinghamshire on the Trent and Fiddlers Ferry at Widnes on the Mersey.

⁵² PRO, File POWE 52/119: Brief: Ministry of Power: Coal Supplies for Power Stations 13 January 1966.

⁵³ PRO, File POWE 52/4: 1962-1963: Colliery closures: NCB: Notes of minutes of meeting between Minister of Power and Lord Robens in Ministers of Power's room 21 January 1963. PRO, File POWE 37/598: 1961-1963: Distribution of Industry Committee: NCB expectations of pit closures and effects on employment: NCB Industrial Relations Dept: Notes of meeting at Hobart House 8 June 1962 to discuss various manpower questions with officials from Ministry of Power, Board of Trade, Ministry of Labour and Scottish Office, Draft Memorandum for the Distribution of Industry Committee by the Ministry of Power. Daly, L, 'Scotland on the Dole' New Left

Review, Winter 1962,pp.17-23. Horne, A, Macmillan 1894-1956: Vol 1 of the Official Biography, 1988,Macmillan, pp.75-76, 82,106-109.

⁵⁴ PRO, File POWE 52/119: Brief prior to Selsdon Conference 18-20 May 1967: Ministry of Power Coal Division: Support for Coal.

⁵⁵ PRO File POWE 52/119: Brief: Coal Supplies for Power Stations 13 January 1966.

⁵⁶ Report from the Select Committee on the Nationalised Industries: Electricity Supply Industry Vol I: 1963, Report and Proceedings House of Commons 28 May 1963: Part IV: General Transmission and Distribution, HMSO, p.111: While the Government, Ministry of Power and the CEGB were "in favour" of oil burning there was some sensitivity about shifting the relative proportions of fuel too much one way or the other because of what the Ministry of Power saw as its role of "co-ordinating the development of the various fuel industries". There was a consistent attempt to hold forth the ideal of an integrated fuel policy which never materialised under public ownership.

⁵⁷ PRO, File POWE 52/119: Brief: Coal Supplies for Power Stations 13 January 1966. Simpson, E.S., Coal and the Power Industries in Post-war Britain, 1966,pp.25, 119:Table 50:The Expansion of Refining Capacity-United Kingdom 1962-70.

⁵⁸ 'Questions of Fuel Policy', June 1965,p.193. PRO, File POWE 52/119: Brief: Coal Supplies for Power Stations 13 January 1966.

⁵⁹ Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972,p.66.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Power Statistical Digest 1967, 1968,p.142: Table 86: Fuel Use: Electricity. A Fuel Policy for Britain, 1965,p.206: Table 12: The UK Public Electricity Industry, 1950-64.

⁶¹ Simpson, E.S., Coal and the Power Industries in Post-war Britain, 1966,pp.143, 145-147,152-153. Ministry of Power Statistical Digest 1967, 1968, Tables 89-91.

⁶² Ministry of Power Statistical Digest 1967, 1968,Tables 89-91. CEA, Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1957, HMSO.

⁶³ Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972,p.72.

⁶⁴ Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972,pp.66-67. Simpson, E.S., Coal and the Power Industries in Post-war Britain, 1966,pp.147-149. Manners, G, 'Some Location Principles of Thermal Electricity Generation', Journal of Industrial Economics, No 3, July 1962,p.229. CEGB, Report and Accounts for the year ended 31March 1964,HMSO.

⁶⁵ CEGB, Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1964,HMSO.

⁶⁶ Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972,p.72.

⁶⁷ PRO, File POWE 37/555: Ministry of Power Statistics branch to Coal Division 11 March 1960. BEA, Report and Accounts, 1954, HMSO. CEA, Annual Report and Accounts, 1957, HMSO. CEGB, Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 1964,HMSO.

⁶⁸ CEGB, Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1964,HMSO. The CEGB were increasingly looking to manage electricity demand on a daily and weekly, as well as seasonal basis, as living standards and electricity consumption increased. Rising levels of TV ownership and the huge daily variations in demand this created was one example cited.

⁶⁹ PRO, File POWE 52/119: Brief: Coal supplies for Power Stations 13 January 1966: Short term measures of assistance. Fuel Policy, October 1965,Command Paper 2798, Ministry of Power.

⁷⁰ PRO, File POWE 52/119: Brief: Coal Supplies for Power Stations 13 January 1966: Short-term measures of assistance, Conference on Fuel Policy: Summary of conclusions of the conference at Selsdon Park Hotel, 18-20 May 1967.

⁷¹ Coal Industry Act 1967: 20 December 1967: The Public Acts and Church Assembly Measures 1967: Part II, Chapter 91,pp.2151-1255, HMSO. NUM Annual Conference Report 1970:Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry. A general subsidy for the coal industry was resisted by both Conservative and Labour governments and the Treasury.

⁷² PRO, CAB 129/121/c (65) 89: 1965: Cabinet Papers: Cabinet Memoranda: Financial Position of the Coal Industry: Memorandum by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury 29 June 1965.

⁷³ PRO, File POWE 52/75: Colliery Closures: Action arising out of the meeting with the Prime Minister, Minister of Power and Lord Robens 20 September 1967, 28 September 1967 and a meeting between the Prime Minister and the NUM at Scarborough 28 September 1967. Morgan, K.O., 'The Wilson Years: 1964-1970' in From Blitz to Blair: A New History of Britain Since 1939, 1998 Paperback Edition, N. Tiratsoo (ed), Phoenix, pp.140-141.

⁷⁴ Fuel Policy, October 1965, Command Paper 2798, Ministry of Power, HMSO.

⁷⁵ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1964: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry presented to conference by General Secretary Will Paynter.

⁷⁶ Odell, R, 'Oil: the new commanding height', Fabian Research Series, No 251, Fabian Society, December 1965, p.4.

⁷⁷ PRO, File POWE 52/119: Brief for Fuel policy Conference Selsdon Park Hotel 18-20 May 1967: Ministry of Power Petroleum Division: Adequacy and Security of oil Supplies 16 May 1967. Tugendhat, G, 'Energy Policy', Economic Studies, Vol 4, No 1/2, October 1969, pp.78-87. Lloyd, B, 'Energy Policy', Young Fabian Pamphlet, No 16, March 1968, Fabian Society, p.30.

⁷⁸ PRO, File 52/119: Ministry of Power: Brief in Conference for Fuel Policy Conference Selsdon Park Hotel 18-20 May 1967, 11 May 1967. Britain's Coal: A Study Conference Organised by the National Union of Mineworkers, March 25th -26th 1960, 1960, Pamphlet, Report of Discussion Group, Grovesnor House Hotel, Park Lane, London, Working Class Movement Library, Salford Crescent, Salford, Box File F28/F7. Bromley, S, 'Energy', 1996, p.87.

⁷⁹ PRO, File POWE 52/119: Ministry of Power: Brief in Conference: Oil, 11 May 1967.

⁸⁰ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1970: Situation in the Coalmining Industry.

⁸¹ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1970: Situation in the Coalmining Industry. NUMNEC Minutes 13 November 1969: Economic Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes 13 October 1969. NUMNEC Minutes 13 May 1970: Report of the Coal Industry National Consultative Council Meeting 24 March 1970: Appendix VII, Notes of Meeting between the NUMNEC Economic Sub-Committee, certain members of the NUMNEC and representatives of the NCB 29 April 1970.

⁸² Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972, pp.72, 200-203. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1969: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry, Report of the Miners' Parliamentary Group, 1968-69. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1970: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry. NUMNEC Minutes 8 January 1970: Report of the Coal Industry National Consultative Council Meeting 18 November 1969. The NUM believed that it was Government reluctance at the heart of delays over Drax 'B'. Both the NCB and NUM pressed the Government over Drax and for an extension of the 'special preference' on power station coal into the 1970s as evidence of Labour's commitment to the industry. These efforts only produced a satisfactory outcome in as much as Drax 'B' was secured because the Government also announced two more AGRs and a new oil-fired power station.

⁸³ Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972, pp.22, 72, 229. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1969: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry, Report of the Miners' Parliamentary Group 1968-69, Address by NCB Chairman, Lord Robens. NUM Annual Conference, 1970: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry. NUMNEC Minutes 13 November 1969: Report of the Economic Sub-committee 13 October 1969. NUMNEC Minutes 8 January 1970: Report of the Coal Industry National Consultative Council Meeting 18 November 1969. The new power stations were the two AGRs at Heysham, Lancashire, and Sizewell, Essex, with the oil-fired station on the Isle of Grain.

⁸⁴ Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972, pp.72-73, 79, 168, 172, 174, 192-200, 219, 229. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1969: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1970: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry. Bromley, S, 'Energy', 1996, p.97. Discussion of fuel policy within government after 1967 is obscured by a paucity of available documents. While the Selsdon Conference of 1967 represented a significant further reverse for coal, the Sunningdale Conference of 1968 indicated some relaxation of policy toward coal. However, the documents relating to the Sunningdale Conference were not available at the PRO.

⁸⁵ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1970: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry. NUMNEC Minutes 8 January 1970: Report of the Coal Industry National Consultative Council Meeting 18 November 1969.

⁸⁶ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1970: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1971: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry. NUMNEC

Minutes 13 May 1970: Report of the Coal Industry National Consultative Council Meeting 24 March 1970.

⁸⁷ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1971: Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry.

⁸⁸ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1964: Debate: Situation in the Coalmining Industry: The National Fuel Debate.

⁸⁹ 'Seminar: Oil Companies and Government', Business History, Vol XXVI, 1983-84, pp.78-79.

⁹⁰ 'Questions of Fuel Policy', 1965, pp.189, 193. McVey, G.L., 'Policy for Fuel', 1965, pp.48-49.

⁹¹ Coal Problems: A Plea for a National Fuel Policy, 1933, Pamphlet, MFGB, Working Class Movement Library, Salford, Box File F28/F4.

⁹² The Labour Party, Report of the 57th Annual Conference, 29 September – 3 October 1959: National Fuel Policy Debate, General Fuel Debate. NUMNEC Minutes 15 October 1959: Proposals for a National Fuel Policy, Report: Situation in the Coalmining industry including references to the Labour Party Conference decision of 1958 and TUC conference decisions of 1958 and 1959.

⁹³ Page-Arnot, R, 'Crisis, Coal, and Oil', Labour Monthly, June 1959. 'The Need for a National Fuel Policy', Labour Research, Jan 1960, Vol XLIX, No 1, pp.20-28. 'Coal: The Cost of Tory Policy', Labour Research, July 1962, Vol LI, No 2, p.115. 'The Coal Crisis-What Should be Done?' , Plebs, Vol 51, 1959, pp.111-112. Hughes, R, 'Report: The Nation's Coal', New Left Review, Jan-Feb 1960, p.51. NUMNEC Minutes 15 October 1959: Proposals for a National Fuel Policy, Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry.

⁹⁴ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 46: Minutes of Meeting between NCBNWD Chairman and officials and the Executive Committee of the Colliery Tradesmen and Kindred Workers Lancashire and Cheshire Area 19 January 1959. The Labour Party 65th Annual Conference Report 3-7 October 1966: Fuel and Power Debate. Wilson, H.A., New Deal for Coal, 1945, Contact Publications, pp.244-245.

⁹⁵ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1963: Address by NUM General Secretary, Wil Paynter, re: Situation in the Coal Mining Industry.

⁹⁶ Britain's Coal, 1960, Pamphlet.

⁹⁷ PRO, CAB 129/121/c (65) 89: 1965: Cabinet Memoranda: Financial Position of the Coal Industry: Memorandum by the First Secretary to the Treasury 29 June 1965. PRO, CAB 129/121/87: Cabinet Memoranda: Financial Position of the Coal Industry: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs 29 June 1965.

⁹⁸ Wood, J.V., 'Coal-A Labour Intensive Industry in a Competitive World', Public Administration, Vol 43, 1965, p.232.

⁹⁹ NUM Annual Conference Report, 1964: Miners' Parliamentary Group Report for 1963-64. NUMNEC Minutes: Situation in the Coalmining Industry 12 November 1964: Report of meeting between Minister of Power and national officials of the NUM. NUMNEC Minutes: Situation in the Coalmining Industry 14 January 1965: Report of meeting between Minister of Power and NUM Economic Sub-Committee 7 January 1965.

¹⁰⁰ NUMNWA Week-End School Report, 30-31 March 1968: Marketing Debate. Bromley, S, 'Energy', 1996, p.86.

¹⁰¹ NUMNEC Minutes 12 November 1964: Report of meeting with Minister of Power.

¹⁰² PRO, CAB 129/121/c (65) 89: Memorandum by the First Secretary to the Treasury 29 June 1965. PRO CAB 129/121/87: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs 29 June 1965.

¹⁰³ NUMNEC Minutes 14 January 1965: Report of meeting with Minister of Power 7 January 1965.

¹⁰⁴ NUMNEC Minutes 14 January 1965: Report of meeting with Minister of Power 7 January 1965.

¹⁰⁵ 'Questions of Fuel Policy', 1965, p.193.

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- ¹⁰⁶ 'Questions of Fuel Policy', 1965,p.193. Fuel Policy, October 1965, Command Paper 2798, Ministry of Power, HMSO.
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CHAPTER THREE

THE BRITISH COAL INDUSTRY 1945-1972,

'TRANSFORMATION'

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the transformation of the industry which ran parallel to the challenges faced by coal from alternative fuels. Modernisation had been a desired objective for many years but had been largely deferred under private control because the need to maximise output and profitability consistently overrode future development. After the Second World War, the position was radically altered under public ownership. The imperatives of private capital were superseded by the demands of state control. Public ownership brought with it the necessity to overhaul the industry to remedy the deficiencies and iniquities of private ownership. State control was the engine of modernisation under which an unprecedented scheme of improvement was formulated. However, it will be argued in this chapter that modernisation was again postponed by the requirements of post-war governments desperate to maximise coal production to obviate fuel crises. Additionally, implementing modernisation proved to be exceedingly difficult. But, this realisation increased, rather than reduced, the desire for change. This highlighted the range of interests gathered together to underwrite the process of change including all shades of political opinion and both sides of the industry. As this chapter will show, the key development in the implementation of the scheme was the collapse of coal consumption from the late 1950s. This hastened the completion of modernisation through the construction of new collieries and re-constructions and unleashed an intense and rapid process of rationalisation through colliery closures.

It will be demonstrated in this chapter that the process of industrial change was remarkable for the support it enjoyed together with the coalition of interests it garnered. However, the process was not free of tensions. These were particularly manifest between government and the Coal Board. While there was no questioning of the priorities for change tensions

did emerge over its scale and rapidity. Throughout, the Coal Board performed the difficult task of managing change while simultaneously maintaining the continued co-operation of organised labour. Essentially, the process was the culmination of the long-awaited modernisation of the coal industry. It will be proposed that matters only took a turn for the worse with the return of a Labour Government in 1964. This development increased the level of tension within the coalition of interests. The source of these tensions was Labour's insistence on carrying through a further scheme of rationalisation known as the Accelerated Colliery Closure Programme (ACCP or ACP) in tandem with its departure on fuel policy. Tensions over the ACP emerged once again between government and the Coal Board. The ACP also precipitated tensions within both the Coal Board and the NUM. It will be shown that the ACP was different from the previous scheme of rationalisation in the industry. It was part of Labour's wider agenda for modernity. Furthermore, the extent and speed of contraction it necessitated was unprecedented. Significantly, it focused attention on attitudes to industrial change. On the one hand, it provoked opposition from important elements within the Coal Board and from the left and 'rank-and-file' in a number of coalfields. On the other hand, opposition was less marked from the NUM leadership. Importantly, while the NUM leadership mounted opposition to the outcomes of the ACP it accepted the priorities of the scheme. The attitude toward the ACP served to underline the NUM's acceptance of industrial change throughout this period. This level of acceptance was underpinned by union willingness to embrace modernisation particularly when advocated by Labour. The NUM's traditional links to Labour helped facilitate this level of interest in industrial change.

3.2 THE PLAN FOR COAL: MODERNISATION DEFERRED

Even during the coal industry's Victorian growth the political economist W. S. Jevons had warned that the coal industry's future would not be assured without the technological and organisational skills required to exploit the resources.¹ 50 years later, his son, H.S. Jevons, again speculated about the future of coal. Writing of an industry which had just peaked in terms of output and manpower, he was concerned about the weakness of British coal. Chief amongst these concerns was technical and organisational backwardness in which there was a plethora of small-scale pits with poor lay-out and lack of mechanisation.² British coal

owners had been convinced that growth, together with attendant competitive pressures, would continue. This meant all efforts were directed toward the maximisation of profitability through the prioritisation of current production rather than future development. This position persisted into the inter-war period. There was some improvement mainly through increasing mechanisation while statutory re-organisation after 1930 created large colliery companies prepared to invest in technical development. These companies laid plans for extensive improvements in a modernisation drive. Some post-nationalisation re-construction schemes had origins in those begun by the private companies. Still, prior to the Second World War improvement was patchy.³ The severe decline of the industry between the wars saw private owners put current production first because of the need to survive in a competitive and declining industry. Again, wholesale modernisation was deferred and prolonged by wartime exigencies. In any case the scale of investment required to modernise the industry was beyond the reach of all but the largest and most highly capitalised companies.⁴

Post-war Britain thus inherited an under - capitalised, inefficient and technically backward industry in which inter-war modernisation had failed significantly to improve indices of performance. Furthermore, it had a chaotic structure; the product of hundreds of years of unplanned growth. Evidence testifies to the near derelict state of British pits; a view endorsed by commentators such as Harold Wilson. He, in common with others on the political left, believed the problems of the industry had to be tackled as a priority in post-war Britain as part of the delivery of the long-cherished objective of public ownership. It was felt that only under state control would the industry begin its long-awaited modernisation.⁵

An indication of what the post-war world might be like for coal came with the publication of the influential Reid Report in 1944. The Report represented an unambiguous and comprehensive exposition of the technical backwardness of the industry together with remedies. The scale of improvement required to modernise the industry was only eclipsed by its damning indictment of private ownership. Virtually no aspect of mining was spared from its remit. The Report was a blueprint for the post-war modernisation of coal. It used the explicit language of industrial change under which the coal industry would be dramatically transformed. There was a huge chasm between what Reid saw as a modern,

efficient and competitive industry and the parlous state of the industry at the end of the war. It was obvious that achieving the scale of transformation envisioned by Reid would be a tall order requiring huge levels of investment only the state could provide. This meant the construction of new collieries and the reconstruction and concentration of others. It also meant that a massive rump of the industry would be declared redundant because of technical reasons or economic unfeasibility. Reid, was the harbinger of a re-invigorated two-tier future for Britain's coal industry. A small number of coalfields were expected to have a future as modern technically advanced producers while others were expected to wither. This principle extended right down to expectations for individual pits; even to underground districts of the same colliery.⁶

While the Reid Report represented the blueprint, the key document in the implementation of industrial change was the 1950 *Plan for Coal*. The Plan launched an extensive investment programme of new pit constructions, re-constructions and concentrations. It required the technical re-construction of 250 collieries along with the development of new pits from where 80 per cent of output was to be mined by the early 1960s. It was expected that a further 250 collieries would remain largely unchanged with only minor improvements. These pits were expected to contribute the remainder of the output. In terms of rationalisation it was anticipated that 350-400 collieries would close, amalgamate or undergo concentration. The two-tier aspect of Reid was very much in evidence in the Plan. It established which coalfields were to expand and those expected to decline. Lancashire was seen as a declining coalfield under this regime in term of manpower and output.⁷

With the framework of public ownership in place and with the blueprint and plan for rationalisation formulated, it seemed the long-awaited scheme to bring the coal industry into the twentieth century had begun in earnest. It was not to be. Once again, modernisation was deferred. The current demands placed on the industry intruded. As Jackson notes, the post-war agenda was one of "coal at any price", ⁸ which meant that modernisation was pushed to the periphery of concerns in favour of attaining production because of continuing worries over fuel shortages. In addition, as the Coal Board proceeded with the initial stages of the 1950 Plan it ran into difficulties. By 1956, in the document: *Investing in Coal*, the NCB admitted that the scale of the Plan had been ambitious given the level of resources which were required to rejuvenate the industry. The

response from the NCB, and endorsed by the Government, was not a deceleration in modernisation but a re-doubling of efforts including new investment earmarked for new pits and re-constructions. As a result, new pits and re-constructions were accorded even greater urgency, while 'excess capacity' was put under closer scrutiny.⁹

The main development precipitating coal industry modernisation and rationalisation was the collapse in coal consumption from the late 1950s. This ended a period of "coal at any price" to be replaced by an imperative to increase the speed of the modernisation and to reduce 'excess capacity' for coal to compete in a rapidly declining market. The 1959 *Revised Plan for Coal*, accordingly, established an unparalleled rationalisation programme. The Revised Plan required the size of the industry to be determined by reduced output and lower manpower which would achieve higher levels of productivity by 1965. This was to be achieved by concentrating output in new or reconstructed pits. Furthermore, a re-assessment of capital investment meant an even greater concentration of resources on new and re-constructed pits at the expense of those which had hitherto been 'borderline' for closure. Lancashire saw the highest rate of manpower run-down of the coalfields. Each division, area and colliery was expected at least to break even. Although rationalisation had been taking place since vesting day it was conceded that pits had been "kept going" which should "otherwise have closed" to meet fuel demands. 1959, thus marked the real start of modernisation and rationalisation in the industry. In a short space of time coal underwent a period of major upheaval. Such was the severity of closures under the Revised Plan that assurances were given that there would be minimal redundancy. For the Revised Plan work it depended on miners transferring from closures to new or re-constructed pits or to other coalfields. In this manner, social costs could be minimised through a gradual co-ordinated and planned transfer of resources.

In spite of the false starts, an extraordinary level of industrial and political support impelled the modernisation agenda. This 'grand coalition' was like a juggernaut driving modernisation throughout the period. Inevitably there were tensions, though these did not impede the direction of modernisation, only the extent and pace of change. The Labour Party had been at the forefront of formulating plans for the modernisation of the industry as part of nationalisation. Labour viewed the Reid Report as one of the most important documents in the industry's history; a "standard" against which the post-war modernisation

of the industry should be measured.¹⁰ Indeed, Labour saw the Miners' Charter, drawn up with the NUM as one which should include modernisation as one of its chief tenets.¹¹ The CPGB demanded the delivery of major capital investment from government in order to modernise coal. The Party criticised the pace of modernisation because it was not proceeding fast enough.¹²

For organised labour in coal, modernisation was the achievement of a much desired objective. There were rumblings of discontent within the NUM focusing on the scale of run-down envisaged.¹³ A NUM leadership completely sold on the idea of modernisation assuaged such concerns. Horner, the NUM General Secretary, reminded colleagues of the golden future that awaited them in the modernised pits.¹⁴ In the Lancashire coalfield, the NUMLA president, Charles Tyrer, accepted that the re-organisation of the industry would consign coalfields like Lancashire to the margins. However, Tyrer implored miners in Lancashire to grasp modernisation with both hands. He argued that the sunlit uplands of the future belonged to those who embraced a modern, efficient and technically advanced industry in contrast "to the dark days of the past". He further noted that in partnership with Labour, under public ownership they would be able to participate in the decisions affecting their future as a result of industrial change.¹⁵

Two additional elements of the 'grand coalition' were 'progressive management' in the industry and Conservative governments. The Reid Committee was composed of a number of figures associated with the management of the industry who were keen to proceed with the overhaul of coal.¹⁶ A new cadre of 'progressive management' emerged throughout the inter-war and wartime period. They conceded there had been deficiencies under private control which a new breed of well-educated professionally trained managers would be able to rectify working together with government and 'advanced' sections of the trade union movement toward a modernised industry. Many of these managers came from new colliery companies formed after compulsory re-organisation in 1930. Some went on to occupy key positions in the NCB, working alongside former NUM officials. Sir Humphrey Browne of Manchester Collieries, later to become Lord Roben's deputy, exemplified this new generation of management.¹⁷

Conservative governments also became avid 'modernisers'. They were as willing as the rest to climb aboard the modernisation 'juggernaut'. They argued that the idea of a modern and efficient coal industry was vital for economic modernisation. The level of its commitment can be seen by the decision in 1956 to continue to underwrite the modernisation of the industry just as it was beginning to falter. This commitment involved a doubling of investment to facilitate modernisation. Bolstering the programme in this way amounted to one of the greatest single acts of faith in coal industry modernisation during the post-war period.¹⁸

There were tensions within the 'grand coalition', but these were about the scale and pace of change rather than its direction. One main source of conflict was between government and the Coal Board. Both post-war Conservative and Labour governments pressed for a greater degree and faster pace of change.¹⁹ For example, during the formulation of the 1950 Plan, the Labour Government felt that the Coal Board was too cautious in its prescriptions for change, believing that the Plan should introduce a more radical re-organisation, including wholesale transfers of manpower from declining coalfields such as Lancashire, to the expanding coalfields of the East Midlands and Yorkshire. The Government was confident of its ability to achieve this complex operation because it felt able to convince the NUM. The Coal Board, which had the task of implementing change, was not convinced. It believed that this radical plan would produce such high levels of dislocation and dissatisfaction that miners would leave the industry in droves thus jeopardising attempts at re-structuring. Coal Board concerns centred on its ability to obtain the agreement of the NUM which had made it clear that it had reservations even about the more limited change envisaged in the 1950 Plan.²⁰

The Government thought the Coal Board's caution was unwarranted. It argued miners should feel re-assured because the time-scale involved for re-structuring would allow for the absorption of 'excess manpower' in new and re-constructed pits while new industrial development brought into declining mining areas would create new opportunities for the remainder. Government optimism was predicated on a belief in a continued expanding market for coal and confidence about its ability to create an industrial renaissance in declining coalfields. The Coal Board won this particular argument because it made it clear to the Government that it would be unable to obtain union agreement to such a radical

venture.²¹ Coal Board strategy on industrial change was therefore always developed on the understanding that it could push change only as far and as fast as it was able to obtain union agreement. By contrast, it was post-war governments who consistently demanded that change should proceed much further and faster. This created problems for the Coal Board throughout the 1950s because government placed two mutually exclusive demands upon it. On the one hand the Coal Board was under pressure to maximise output to forestall fuel crises, while on the other, it was under pressure to proceed with a rapid overhaul of the industry. Little wonder that many colliery re-construction schemes quickly ran into difficulty.

There was another clash between the Government and the Coal Board during the early 1960s as the 1959 rationalisation programme proceeded. This time the issue for government was how quickly the industry could reduce 'excess capacity'. The continued poor performance of the coal industry, exacerbated by competition from other fuels, created an impetus for the Government to demand a more rapid rationalisation than that contained in the 1959 Revised Plan. The 'Review of the Revised Plan', conducted during 1961-63, thus required further manpower and output reductions beyond those contained in the 1959 programme. The NCB felt this was pushing NUM compliance too far. Unlike the disagreements over the 1950 Plan the Government prevailed, but, once again, Coal Board anxieties centred on the sudden acceleration in contraction upsetting the NUM.²²

The Coal Board's sensitivity at this time stemmed from tension with the NUM over the Board's abandonment of two major new 'showpiece' pits in the Scottish Area: Glenochil and Rothes. This highlighted the tensions which arose between the Board and the NUM when modernisation was pushed too far. It also illustrated the level of support modernisation enjoyed within the NUM. The spectacular failure of two projects at the cornerstone of modernisation saw the Scottish TUC demanding an inquiry into the closures and calling for the resignation of the Coal Board chairman. The NUM Scottish Area considered taking industrial action. Modernisation clearly had its limitations. Robens readily accepted that there had been mistakes. Glenochil, was, according to Robens, a "colossal waste of public money".²³ However, as developments in the early 1950s had indicated, such failures, rather than raising questions about the direction of modernisation served to the strengthen resolve within the NCB and NUM for modernisation to succeed.

These 'mistakes' certainly saw the NUM seething, particularly as 5,000 jobs disappeared with the Rothes closure. But, the NUM, even in the Scottish coalfield, was less concerned about what these and other failures said about modernisation. Rather, concerns focused on the economic and social consequences of failure. In no way did they result in any substantive questioning by the NUM of industrial change either in Scotland or elsewhere. The belief in the efficacy of industrial change remained undiminished. Unwelcome though these closures were they were seen as the necessary casualties of the modernisation drive.²⁴

Undoubtedly for the NUM, modernisation of the industry had been desired for many years. Public ownership offered the opportunity for it to come to fruition through the resources of the state and the dynamism engendered through widespread industrial and political support. The modernisation agenda was only postponed by the intrusion of competing demands placed on the industry during the immediate post-war period. It is clear that it was government in the vanguard of industrial change. The NCB was a willing partner too, although only in as much as it could rely on organised labour to comply with the scale and rapidity of change. Leading sections of the NUM remained implacably in favour of modernisation. Any reservations were expressed about outcomes rather than about the validity of the project.

The character of industrial change underwent a dramatic shift from the late 1950s with a change of emphasis from the new pits and re-constructions to closing collieries. The 1959 Plan marked the point at which the tempo of modernisation increased with many projects reaching completion during the 1960s. The main pre-occupation was increasingly turning to colliery closures. Modernisation and rationalisation thus came together in a more profound way during the 1960s. They were not separate processes. Both were intended to operate together in a scheme of overall 'transition' which envisaged the transfer of resources from the declining and unproductive to the expanding and efficient. Once again, though this process had a broad measure of support, the problems of 'transition' highlighted tensions between government and the Coal Board. It also brought the NCB and the NUM closer together through the evolution of industrial change.

3.3 RATIONALISATION: MODERNISATION COMPLETED.

The purpose of rationalisation was to concentrate resources in operations which would increase the competitive efficiency of coal. This had been an objective since vesting date but competition from other fuels renewed efforts to achieve this goal. In the short-term the aim was to increase productivity and break even. In the longer-term a smaller, modern, more efficient industry was expected to achieve profitability. This meant concentrating production in new collieries and re-constructions and closing the remainder. The early 1950s saw the Coal Board committed to rationalisation under the 1950 Plan. This involved placing an emphasis on individual pits. As the NCB contended “there is no industry, there are only 900 pits”.²⁵ From this basic premise the Board identified collieries as either “improving” or “declining” in terms of output and productivity amongst those designated by the 1950 Plan as new collieries, major re-constructions, minor re-constructions, and ‘short-life’ collieries likely to close by 1965. The ‘short-life’ pits were more heavily concentrated in the declining regions of Scotland, South Wales, the North-East, and North-West where they comprised half of all pits. During the early 1950s the Board earmarked collieries likely to face closure based on their inability to undergo technical improvement and to match commercial criteria.²⁶

An increasing focus on commercial criteria was given another twist by the 1959 Revised Plan which required much stricter adherence to the principle that each pit, area, and division should move toward profitability.²⁷ Thus, while the period since vesting date had seen pit closures due to ‘exhaustion’ of reserves,²⁸ pits now faced closure based upon a whole host of market-led criteria.²⁹ As the NCB noted, such criteria had been at the heart of the Board’s operations since vesting date when it was deemed each pit should be profitable. However, government anxieties over post-war fuel shortages meant these collieries remained open. Unprofitable pits which should have closed frequently received new investment in the hope that they could be ‘turned around’ because they were high coal producers. As the demand for coal fell during the late 1950s so commercial criteria once again predominated in determining outcomes for individual collieries.³⁰ Although there had always been the rather controversial and poorly defined concept of an ‘uneconomic pit’ the term was taken to include the widest possible definition from the late 1950s. As a result, many pits had their feasibility threshold slashed resulting in the threat of closure.

Collieries carrying high coal reserves which would have remained open by the criteria of the early 1950s were suddenly candidates for closure.³¹

The process of rationalisation created dilemmas for the NCB. Again, its problems mounted as government questioned the scale and rapidity of rationalisation. From the beginning of the process the Coal Board believed that the best way forward was a cautious and gradual one in which pits were only closed as jobs became available in new and re-constructed pits. In this way, there would be fewer 'dislocations' of manpower. Pit closures were correspondingly phased in or deferred to achieve this objective. This strategy was pursued not just to reduce the social impact of pit closures. It was based on a hard-headed commercial need to synchronise the transfer of miners from redundant to productive pits.³² Synchronising transfer was an extremely difficult task given that the progress of new or re-constructed pits was often delayed. Likewise, as the scale of rationalisation became apparent during the early 1960s the industry saw an exodus of mineworkers as anxieties over the future of coal mounted. The 'gradualist' approach contributed to a collapse in morale because local 'green labour' recruitment embargoes agreed to facilitate pit closures resulted in local manpower crises across the coalfields. This included a shortage of the skilled and experienced labour desperately needed in the modernised collieries.

By the early 1960s the progress of industrial change was threatened by these trends as many colliery modernisation schemes approached completion and still awaited a full manpower build-up to swing into production. The earmarking of many pit closures by the Coal Board as 'manpower reservoirs' to serve the needs of the new and re-constructed collieries was only a palliative in the context of government demands to speed up the completion of modernised pits and quickly close those due for closure. Conversely, the Board's problems were complicated by the occurrence of high levels of localised unemployment in many coalfields not seen since the inter-war period due to an absence of alternative job opportunities.³³

The acceleration of rationalisation under the 'Review of the Revised Plan' at the Government's behest had been far from welcome by the Coal Board because of the operational problems it created and through fear of antagonising the NUM. As a result the Government agreed to some slackening of the pace of closures. There thus developed the

rather damaging situation of pits winning deferments only to be closed at a later date. It also produced the unsavoury spectacle of pits winning reprieves from the Board but the Ministry of Power asking for substitutes after the Board had entered into negotiations with the unions for the closure of specific pits. ³⁴This kind of bartering, with pits put into a state of limbo, further increased levels of uncertainty thus hastening 'manpower drift'.

By 1963, increasing competitive pressures on coal and a deepening financial crisis within the industry brought a new urgency to the task of rationalisation such that the Government again made further demands on the Board by pressing for more closures. Richard Wood, the Minister of Power, asked Lord Robens, the Coal Board chairman, to produce a "secret reserve list of closures". The 'secret list' was important in determining the character of future rationalisation because the collieries Wood was asking Robens to consider for closure included a substantial number not hitherto considered. They were collieries which had some future, at least in the medium term. Importantly, for the Board, they were pits in which mineworkers and the NUM had been assured there would be some future. For Robens, this request was too much. He categorically refused to ratchet up the scale of closures. Robens was anxious about the likely dislocation to the progress of the *Plan* by the scale of what was being suggested. He was even more concerned about an adverse union reaction, explaining that "the present programme was the biggest the Board could negotiate with the unions in a peaceful manner", and was "drawn up on the basis of what it (the Coal Board) considered to be industrially possible to achieve". On this occasion, the Coal Board successfully rebuffed attempts to increase the scale of contraction. Robens's success was assisted by forecasts indicating more widespread social hardship as a result of further closures. Because the new colliery and re-construction schemes were nearing completion the opportunities for absorption of mineworkers from further colliery closures was likely to diminish. ³⁵ The suggestion by the Conservative Government of a new phase of contraction was the harbinger of the ACP under the subsequent Labour administration.

The challenge facing the Coal Board during the early 1960s was balancing the manpower needs of modernisation with the reductions from rationalisation. One of the Board's priorities was to convince miners that they had a future in mining. The Board co-opted the unions in this task. Despite the closure of many pits, the unions were, like the Board, keen to emphasise the re-generative aspects of industrial change as a means of retaining a modern

and viable coal industry. The Board used the discourse of modernity to project a modern image for the industry aimed at dispelling the notion that it was dying. It emphasised the more modern aspects of its operations through a variety of media. These were attempts to 'steal the white coat' from the nuclear power industry with an emphasis on new technology; new collieries; research and development; and the projection of the Board as a progressive employer. During the late 1950s the Coal Board chairman, Sir James Bowman, offered modernisation as delivering a coal industry that would be the most "progressive in the world". This message was delivered against a symbolic backdrop of new gleaming colliery constructions of concrete and glass looking more like atomic research establishments than collieries. The new concrete encased Koepe Friction winding gear stood in stark contrast to images of traditional headgear. These were symbolic representations of the notion of re-birth. Images of miners leaving the pit wearing suits and carrying briefcases to their cars in the colliery car park were intended to be contrasted with the more traditional images of miners leaving a pit cage. Reports of the new pits carried reference to the latest technology including remote controlled underground operations. Technology was seen as the key to re-invigorating a traditional industry. There was, too, a clear emphasis on youth through education, career development and training.³⁶ At the same time, the strong cultural traditions of the industry were invoked as sustaining elements in a changing world. The stamp of official approval buttressed the images of modernity through visits to the new and re-constructed collieries by figures from royalty, government, entertainment and sport.³⁷ Lord Robens's vision was an industry without equal in technological development in which continuous mining techniques were practised employing the latest remote-controlled operations in underground cathedrals of cybernetics.³⁸ Technological developments had the primary objective of improving the industry's performance but they became a lucrative addition to the Board's strategy of creating a modern image for the industry.

These strategies were equalled by the Board's attempts to create incentives for miners to remain in the industry. The Board was reducing overall manpower levels but was anxious to retain enough skilled and trained labour to 'man-up' its modernised collieries. The retention of this so-called "virile labour" became a Board priority. It also meant that there was a focus on a younger workforce at the expense of older and 'disabled' miners.³⁹ The Board, together with the NUM, wanted to provide incentives by promising miners better

rates of pay and conditions at these collieries particularly within the new power-loading teams.⁴⁰ These mineworkers were seen as the key to future success. The Board thus attempted to demonstrate that the painful process of colliery closures was a necessary prerequisite to the emergence of a smaller streamlined but modern and efficient industry in which miners would enjoy long-term job security. Judging by the rush to leave the industry, which saw a net outflow of nearly 410,000 workers between 1960 and 1965, the Board was less successful at convincing mineworkers to stay in coal than they were at altering public perceptions of the industry. Even accounting for 'planned' outflow through the rationalisation programme this ranked as one of the largest concentrated losses of manpower in the industry's history.⁴¹ The best efforts of the Board and the NUM to stem this tide proved fruitless as leading officials from both sides of the industry worked together to ensure that the momentum of industrial change was maintained throughout the early 1960s.

3.4 THE DELUGE: LABOUR'S ACCELERATED COLLIERY CLOSURE PROGRAMME

The return of a Labour Government in 1964 marked a major shift in the circumstances of industrial change in the coal industry. Although there had been tensions between Government and the NCB over industrial change they were as nothing compared with the tensions which arose over the ACP. Moreover, for the first time, the ACP saw the emergence of serious cleavages within the 'grand coalition' as tensions rose within both the NCB and NUM. Lord Robens had warned the outgoing Conservative Government of the dangers of pushing coal industry rationalisation too far and too fast. This disagreement prefaced a more deleterious turn of events under Labour. The return of a Labour government was expected to herald some moderation in the pace of coal industry contraction. Additionally, the NCB believed that a difficult process of modernisation and rationalisation was nearing completion. A smaller, modern and technically advanced coal industry was emerging. Years of effort to produce an upward shift in productivity was finally beginning to bear fruit even in declining coalfields such as Lancashire. There were even the first signs of the industry moving into profitability. Lord Robens, the great helmsman of change, stood on the brink of delivering his brilliant vision for the industry.

He had earned many plaudits for his skilful handling of what had been a difficult phase for coal. In turn, Robens was able to point to a largely successful 'transition' which had been achieved in record time without major social hardship or large-scale unemployment, and achieved without serious challenge from the NUM.⁴² Robens was able to reflect with satisfaction that by the mid-1960s he had nearly completed his most difficult 'stint'. Now, with a Labour Government in power, and with coal likely to be given priority in fuel policy, there would surely be a bright future for the industry.

This benign scenario was shattered with the announcement of Labour's fuel policy. The reduced role for coal required an even smaller industry. The ACP represented a qualitative and quantitative change in the character of contraction from the previous rationalisation programme. In November 1965 it was announced that 120 'uneconomic pits' were to be closed in a period of 18-24 months, with at least 90 more during the three years from 1968 to 1971. Manpower reductions envisaged the 'displacement' of 64,000 mineworkers during the first phase and 60,000 during the second phase.⁴³ It was not necessarily the scale of the programme that was extraordinary, though this was extensive, but its speed. The level of contraction proposed was as great as anything which had taken place during previous rationalisation, but it was set to occur in less than two years in the first phase. By comparison during the six-year period from 1959 to 1965 233 collieries had closed with the net loss of 196,000 mining jobs but including 'unplanned' manpower losses.⁴⁴ The extent of the scheme indicated the underlying reason for its initiation. Although the Labour Government accepted that the industry was improving, it needed to be put on a financially sound basis sooner rather than later. Importantly, the reduced role for coal in fuel policy meant that a further severe contraction was required at a stroke rather than the 'gradualist' approach seen in the earlier programme.⁴⁵

Unlike the previous scheme of rationalisation carried out under the 1959 Revised Plan the ACP was much more about shaping the coal industry within Labour's wider programme of economic modernisation. George Brown, the Economic Affairs Minister, noted it was about Labour demonstrating its credentials in fashioning and implementing a major restructuring process: a huge economic and social planning experiment. The chief architects of the ACP, the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, the Minister of Power, Fred Lee, and George Brown, were convinced of the propriety of the project. Brown, in particular,

positively relished the prospect, convincing his colleagues that with the right blend of economic and social policies further contraction could be properly 'managed' despite warnings to the contrary.⁴⁶ Lee, in opposition, had been a keen student of Labour's commitment to reversing Britain's relative economic decline through economic planning linked to the scientific and technological revolution.⁴⁷ Wilson's ideas for the coal industry had been clear for many years both as a young economist and later as a senior Labour politician. For its success, the ACP depended on the continued availability of re-employment prospects within the industry, together with the rapid creation of alternative employment in pit areas. In formulating the plans it was expected that most of the 'displaced' mineworkers would be able to transfer within the industry. The remaining 'surplus' was not anticipated to exceed ten per cent of those 'displaced', with the majority comprising elderly and 'disabled' miners together with some 'localised' unemployment which would require special attention within the framework of social ameliorative measures forming part of the scheme.⁴⁸

The Coal Board was involved in the consultation process during the planning for the ACP. It ranked amongst its chief sceptics. Robens was aghast at the programme. His main concerns centred on the extent and speed of contraction and anxieties over a possible adverse union reaction. He had consistently argued that the industry could not take further contraction without significant economic and social dislocation in many pit areas because the absorption and transfer possibilities - so vital to the relative success of previous plans - had all but diminished. The types of colliery to be closed also caused concern because these included many previously expected to have a 'medium' or longer-term future. His sense of frustration was heightened because these were the pits that the Coal Board had exhorted to achieve improved performance in order to guarantee their future. Closure meant destroying the goodwill developed with NCB and NUM officials and the 'rank-and-file' at the affected collieries. Robens was petrified at the prospect of losing longstanding NUM support for industrial change. He constantly fretted about the ACP by seeking government reassurances and ensuring that he still retained NUM support. As a most unwilling convert to the scheme Robens implored the Government to consider alternative, less ambitious strategies. Robens argued, with some justification, that the ACP was an unprecedented departure which was likely to have "tremendous political and social consequences" while there were certain to be political repercussions with the NUM. This

was an argument which Robens was destined to lose despite his sound judgement. Government policy was firmly set. Any qualms about the ACP were set aside as Labour believed it would provide a sufficiently well planned scheme of economic and social amelioration and was confident that it could cope with any political fall-out from the NUM.⁴⁹

The disagreement between Robens and the Labour Government over the ACP was only the first instalment of more serious conflict. Robens felt aggrieved by the way the ACP had been pushed through. He distanced himself from the scheme both publicly and through his participation in the Select Committee on the Nationalised Industries. His growing criticism of the Government throughout 1966 and early 1967 brought him into conflict with the new Minister of Power, Richard Marsh, who, became incensed by Robens's attitude. Robens's description of Labour policy as "brutal butchery" was one which Marsh found particularly galling. In spite of what both Marsh and Robens have claimed was a harmonious relationship it became highly fractious over the direction of Labour fuel and coal industry policy. In July 1966, Marsh, questioned Robens's loyalty to the Labour Government. Marsh sought approval for his removal from the chairmanship of the Coal Board from Harold Wilson "at the earliest opportunity" with a suggestion that he be moved to chair the National Steel Corporation. Robens's clear disenchantment was such that he was considering offers in the private sector. There was certainly some venom in the manner by which Marsh wanted to get rid of Robens. Marsh considered Robens's attitude towards the ACP indicated the cooling of his passion for industrial change in coal; far from being the great helmsman of modernisation it seemed he had not got the stomach for Labour's prescriptions. Robens had to go, leaving behind only true believers to carry forward the scheme.⁵⁰

The episode sheds some light on increasing divisions within the Coal Board on the question of further contraction. Marsh believed schisms were opening up within the Coal Board suggesting that Robens and his deputy, Derek Ezra, were at odds, as were several members of Robens's team. Ezra, and his supporters on the Board, indicated that they were more amenable to the ACP as a swift elixir for the coal industry.⁵¹ A divided Board made it easier for the Government to force through the ACP. Robens did not go on this occasion despite Wilson's agreement to Marsh's request. Why he remained is unclear from the

available evidence.⁵² There are some strong indications nevertheless. While Marsh would have liked Robens to resign he acknowledged his part in managing a successful rationalisation programme. Robens's stock was riding high. He was a popular figure both with Labour MPs and more latterly with the NUM. Robens had initially been viewed with suspicion by sections of the NUM both as an industry outsider and because it was felt he would be manipulated by a Tory government. However, he had quickly gained respect from the NUM leadership and the 'rank-and-file' for his candour and integrity, but, most of all, for his readiness to speak out on behalf of the industry. The NUMLA leadership had been among the earliest to warm to Robens. Elsewhere within the NUM there were continuing reservations particularly in the more left-wing dominated areas such as South Wales. However, reservations that did persist were more frequently expressed over his style of leadership. He was the one figure whom the Government needed to keep the NUM 'on board' for what might be a rough few years as the ACP proceeded.⁵³

Robens tendered his resignation in August 1967 after the results of the public enquiry into Aberfan.⁵⁴ Marsh rejected his resignation after much support was offered from Labour MPs and the NUM. His offer of resignation was widely regarded as an act of "ritual self-immolation without logic and without benefit to anyone".⁵⁵ Evidence to-date suggests the first indications Robens was contemplating leaving came over Aberfan. However, the Government was plotting to get rid of him over his attitude to the ACP months before those tragic events on a Welsh hillside. Robens became for Labour a 'lightning rod' to oversee further contraction: to absorb criticism; to soothe and placate; to cajole and persuade; even to take the blame if things did go wrong. Though he became loathed over his attitude on the ACP the Labour Government came to realise that, at least *pro tem*, he remained its best hope as the chair of the Coal Board for a successful 'transition'. Although Robens remained as Coal Board chairman until after the fall of the Wilson Government, during which he oversaw further contraction, his relationship with the Government was never easy. Dealings with Ministers of Power, with the exception of Harold Lever, were especially difficult. Robens became increasingly dissonant and vexed over Government policy on fuel and pit closures. His introspection over coal contraction became more intense as the social consequences became more apparent. He was clearly keen to finish his 'stint', but reluctantly stayed in order to act as a counterweight to Government policy.⁵⁶

Just how much the relationship between the Government and the NCB had altered through the tensions created by the ACP is evidenced by the events of 1967. Robens's caution had been justified. With the NUM questioning the Government over further contraction and with sections of the union in open revolt it was clear that it had become a serious challenge to the Wilson Government. With Labour loyalists of the calibre of Joe Gormley talking about his fears that the policy might precipitate a re-alignment on the left of British politics, there were plenty of potential worries for Labour.⁵⁷ By 1967, some of Robens's prognostications were coming true. During 1966, the Government re-affirmed its commitment to the ACP in the face of evidence from the Coal Board that the pace of contraction was so rapid it was producing 'manpower dislocation'. The Government persisted in its belief that "special attention to areas of high redundancy" would see the programme through without serious problems.⁵⁸ Moreover, the Selsdon Conference in 1967 endorsed further coal industry contraction as a policy objective. However, by 1967 the Prime Minister conceded that closures were likely to produce difficulties for the Government during the winter of 1967-68. Wilson was anxious about forecasts for unemployment which, he felt, might be worsened by the rapid contraction of coal. In addition, there was a mounting tide of economic and political problems for the Government in 1967. Wilson was anxious to avoid creating more problems for the Government. Consequently, in the autumn of 1967, he headed off further potential problems by meeting the NUM and agreeing to a deferment of pit closures in areas where it was thought there might be an adverse effect on unemployment.⁵⁹ The intervention was clearly a tactical political move. Wilson was still adamant about the efficacy of the ACP to the extent that he decreed the deferments should not interfere with the overall objective of the scheme, but only delay it slightly. The pits obtained a reprieve of up to six months.

The Wilson intervention illustrated the way in which the relationship between the Government and Coal Board had changed through the tensions created by the ACP while it underlined the Government's eagerness to push through the ACP. For Wilson, it was a political manoeuvre to buy time and maintain NUM support during a difficult patch for the Government. Although Robens was still needed by the Government he was a Flying Dutchman - the mere spectral captain of the coal industry destined to travel the corridors of power peddling his tale of woe for the remainder of his chairmanship. Wilson's consultation with him over pit closure deferment was nothing more than a courtesy call.⁶⁰

Robens had already been banished from the policy discussions. In any case, a deceleration of the process was one which Robens was not expected to oppose.

The two figures of greatest interest in this episode were Ezra and Marsh whose views on the ACP converged. Marsh sought counsel on deferment, not from Robens, but from his deputy Derek Ezra. Both Ezra and Marsh opposed the deferment. This reinforced growing divisions within the Coal Board. Marsh wanted to elicit the support of Ezra since both agreed that the problems facing the industry needed to be solved through a *coup de main* rather than a 'gradualist' approach. They believed a deferment sent out all the wrong signals because it was based on "political" rather than "economic" calculations. Furthermore, they argued deferment should be avoided even at the expense of increasing unemployment, or risking increased tensions with the NUM, because it created a backlog of closures and gave hope to those involved in attempting to save collieries thereby risking derailment of the programme.⁶¹ As Robens later noted, Wilson's intervention was intended to please everybody but pleased no one.⁶² In spite of deferment the Government continued to believe further contraction was the right policy and remained confident of its ability to handle the economic, social and political consequences of the ACP. Wilson's intervention did not seriously impede the progress of the programme and in all probability made matters worse. Marsh continued to lead the drive for coal contraction by seeking allies in the industry and finding them in a divided Coal Board.

1967-68 also saw disagreement between the Government and NUM. Wilson's deferment was primarily aimed at soothing the NUM, but the union was left wondering what its value had been. Paynter described Wilson's proposal as a mere "postponement of execution". However, while senior NUM officials questioned the scale and speed of the ACP and the Government's claims that it would bring new investment to declining coalfields through a policy of industrial diversification, they accepted Wilson's request to keep faith with Government policy.⁶³ Although the programme produced tensions between the Government and NUM these did not amount to much more than attempts to warn of pushing contraction too fast and scepticism over Government promises of new investment. At the announcement of the ACP, Fred Lee had asked the NUM to accept further coal contraction in the "national interest". He argued that the ACP was necessary to put the coal industry on a sound footing to achieve Government objectives on national economic

planning.⁶⁴ This amounted to an unprecedented contraction of the industry to accommodate wider Government objectives, but there was never any serious questioning from the NUM. Given the ACP came on top of rationalisation which was supposed to have delivered a streamlined and efficient industry, the NUM's response was pallid in the extreme. It was, as Minkin notes, best expressed as "ritualistic anger" with no questioning of the propriety of the programme.⁶⁵ Rather it focused on probing the outcomes in terms of Government commitments on manpower absorption, transfer, and industrial diversification. Furthermore, the NUM rejected direct action against Government policy, preferring dialogue to test Government assurances on the consequences of industrial change rather than challenging its priorities. Thus, increasingly vocal criticism of the Government by senior NUM officials throughout 1966 and 1967 was exclusively concerned with the Government's alleged failure to deliver on its ameliorative promises, while individual pit closures were issues for debate only at divisional and local levels. The NUM leadership had accepted the terms of the debate dictated by the Government. Under the ACP the coal industry was destined to become an even smaller and more efficient cog in the overall 'plan' for the economy. This consistently went unchallenged by the NUM leadership.⁶⁶

The dominant attitude toward the ACP led to tensions within the NUM. There were calls from the left for a more robust response to Government policy. While criticism of the Government was not confined to the left more general opposition tended to concern itself with particular outcomes of the programme such as those emanating from specific coalfields rather than from a fundamental challenge to the principle of the scheme.⁶⁷ Indeed, as the full impact of the scheme unfolded attacks on the Government over inadequate provision for economic and social dislocation increased in frequency and intensity.⁶⁸ *Prima facie* the growing strength of opposition to the Government appeared to be a revolt uniting 'left' and 'right' political divisions within the NUM including senior officials considered to be Labour loyalists. In fact, the clash with the Government was one limited to the consequences of the policy rather than policy itself.

There was a temporal aspect to the questioning of the ACP. Certainly the ferocity of opposition to the Government over pit closures increased markedly throughout 1967-68. By this time the effects of the ACP were being fully felt. There were signs too of a less favourable economic climate generally by the late 1960s. Senior figures in the NUM

realised the mood in the coalfields was moving against the Government. They began to pay closer attention to growing signs of belligerence as they worried that matters might start to pass outside the control of the leadership. Paynter was keen to be seen at a big miners march and rally in London in November 1967 in which he shook a fist at the Government but failed to give a clear endorsement of industrial action over pit closures. The miners on the rally were less reticent.⁶⁹ These events showed the leadership was beginning to lose control of sections of the NUM through the increasing dissonance of many officials and mineworkers in a number of coalfields. Nevertheless although the NUM leadership was anxious about 'rank-and-file' restiveness it continued to signal compliance with the prescriptions of the Government on further contraction.

By 1968 it was clear there were sharp differences within the NUM over what form opposition to the programme should take. While the NUM leadership was angered by the outcome of the ACP in decimating the industry, it remained resolute in opposing action against the Government, agreeing instead to continue to restrain the impact of coal contraction.⁷⁰ Not only was rejection of protest against Government policy based on a belief that it was futile or that it might be counterproductive to dialogue, there was also considerable support for the Government's policy of industrial diversification in declining coalfields. This was contrasted with Tory policy. On the other hand, continuing loyalty to Labour was in sharp contrast to those on the left who felt the Rubicon had been crossed. For them it was time for action. Kane of Yorkshire, supported by members of the Scottish Area, demanded direct action against the Government over its fuel and closure policy. A significant development from this growing schism was the way in which sections of the NUM turned their attacks directly onto both Marsh and Lord Robens who it was felt were blaming each other. Robens was fulfilling the role assigned to him by the Government of absorbing criticism. In any event it was far too late for the Government to alter a programme that was intended to operate swiftly. By the late 1960s NUM efforts continued to focus exclusively on dealing with the outcomes of Government policy. On the other hand, the increasingly 'militant' coalfields such as Yorkshire were articulating a more fundamental critique of coal policy over a wide range of issues in which the ACP was seen as yet another sell-out by the NUM leadership.⁷¹

By the end of the 1960s the programme was reaching a conclusion with a mounting toll of pit closures many of which were not included in the original 1965 schedule, such were the competitive pressures on the industry coupled with the effect of the new departure on fuel. The scheme was substantially completed by the time Labour left office. The ACP was highly successful in achieving the rapid run-down of the industry. The net manpower wastage rate was up by a third during the 1965-1971 period compared with 1959-1965. Similarly, the annual rate of colliery closures rose by nearly 50 per cent during 1965-1971 compared with the earlier period of rationalisation. The first phase of the ACP saw the most intensive rate of run-down during the post-war period. Between 1965 and 1968 collieries were closing at an annual rate of 58 per year against 39 for the 1959-1965 period, and 19 for the 1968 to 1971 period. The manpower run-down figures reflected a similar pattern.⁷²

The most significant trend to emerge from the ACP was a fall in 'wastage' rates for men leaving the industry or transferring within it. The increasing lack of alternative sources of employment outside the pits, together with the reduction in transfer possibilities, was a major source of concern from the mid-1960s. The number of men leaving the industry and finding jobs in other employment sectors fell from an annual average rate of rate of 13 per cent of the workforce for the period 1959-1965 to 8 per cent for the period 1965-1971. Similarly, the number of men transferring within the industry fell from an annual average of 16 per cent of the workforce to 8 per cent during the same respective periods. These rates peaked around the time of major closure announcements in 1959-60 and 1965-66 as men joined the rush to leave the coal industry or transfer within it. Manpower 'wastage' to other employment sectors had played havoc with the Coal Board's plans during the 1959-1965 period but it constituted an important 'safety valve' against the build-up of unemployment. Likewise, social hardship was minimised through transfers of mineworkers within the coal industry to ease manpower dislocation resulting from rationalisation. The ACP saw a substantial reduction in the opportunity for both these possibilities.⁷³

The most important issue arising from the ACP was the reaction of the Coal Board and the NUM. Lord Robens recognised what the programme was about. His criticism incurred the ire of Government. He wrote in his memoirs that his opposition to the Government got him "two public warnings".⁷⁴ To take this wrestling analogy further, it nearly got him a lifetime

ban. Allen has correctly identified Robens as one of the key figures in the process of industrial change in the coal industry, characterising this role as one of “diligently” executing Government policy whilst simultaneously acting as an “aggressive critic closer to the interests of the miners than their officials”.⁷⁵ An examination of the historical record reveals that Robens was a significant critic of Government policy, at odds with Ministers and members of his own team, to the extent that there was an attempt to engineer his removal. Contrary to Allen’s assertions, Robens was a most reluctant devotee of the ACP under Labour. In fact, his opposition should be seen in contrast to the character of opposition waged by the NUM leadership. It challenged the Government only on the specific outcomes of the scheme, not on its priorities, and it only did so as ‘rank-and-file’ anger increased over the scale of contraction during the late 1960s.

Why was there not more vigorous opposition to the ACP from the NUM leadership? There was, of course, considerable loyalty to a Labour Party returned to government after years out of office and initially operating with a slim parliamentary majority. Moreover, the main priority for the NUM was to obtain the best deal for coal within the new departures on fuel. This meant ‘fighting’ for coal within the new arrangements and ensuring that government pledges on economic and social amelioration were honoured. The NUM accepted that the Mining Group of MPs at Westminster was not as influential with this Labour Government as it had been in the past. Finally, a substantial majority within the NUM were committed to Labour’s prescriptions for change in the context of its plans for the modernity. In this scenario, coal industry contraction was seen as part of an overall plan to rationalise and modernise the British economy. It was accepted that the coal industry should be reduced in size to produce a smaller, more efficient and modernised industry with a policy of industrial diversification to bring new economic opportunities to coalfields experiencing contraction. During the early 1960’s Alex Moffat, the Communist leader of the Scottish miners, argued he would prefer to have a pillar of coal with a new factory on top giving employment and hope to workers in pit areas than have a pillar of coal which miners could not work profitably.⁷⁶ In essence, Moffat defined the touchstone of belief in the need for industrial change in coal. This belief was shared across the ideological divide within the NUM including Joe Gormley, the Lancashire miners leader.⁷⁷

These were views which did not have to wait for Labour's ACP, they had been inherent in the NUM's acceptance of industrial change since vesting date. The NUM had, after all, been a willing participant in the 'grand coalition' for modernisation. Furthermore, Labour in opposition had championed the notion of economic rejuvenation for declining coalfields underpinned by a framework of industrial and regional policies supported by economic planning. The NUM believed coal would form an integral part of Labour's plans for modernity. It was argued that this was better overseen by a Labour Government committed to effective economic and social planning than rely on the free market policies of the Tories. The NUM had embraced Labour's agenda of modernity. These scenarios had common acceptance within the NUM in varying degrees but there was a prevailing belief that it was Labour who should be trusted to carry forward the mantle of change. This was further reinforced through the traditional bonds of allegiance between the NUM and Labour.

The NUM's attitude made the task of implementing the ACP much easier. The Labour Government knew it would only be challenged by the NUM on the consequences of the programme, not on its conception. In any event, the success of the programme was predicated on the confident expectation that the Government could adequately manage the outcomes of the ACP and assuage any opposition to it. The only source of anxiety for Labour was the growing influence of the left within the NUM in certain coalfields developing in conjunction with increasing 'rank-and-file' discontent as the programme progressed. However, by the time opposition from this quarter had become a significant threat the speed of the ACP had ensured its successful implementation was guaranteed in the absence of more sustained and widespread opposition from within the NUM.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The transformation of the British coal industry between 1945 and 1972 involved a process of industrial change through modernisation and rationalisation. As this chapter has shown, modernisation was deferred for many years. It was the advent of public ownership which made modernisation possible during the post-war period but the intervention of other priorities impeded progress. The collapse in coal consumption from the late 1950s

provided the crucial impetus for change manifested in the *Revised Plan for Coal* in 1959. This chapter has highlighted the broad level of industrial and political agreement for industrial change in coal. There were tensions within the coalition of interests. One of the chief sources of tension was between government and the Coal Board. However, such tensions rarely arose over fundamental disagreements about the need for industrial change, only over its scale and rapidity.

Matters came to a head with the return of a Labour government in 1964. This marked a major shift in attitudes toward industrial change with the ACP emerging from Labour's new fuel policy. Only then did consensus about the priorities for industrial change begin to fragment. Significantly, opposition to the ACP was led from within the Coal Board by Lord Robens who argued the ACP was in a different category from previous rationalisation programmes because it reflected Labour's wider strategy for economic modernisation and planning. As Robens acerbically noted, this was a government "in mortal danger of planning themselves out of office".⁷⁸ Robens's attitude was all the more significant because he had a first class *curriculum vitae* as a 'moderniser' *par excellence*. Before he became Coal Board chairman, as a senior Labour MP, he had told Lancashire cotton and coal workers not to fear the future, but to embrace it. Speaking as a Lancastrian himself he told them "our" industrial tradition belonged to the past: "be ready to pioneer new industries and be ready to move out of the old and dying industries into new ones".⁷⁹ It was of course Labour who held the key to successful 'transition' as guardians of its 'natural' working class 'constituency'. Yet, after having overseen the modernisation of the coal industry, Robens, became of one Labour's fiercest critics as it embarked upon its agenda for further change. He refused to accept that the ACP should constitute an end in itself.

This was in contrast to the position adopted by the NUM. Leading officials had been amongst the most enthusiastic supporters of industrial change in coal. Under the ACP they too began to question further contraction. However, as this chapter has revealed, the NUM only challenged the Government on the outcomes of the programme. This questioning increased as 'rank-and-file' dissent intensified over the scale of pit closures. It never amounted to a challenge over the concept of further contraction because a majority of the NUM leadership either agreed with, or acquiesced in, Labour's prescriptions for change.⁸⁰ Opposition to industrial change which gathered momentum on the left of the NUM and

amongst the 'rank-and-file' during the late 1960s was based around a range of issues which developed into a more profound critique of existing NUM leadership. For the most part, transformation of the coal industry during the post-war period was determined by imperatives for change enjoying support amongst a broad coalition of interests. The agenda for change established by the Labour Party was supported by the NUM. This pedigree and endorsement was crucial in ensuring its success.

¹ Jevons, W.S., The Coal Question, 1865, Macmillan, p.153.

² Jevons, H.S., The British Coal Trade, 1915, Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner and Co Ltd, pp. 56,758,765-768.

³ PRO, File COAL 28/9:NCBHQ: Marketing Dept: Technical 1946-1963 Sept, Bradford Colliery Reconstruction Scheme, Minister of Fuel and Power to Lord Hyndley 4 April 1946, Proposal for Re-Construction by Manchester Collieries and Lancashire Associated Collieries. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279:NCBNWD Area General Manager No 1 East Lancashire Area: 1961 February: Report on Mosley Common Colliery by Area Manager 21 February 1961: Technical Considerations. Mines Department, Annual Report of the Secretary, for the year ended 31 December 1926. Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines, period 1921-1926: Plant and Equipment. Greasley, D, 'The Diffusion of Coal Cutting in the British Coal Industry 1902-1938', Explorations in Economic History, Vol 19, 1982, Table 1: Percentage Output Machine Cut by Region, p.242. Wilson H, New Deal for Coal, 1945, pp.225-226, Contact Publications Ltd. Greasley, D, 'The Coal Industry: images and realities on the road to nationalisation' in The Political Economy of Nationalisation in Britain 1920-1950, 1995, R.Milward and J.Singleton (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.29-46.

⁴ Wilson, H, New Deal for Coal, 1945, pp.225-226. Greasley, D, 'The Coal Industry', 1995, pp.29-46.

⁵ Wilson, H, New Deal for Coal, 1945, pp.142-146, 157-161. Loftus, J, 'Lee Side', Autobiography, Typescript, Working Class Autobiography Collection, Brunel University, Uxbridge Campus Library, p.164.

⁶ Coal Mining: Report of the Technical Advisory Committee, Ministry of Fuel and Power, March 1945, Command Paper 6610 (The Reid Report), HMSO. Greasley, D, 'The Coal Industry',

1995,p.54. Fishman, N, 'Coal: Owned and Managed on Behalf of the People' in Labour's High Noon: The Government and the Economy 1945-1951, 1993,J.Fyrth (ed), Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 64-66. It is worth noting that the Reid Report was criticised by contemporaries and has been criticised since because of its emphasis on prescriptive technocratic solutions rather than ones based on economic feasibility. It was a mining managers'/engineers' blueprint not a politicians' or economists'.

⁷ The Plan for Coal: The National Coal Board's Proposals, National Coal Board, October 1950.

⁸ Jackson, M. P., The Price of Coal, 1974,Croom Helm Ltd, pp.70-99.

⁹ The Plan for Coal: The National Coal Board's Proposals, October 1950. Investing in Coal: Progress and Prospects under the Plan for Coal NCB, April 1956. Schumacher, E.F., 'Plan for Coal', in National Coal Board: The First Ten Years: A Review of the first decade of the nationalised coal mining industry in Britain, 1957,Sir Guy Nott-Bower and G. H. Walkerdine (eds), The Colliery Guardian, pp.61-64.

¹⁰ NUM, Annual Conference Report, 1945: Report of the NUMNEC, May 1945:Situation in the Coal-mining Industry. Report of the Technical Advisory Committee (Reid Committee). 'Coal Nationalisation', Labour Research, Jan 1946, Vol XXXV, No1.

¹¹ 'Coal Nationalisation', Labour Research, Jan 1946, Vol XXXV, No 1.

¹² Pollitt, H, 'What do the Miners' Need', 1953,Pamphlet, CPGB.

¹³ NUMNEC Minutes, 4 May 1951:Appendix IV: Report of Coal Industry National Consultative Council 13th Special Meeting, London 17 April 1951.

¹⁴ NUM, Annual Conference Report, 1951:Resolution 29:South Wales: Re-organisation of Industry Debate.

¹⁵ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1949:Presidential Address: C.L.Tyrer: Annual Conference Report, 1951:Presidential Address: C. L. Tyrer: Future of the Lancashire Coalfield.

¹⁶ 'Coal and Nationalisation', 1946,Labour Research, Jan 1946,Vol XXXV, No 1.

¹⁷ Hayes, G, Collieries in the Manchester Coalfield , n.d., De Archaeologische Pers ,Eindhoven, Netherlands,p.30. Colliery Guardian 23 June 1960. Wilson, H, New Deal for Coal, 1945,pp.166-168, 175-176.

¹⁸ 'Investing in Coal - for Whose Benefit?' Labour Research, June 1956, Vol XLV, No 6,pp.84-87. Public Enterprise: Labour's Review of the Nationalised Industries, 1957, Pamphlet, Labour Party, WCA Gregory/Socialist Collection, Lancaster University Library, Call No 97 TDAea.p.9-12. Success Story: The Nationalised Industries, 1958,Pamphlet, Labour Party, WCA Gregory/Socialist Collection, Lancaster University Library, Call No 97 TDAea.pp.13-19. During the 1950s Conservative and Labour policy on the coal industry substantially revolved around which party was most committed to its modernisation.

¹⁹ Noel-Barker, P, Coal, September 1950, Pamphlet, Labour Party, WCA Gregory/Socialist Collection, Lancaster University Library, Call No 97 UDJea.

²⁰ PRO, File No POWE 37/65: Ministry of Fuel and Power: Coal Division: NCB's Plans for Coal 1949-1952:NCB's National Plan: Draft for Publication, Economic Advisors' Branch 18 October 1950,NCB to Ministry of Fuel and Power 14 October 1950,Ministry of Fuel and Power: The National Plan 25 October 1950,Plan for Coal: Board of Trade Comments on Expected Unemployment: Distribution of Industry and Regional Divisions 2 March 1951, Ministry of Labour and National Service to Ministry of Fuel and Power: Examination of the Plan for Coal 30 April 1951, Coal Industry National Consultative Council Minutes of 30th Meeting to discuss The Plan for Coal, Hobart House, London, 17 April 1951 with NCB, NACODS and the National Association of Colliery Managers.

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CHAPTER FOUR

INDUSTRIAL CHANGE IN THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD: MODERNISATION, RATIONALISATION AND THE ACCELERATED COLLIERY CLOSURE PROGRAMME

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will argue that industrial change in Lancashire was accompanied by a high degree of consensus from both the NCBNWD and the NUMLA leadership, including acceptance of the need for colliery closures. This will be demonstrated through an examination of NUMLA attitudes on key aspects of industrial change and an analysis of the events surrounding four specific closures. This will show that the co-operation of the NUMLA leadership extended to include participation in decisions affecting closures and in arrangements for closure in order to underpin its support for modernisation. Likewise, it will be demonstrated that NUMLA leadership endorsement of the modernisation of coal can be measured by its reluctance to confront the NCBNWD over colliery closures and their outcomes. Furthermore, this chapter will advance the notion that it was how the NUMLA leadership sought to define industrial change in coal which influenced its overriding support for modernisation both through its attitude towards new colliery developments and re-constructions and the modernisation of work processes. Finally, through an assessment of the circumstances of colliery closures it will be argued that 'rank-and-file' opposition to industrial change was fragmented and weak during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

4.2 THE PLAN FOR COAL: MODERNISATION AND RATIONALISATION

If one coalfield exemplified a second tier coalfield in the Reid Report and the 1950 *Plan for Coal* it was Lancashire. From its position as one of Britain's premier coalfields during the nineteenth century it had been in decline for most of the twentieth century. By the

outbreak of the Second World War the coalfield had declined since its zenith during the 1900s on all indices. No other major British coalfield had undergone a "comparable decline".¹ Physically, the Lancashire coalfield had been well worked with many parts exhausted. Geological and mining problems were accumulating in profusion. Deep and costly mining operations combined with technically backward and under-capitalised pits. The small size of colliery companies and fragmented pattern of ownership meant that any hope of improvement remained a distant prospect.² The new larger colliery undertakings created by compulsory re-organisation of the industry after 1930 had only just begun to address the appalling state of the industry. The inter-war period had been the rock upon which any lingering hopes for the coalfield had been irrevocably smashed. Economic depression combined with a coal industry in rapid decline. Between 1915 and 1939 291 collieries were closed leaving just over 100 by the Second World War with the loss of 30,000 mining jobs.³ The economic and social malaise of this period had produced a permanent surplus of 15,000 unemployed miners with most in the enervated central districts of South Lancashire.⁴

The coalfield fitted uncomfortably into the framework envisaged for the post-war coal industry. Both Reid and the 1950 *Plan for Coal* had concluded it would maintain a steady decline. By 1945 it was estimated that only 32 of the 104 collieries in the North-West region would remain by 1975 with employment down from nearly 50,000 to 18,000 during the same period. It was felt that the only future for the industry in Lancashire was to concentrate output on a few viable areas of the coalfield where economically accessible coal reserves remained. This meant only a restricted number of new collieries and re-constructed pits, which were able to undergo technical re-organisation, would remain with the rest facing an uncertain future.⁵ The only sources of optimism was the coalfield's proximity to one of the largest markets in Britain with rail access restricted from the expanding South Yorkshire and East Midlands coalfields. In addition, certain areas of the coalfield had the potential for expansion.⁶ The future of the industry in Lancashire was in the south western area where relatively undisturbed reserves of coal existed. Private owners had pinned their hopes on expansion here as the coalfield had been gradually 'moving' in a south westerly direction.⁷ In addition, there was some potential to the west and north-west of the Manchester conurbation and in North East Lancashire. By contrast, the older more heavily worked central district of south Lancashire had little future.⁸

During the immediate post-war period with high demand for coal and continuing worries over coal shortages pits that might otherwise have closed remained open.⁹ Furthermore, the growing requirements of the power industry provided a lifeline.¹⁰ However, the collapse in coal consumption from the late 1950s brought new problems for the Lancashire industry exacerbated by the structural decline and technological change experienced by its traditional customers. Similarly, power sales suffered from the encroachment of alternative fuels and the plethora of older, low capacity coal-fired power stations in the region which the electricity generators wanted to de-commission.¹¹ Lancashire's reliance on the sale of good quality coal for town gas production, domestic and industrial customers became a liability because what future there was for the British coal industry lay elsewhere in poorer quality coal for electricity generation.

If industrial change in coal was to be a success it had to succeed in coalfields like Lancashire given the multifarious complexity of its problems. The coalfield could be seen as a model for industrial change during this period. The scale of its problems required the development of two new collieries and 'major' colliery re-constructions with the remainder undergoing either 'minor' re-construction or facing closure. The two new collieries were at Agecroft in the Manchester district and Parkside in the St.Helens district.¹² In addition there were thirteen major re-constructions.¹³ By the mid-1960s it was expected that the new pits, together with the major re-constructions would supply the bulk of output with the remainder coming from the 'minor' re-constructions.¹⁴ It was clear at the outset that the two new pits would be the jewels in the crown of modernisation in Lancashire. Equally, hopes were high for the re-constructed 'showpiece' collieries at Bold, Bradford, and Mosley Common where the majority of investment for re-construction was allocated.¹⁵ Both the divisional board and the NUMLA were excited by these projects because it gave hope to a dying coalfield.¹⁶ It was anticipated that the coal reserves at the new pits would sustain a viable industry in Lancashire until at least the end of the century.¹⁷ Indeed, Parkside was seen as one of the most promising new projects in the whole of the NCB's modernisation scheme.¹⁸ The new pits and major re-constructions were expected to become 'big hitters' in terms of production into which both capital and manpower were to be concentrated to ensure their success.¹⁹ The priorities of industrial change in coal in Lancashire were completely sub-ordinated to the need to see these projects come to fruition. Modernisation meant that these collieries would replace many 'short life' pits.²⁰

The large investment in the new pits was a measure of the importance the Coal Board attached to them. This was substantially increased without question when progress began to stall.²¹

An indication of how these projects monopolised the divisional board's priorities was provided by the manpower question. 'Manning-up' these pits meant transferring trained manpower from 'short life' pits. The importance the divisional board attached to the development of Parkside can be seen through the size of the manpower 'pool' 'allocated' for transfer to Parkside involving eighteen collieries covering much of south-west Lancashire. This was three times Parkside's expected 'manned-up' workforce.²² Similarly, at Agecroft, four collieries in the Manchester district were earmarked as manpower 'reservoirs' scheduled to close to ensure that Agecroft had an excess of trained workers available.²³ Agecroft's actual workforce peaked well short of the 2,000 anticipated by the time it went into full production.²⁴ In fact, the conception of the new pits was based on low manpower requirements because they were to become capital-intensive pits sustaining high production targets. The planning for these projects indicated how anxious the board was to obtain the required level of trained manpower to prevent derailment of its modernisation plans. Consequently, well before the collapse in coal consumption increased the tempo of industrial change the divisional board had decided where closures might occur. The board stressed to the NUMLA the necessity of maintaining the pace of modernisation. For the NUMLA this meant having to accept pit closures to secure the future of the industry in Lancashire. Moreover, the attractions of better remuneration and conditions in the modernised collieries were further incentives to facilitate NUMLA co-operation throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.²⁵

There were many tasty morsels to dangle in front of the NUMLA to make looming pit closures more palatable. Likewise, modernisation allowed the divisional board to argue that rationalisation was not about 'displacing' miners but about the renewal of the industry. The divisional board offered the NUMLA the prospect that many 'displaced' miners would have a guaranteed future in one of the modernised pits. These were important arguments in winning NUMLA support for industrial change. Not that the NUMLA leadership needed much persuasion. It was convinced of the efficacy of modernisation in Lancashire, indeed

modernisation during the late 1950s and early 1960s helped maintain what was already an extremely cordial relationship between the NUMLA and the NCBNWD. The divisional chairman, Colonel Bolton, and the NUMLA secretary, Edwin Hall, enjoyed a working partnership.²⁶ There were differences over modernisation. Hall was considered by the divisional board to be less passionate about the pace of technological change particularly over the introduction of power loading. As a result, Hall was more ambivalent on questions of pit level concentration than the board would have wished. This position should be seen in contrast to Hall's successor Joe Gormley who saw modernisation as a device to force concessions from the NCB through improved terms and conditions for those remaining in the industry. This position helped consolidate Gormley's power base within the NUMLA.²⁷ Nevertheless industrial change proceeded in a benign atmosphere cosseted by a high degree of mutual understanding between leading officials of the NCBNWD and the NUMLA including the issue of closures. The relationship between Bolton, and Hall's respective successors, Anderton and Gormley, was not as close. Both were ambitious and successful men within the coal industry. They had differences over specific aspects of industrial change while Anderton's personal manner was more abrasive than the avuncular Bolton. However, throughout Anderton's chairmanship there was continuance of shared commitment to modernisation of the industry. In this, Anderton, through his experience and calling established himself as a major influence on modernisation.²⁸

The level of support the NUMLA leadership gave to modernisation was highlighted by the position it adopted on some aspects of industrial change. One was its attitude towards localised adult 'green labour' recruitment embargoes. In 1958, in order to facilitate pit closures, the divisional board agreed to impose recruitment bans in areas of the coalfield where pits were to close. In 1960, there was a recruitment crisis because pit closures were deterring new entrants. This crisis was most acute in the Manchester district which enjoyed better alternative employment prospects. Bradford colliery in east Manchester was suffering from acute recruitment problems. The colliery became the catalyst for the divisional board to argue successfully for the lifting of local recruitment embargoes across the coalfield.²⁹ It signalled the NUMLA's willingness to support the Board's endeavours to maintain the pace of modernisation while relegating concerns over pit closures. Leading figures in the NUMLA, such as Joe Gormley, were prominent in offering a high degree of

support over the Board's manpower requirements throughout the 1960s while failing to question pit closures.³⁰

The divisional board appreciated the co-operation of the NUMLA in ensuring that the direction and pace of industrial change was maintained.³¹ While there was a desire to minimise unemployment the board's primary objective was smooth manpower transfers from closures and concentrations to the new projects to maintain the modernisation drive. This called for some finely balanced judgements.³² Timing was of the essence, as was reducing the possibility for confrontation over closures. This was achieved by giving the unions priority in the closure consultation process. In order to reduce the opportunity for confrontation over individual pit closures, announcements were made of tranches of closures. Similarly, the Coal Board made use of phased closures involving rigorous concentration programmes leading to final closure or offered short-and longer-term reprieves. This helped introduce flexibility to the Board's strategy by facilitating manpower transfer synchronisation as well as the political expediency it offered in maintaining relations with the unions.³³

The divisional board was mindful of other factors relevant to the closure process. One important aspect was the spatial perspective. This influenced the pattern of industrial change in Lancashire. Both sides of the industry accepted that the older heavily worked central district of the South Lancashire coalfield would bear the brunt of closures. Similarly, it was acknowledged that the Manchester district was to be the "test-bed" of modernisation with many closures facilitating renewal of an area containing major modernisation projects.³⁴ In the two remaining districts of North-East Lancashire and St.Helens the board felt more constrained. North-East Lancashire was politically sensitive due to the special problems of the area. The divisional board was anxious not add to the unemployment problems of the sub-region because of the severe decline of textiles. The board was willing to close pits in this area but with more brakes on closures than elsewhere in the coalfield.³⁵ The board declared the St.Helens district virtually 'off limits' to closures because it was the only expanding area of the coalfield.³⁶ Closures here might have had negative consequences for modernisation because it would have questioned the future of the coalfield thus increasing 'manpower drift' and running the risk of damaging relations with the unions.

The main priority of the divisional board was to proceed with modernisation to ensure the future of Lancashire coal. Implicit in this was a recognition that modernisation would be sustained through colliery closures. The NUMLA leadership co-operated because they were as anxious as the board to ensure the success of modernisation.³⁷ The NUMLA accepted that to deliver a modernised industry it would have to make concessions and sacrifices such as lifting recruitment embargoes and pit closures. The divisional board recognised its' had a difficult task in driving through industrial change. It required the fullest co-operation from the NUMLA. This realisation influenced the character and pattern of pit closures as the divisional board wanted to ensure it did not damage relations with the NUMLA. This level of agreement was underpinned by the close working relationship between the divisional board and the NUMLA which had developed at the highest level since vesting date.

4.3 THE ACCELERATED COLLIERY CLOSURE PROGRAMME

By the mid-1960s each side of the coal industry in Lancashire justified its support for modernisation by claiming that a successful transition had been achieved. The huge scale of colliery closures under the 1959 programme had been completed. The two new collieries were fully operational and 'manned-up' while the re-construction of collieries was all but finished. Both the divisional board and the NUMLA could draw comfort from the success of the modernisation of the industry in Lancashire providing the basis for its continued existence.³⁸ Gormley, joined Lord Robens, when he promised a great future for Lancashire miners in a modernised, technologically advanced coal industry. Both sides of the industry believed they had come through a difficult period which had been worthwhile to ensure the viability of the industry in Lancashire.³⁹

Optimism was reinforced by a view that the ACP in Lancashire would not result in the scale of contraction envisaged in other coalfields. The initial announcement saw the closure of nine collieries plus four reprieved under the 1959 Plan. This was seen against the scale of the rationalisation during the 1959-1965 period which had closed 31 collieries and reduced the workforce from just over 44,000 to 25,500.⁴⁰ There was thus some

justification for mineworkers to share this optimistic outlook. However, there were salient factors which made the ACP more significant in Lancashire. Though the number of collieries initially affected by the ACP was less than the 1959-1965 period it came on the back of six years of intensive decline. It was the cumulative effect of large numbers of pit closures which formed the background to further contraction in Lancashire. Importantly, transfer opportunities for miners were greatly reduced under the ACP because the new projects were fully manned. Aside from an upsurge in the rush to leave the industry after the 1965 announcement, the trend of 'manpower drift' was beginning to ebb creating a surplus of miners seeking transfers within the industry as 'absorption' possibilities diminished.⁴¹ The closures of the late 1960s saw Lancashire miners travelling further to retain a job in mining, often having to make several forced moves as pits closed while others had to move to other divisions for the first time in greater numbers.⁴² To compound problems, modernisation introduced the more widespread practice of shift work to a coalfield with a tradition of single shift working which exacerbated the difficulties involved in travelling to work.⁴³ To make matters worse, a large numbers of miners had transferred to new pits for lower wages and on lower grades to keep a job in coal. Furthermore, although major unemployment was not a significant feature during the 1959-1965 period this worsened considerably during the late 1960s.⁴⁴ There was also a less benign general economic climate from the late 1960s while contraction had an inordinate impact on unskilled, older, and 'disabled' mineworkers.⁴⁵

Furthermore, colliery closures developed a particular spatial pattern within the coalfield. The older central parts of South Lancashire were worst affected because of high occupational concentrations of mineworkers; an ageing workforce; and less alternative employment.⁴⁶ In the 'Wigan coalfield' - the industry's symbolic heartland in Lancashire - pit closures ripped the core out of the coalfield ending hundreds of years of mining tradition. In this area there were 24 closures in less than twenty years, with eighteen of those in the ten years following the 1959 Revised Plan.⁴⁷ By the mid-1960s for those in Lancashire caught in the headlights of Labour's further contraction there was every reason to fear the future rather than embrace it. These fears were increased by Government assertions that the coalfield was capable of sustaining further contraction without special ameliorative measures.⁴⁸

The modernisation of the coalfield had proceeded under the writ of an iron law resting on the success and guaranteed future of the new pits and re-constructions. The most important effect of the ACP in Lancashire was the way it shook the foundations of confidence in the future. The divisional board and the NUMLA had consistently assured mineworkers that the future of the coalfield would be best guaranteed through the continued success of modernisation. The ACP cut deeper into coal industry capacity than envisaged in 1965 because of the increasing success of alternative fuels aided by the Government's new fuel policy. Under the ACP collieries closed which were expected to have a long-term future.⁴⁹ Six of the collieries: Astley Green, Bank Hall, Bradford, Clock Face, Mosley Common and Thorney Bank were the new modernised re-constructed collieries to which mineworkers had transferred with assurances that they carried the future of the industry in Lancashire. Three of the aforementioned collieries: Astley Green, Bradford and Mosley Common were important re-developments seen as crucial to the successful modernisation of the Manchester district. Moreover, they were large employers. Closure in 1968 and 1970 saw over 5,500 jobs disappear. Against this background the ACP made the post-1965 period an altogether different experience for Lancashire miners than rationalisation under the 1959 Revised Plan. This was informed by disbelief at Labour's fuel and further coal contraction policy. The late 1960s was one marked by the final shattering of the dream of modernisation. Rising tensions and the search for scapegoats accompanied the growing realisation that much of the effort of the post-war period had been in vain. In Lancashire, the dimensions of industrial change had been such that by 1972 there was only a rump of a coal industry to feel aggrieved, consisting of the two new collieries and seven re-constructed pits. These survived the 1960s to see some measure of stability return for coal during the 1970s.

4.4 AN ANATOMY OF CLOSURE: FOUR COLLIERY CLOSURES IN THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD

i. MAYPOLE COLLIERY 1959: A PIT FROM THE PAST

Maypole colliery was situated four miles south east of Wigan in the vicinity of Abram township. The Coal Board was committed to closing Maypole as part of the Special

Review of 'uneconomic' collieries in 1958. However, because this was a phased closure, occurring during the planning for the 1959 Revised Plan, it was re-scheduled as part of that programme.⁵⁰ The first phase of closure in March 1959 came less than a year after the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of a major pit disaster at Maypole,⁵¹ attended by the great and the good of Lancashire mining society.⁵² The closure therefore came at a particularly poignant time for a pit still etched on the folk memory. By coincidence, the Board had decided to close one highly symbolic representation of the coalfield's past.

The Coal Board closed Maypole because its operating results had been consistently poor since vesting date. The colliery's performance had been scrutinised as one of a number of under performing collieries in the division in the light of declining demand for coal. The divisional board offered a bleak prognosis for Maypole including low productivity and output, poor marketability and high production costs.⁵³ These factors were not unusual in the coalfield. The decisive factor for Maypole was its size and potential. It was a big pit in terms of output and manpower - the largest nationally within the 'Special Review' - but, an old colliery situated within an exhausted part of the coalfield. Its overall contribution to divisional production and large coal reserves had ensured it had remained open since vesting date because of high demand for coal. But, in the context of declining demand its prospects were dim as the Coal Board argued that its reserves were not 'economically' exploitable. It had become a loss leader while its size made it an attractive proposition for closure because it allowed costs to be cut at a stroke.⁵⁴ For the Board, Maypole had ceased to be a mining proposition.⁵⁵ In the circumstances of the dire position of the industry during the late 1950s Maypole's position had become untenable.

The Coal Board had some reservations about closing Maypole, chiefly the vexatious issue of manpower. There was no question of wholesale redundancies which would have been politically unacceptable to the Board and the NUMLA.⁵⁶ Moreover, the Board needed to retain trained mineworkers to facilitate its modernisation plans elsewhere in the coalfield. They would have liked the majority of the trained mineworkers at Maypole to transfer to the new projects. However, Parkside - the preferred receiving pit - was still under construction and not yet ready to take a full complement of miners. The Board was therefore faced with a manpower Diaspora throughout re-constructed pits in the Wigan and St.Helens districts. The other option was for a transfer across the coalfield to Agecroft in

the Manchester district which would soon require a manpower build-up.⁵⁷ However, these potential transfers were problematic for the Board in terms of synchronising 'displacement' and transfer. Traditionally, although there was a high degree of labour mobility within the coalfield, mineworkers from the central districts tended to travel within the Wigan district or to the adjacent expanding St. Helens district. On the other hand, latitudinal movement in both directions across the coalfield to the Manchester district created special problems because of impediments caused by distance, poor transport links and the costs and time involved particularly for those on shift work.⁵⁸ Furthermore, intra-coalfield cultural traditions including choice of residential location further conspired against latitudinal mobility. This invisible fracture running north-to-south through the middle of the South Lancashire coalfield created a dilemma for the Board. For this reason they were anxious not only to obtain the maximum co-operation of the NUMLA but also to acquire its active participation in ensuring the successful closure of Maypole in which manpower was effectively and smoothly transferred.

Colonel Bolton met informally with Hall ahead of the formal negotiations for the closure of Maypole. He found Hall appreciative of the difficulties the divisional board was facing.⁵⁹ Hall accepted that Maypole would close and the men re-deployed. Bolton noted that "with Edwin Hall's co-operative understanding of the position and really sound plan for the re-deployment of the men, I feel sure that we will be able to see through the closure of Maypole".⁶⁰ Thus, Hall had effectively conceded closure before both sides of the industry entered into formal negotiations during December 1958. Hall's informal acceptance pre-dated negotiations at the national level in which the NUM agreed to co-operate with colliery closures, but, rejected the notion of closure 'in principle'. Consequently, while the national position on closures eventually limited Hall's room for manoeuvre there is no question of him having been constrained prior to national talks. When formal negotiations did take place between the NUMLA and the divisional board on Maypole Hall's negotiating strategy reflected the national position. There was a desire to co-operate with the board, but the NUMLA asserted it was unable to approve the closure of Maypole 'in principle' in order to solve the industry's problems. It felt the NCB could have done more in other areas of operations to reduce costs. The NUMLA put a number of alternative scenarios to the divisional board which were rejected. Despite the position adopted by the NUMLA it had all but surrendered Maypole because it accepted closure

based on guarantees offered by the divisional board. These guarantees included a continuation of the recruitment embargo with preference given to displaced Maypole miners to transfer to other pits in the coalfield and a commitment to work with the NUMLA to ensure transferees suffered no loss of earnings or reduction of grade. The NUMLA made a great claim that it had wrung a concession from the divisional board to phase-in closure throughout 1959. Yet, this was hardly significant because it had already been agreed at the national level as a way of easing the closures under the Special Review. Moreover, it accorded with the divisional board's requirement to ensure a planned transfer of mineworkers.⁶¹

The NUMLA's strategy was one of adopting the pretence of a principled position while effectively surrendering closure by agreeing to co-operate in exchange for substantive guarantees from the divisional board to make closure more acceptable. Hall's position prior to, and during, negotiations amounted to a NUMLA *de facto* acceptance of closure. The somewhat bizarre behaviour of leading officials after the event lends credence to this view. For example, Hammond, who had actively participated in negotiations, clung to the belief that the NUMLA had not conceded closure. Hammond corrected the Maypole delegate for suggesting that because they had agreed to co-operate in closure they had by implication surrendered the "principle of closure".⁶² There were reasons for Hammond's prickly attitude. Firstly, in spite of this exercise in semantics, the NUMLA leadership knew that playing with words would not avoid the conclusion that the colliery would be closing because of its acquiescence. Secondly, it knew that by surrendering Maypole they had opened the floodgates for wholesale pit closures in Lancashire. During the negotiations over Maypole it became apparent what the scale of closures might be under the 1959 Plan. Indeed, Hammond, had cast himself in the role of a Cassandra. He indicated to the divisional board that if collieries such as Maypole were to close then it put many more in jeopardy. However, Hammond did not press the board over the rationale of closures, rather he moved the debate to one about the manner and outcome of closures - an entirely different strategy accompanied by an entirely different set of priorities.⁶³

The position adopted by the NUMLA in response to the reaction to closure is further evidence of its retreat from an engagement with the divisional board over Maypole. The local council at Abram demanded a mass protest involving the local community,

mineworkers, and the unions. Labour dominated the authority with a strong and traditional representation by councillors with mining connections.⁶⁴ Abram Council wanted to form a “defence committee” against closure in the same way as a number of local authorities in other coalfields.⁶⁵ There was a desire to save ‘their’ pit. The NUMLA was horrified at this prospect. Hall rejected the idea point-blank. He wanted the future of Maypole to be decided by mining ‘professionals’ in which closure would be determined by Hall and Bolton head-to-head in the proverbial smoke-filled room. Hall felt that talk of “mass protests” was dangerous.⁶⁶ The NCBNWD echoed this view believing that pit closures brought out “interested amateurs” from the community.⁶⁷ Other leading officials rejected ‘outside’ involvement in closure. Hammond, in particular, rejected direct action. He unequivocally supported Hall by asserting “we cannot barricade a pit off if the Board says it is going to close, but we will have to find all means at our disposal to change the Board’s policy. The Union will have to decide the means”⁶⁸ With a rejection from the NUMLA, Abram Council appealed to the Labour MP for Ince, Tom Brown, only to see its overtures rejected. Brown, a former miner and leading NUMLA official, supported the line that closure should be a matter between unions and management.⁶⁹

Abram Council made a similar plea to Alan Fitch, the new Labour MP for neighbouring Wigan, to save Maypole. Fitch, another ex-Lancashire miner, believed pit closure should be decided within the industry. Fitch maintained a fundamental belief in the ability of the Coal Board to plan for modernisation. He, argued that the problems of the industry, in which Maypole was a regrettable victim, were not the fault of the NCB but stemmed from Tory fuel policy. He told miners in Wigan district that the solution lay with the Coal Board working in conjunction with a Labour government committed to the planned development of the fuel industries. Fitch left pitmen in the Wigan area in no doubt what this perspective meant. He told them not think with the “mentality of a Luddite” because change would come, but it would be properly managed by a Labour government. In admitting Wigan district was a ‘dying area’ for mining he argued that the future lay in having confidence in the NCB’s ability to see through industrial change and in embracing new industrial growth which would mushroom under the planned economic and social policies of a Labour government. Finally, Fitch asked Wigan miners to be thankful that pit closures were taking place in such a benign regime rather than under private capital.⁷⁰ Fitch’s intervention was influential in affecting outcomes on closures in the Wigan district generally and at

Maypole in particular. Miners believed that although they faced a *fait accompli* over closures they were offered some hope for the future with Labour. Thus, as far as Maypole was concerned there was no prospect that Fitch might have taken action to save the colliery.

The other hope for Maypole lay within the NUMLA. The debate over closure indicated that NUMLA delegates were divided over what action they should take. The character of the debate demonstrated the extent to which the NUMLA was prepared to go to save the pit. It also highlighted the position taken by leading NUMLA officials on industrial change. They had accepted the closure of Maypole and by inference many more pits. The only remaining issue was how to handle the outcome of closures. A minority of delegates led by the 'militant' colliery at Sandhole called for a firm stand against pit closures on the basis that if they did nothing it would be a clear signal to the divisional board of NUMLA's *cart blanche* acceptance of closures. In calling for the mobilisation of the entire labour movement against Tory inspired pit closures, Sandhole believed that closures would end with the return of a Labour Government with a more socialistic commitment to the coal industry.⁷¹

The call to arms was vigorously rejected by leading NUMLA officials such as Joe Gormley who successfully argued that industrial action would weaken the NUMLA's case and risked jeopardising the transfer of miners from Maypole to other collieries. According to Gormley co-operation rather than confrontation was required in which miners should concentrate on making the coal industry competitive and efficient against its competitors. This amounted to an unequivocal endorsement of industrial change. It was a view accepted by a majority of the Lancashire executive and delegates. Hammond took a less supportive view of industrial change, only in as much as he felt that the NCB could have taken measures to avoid closing pits like Maypole such as reducing open-cast operations. Nevertheless by endorsing Gormley's call for co-operation, Hammond showed that he agreed with the tenets of industrial change. In concluding the debate within the NUMLA, Hall felt that the majority against taking industrial action was a boost for the union with a General Election looming. He believed it was necessary to support the return of a Labour Government with a fuel policy to save the coal industry. The NUMLA continued to reject

the closure of Maypole “in principle” but pledged to co-operate with the divisional board in effecting closure to ensure proper transfer of miners.⁷²

With the union resigned to *de facto* closure there was one last hope for Maypole. This lay with the colliery’s branch committee. Again, there was no possibility of saving the colliery from this quarter. The key figure at the colliery was the NUM branch secretary, Frank Pelly. He followed the NUMLA line by denying that it had surrendered the ‘principle’ of closure but admitted they faced a *fait accompli* in which Maypole would close.⁷³ There was an added element to the closure. Pelly was the leading figure on the Wigan panel having periodically represented it on the Lancashire executive since 1950. Pelly was essentially a union man first and foremost, though he was also a leading Labour Party loyalist and moderate. He became Alan Fitch’s champion in ensuring Wigan miners supported Fitch’s selection leading to his successful nomination by Wigan Trades Council and Labour Party for the parliamentary seat. Pelly’s ‘delivery’ of the Wigan miners was crucial to Fitch’s success. Fitch saw the Wigan miners as a vital weapon in his election war chest.⁷⁴ Thereafter, the support of the miners became an essential element in developing Fitch’s fiefdom in Wigan. Fitch was the NUMLA’s choice as a sponsored MP. He had been a nominee to whom Hall had given his full support. Fitch heaped praise on both Hall and Pelly because they had both been instrumental in securing his selection.⁷⁵ On the question of coal industry modernisation there was complete accord between Fitch and Pelly. Pelly was a close confidant of Hall and later became one of Gormley’s principal lieutenants. He was very much in the same mould as Hall. Frank King, later to become NUMNWA president, described Pelly as a “well respected and well established union man of the old order”.⁷⁶ Pelly was a clearly a well-regarded official in whom the NUMLA leadership and Labour had complete confidence. As the NCBNWD wryly observed, the level of resistance expected to closure was ordinarily a function of the extent to which branch union officials were able to retain personal influence, privilege and power.⁷⁷ It is not without coincidence that Pelly later obtained the high profile position of full-time branch secretary at the new Parkside colliery after Maypole branch was dissolved.⁷⁸ That Pelly, both by practice and persuasion, was unlikely to move to save Maypole was the final devastating blow. The neutralisation of the branch committee through personal and political patronage completed the panoply of rejection for attempts to save Maypole. Many miners at Maypole felt isolated as they faced a climate of “betrayal and resentment”.⁷⁹ For

the majority, a mood of grim resignation descended prefacing the headlong dash for a job at another colliery.

During the phased closure it was clear that NUMLA co-operation with the divisional board was limitless. While the NUMLA had a duty to ensure that mineworkers were transferred to new collieries on the same terms, the manner of their departure from Maypole was indicative of the union's willingness to facilitate closure. Pelly unilaterally arranged transfers of men to other collieries by canvassing union colleagues at other branches - a practice approved by the NUMLA leadership.⁸⁰ Little wonder the Coal Board praised the NUMLA for its "good understanding".⁸¹ The union was so eager to co-operate with closure that this practice led to the transfer of men without proper negotiations or authorisation. Miners who had assumed they had secured a place at a receiving pit on the same terms found they had been re-employed on a lower grade and less money. This resulted in miners leaving the industry in disillusionment thus defeating the concept of a planned transfer of trained manpower.⁸²

Another way in which the union co-operated with closure was the assistance it gave to the divisional board with manpower transfer in preference to securing the needs of mineworkers. A few fortunate transferees went to collieries in the St. Helens district, many of which remained open beyond the 1960s.⁸³ Others were less fortunate. They joined the ranks of the "industrial gypsies" destined to roam the Lancashire coalfield from colliery to colliery as receiving collieries were themselves closed.⁸⁴ The divisional board wanted a significant number of the 'displacements' transferred across the coalfield to collieries in the Manchester district, including Agecroft, in order to ensure the manpower build-up there continued unabated. The NUMLA assisted the divisional board's attempts to transfer mineworkers to Agecroft to ensure that this important new project was not derailed despite the problems experienced by miners in making this difficult transfer.⁸⁵

The closure of Maypole colliery was undertaken in circumstances in which the NUMLA had to operate within the limits established by national negotiations. Within these limits it could be argued that it negotiated the best possible deal for mineworkers at Maypole including an attractive portfolio of guarantees. On the other hand, as this assessment has shown, the fate of the colliery was sealed before formal negotiations took place. Moreover,

formal negotiations witnessed incredulity from the union by suggesting that it had not surrendered the 'principle of closure' by agreeing to 'co-operate with closure'. This position was made all the more risible by the NUMLA continuing to maintain this position as the demolition teams were gathering at Maypole. It had good reason to be defensive. Maypole was the first of many. The NUMLA had sent a powerful signal around the coal industry in Lancashire that it would not be opposing pit closures. The debate over Maypole within the union served to confirm this position through the rejection of industrial action to save the pit. The union's active participation in the management of Maypole's closure, together with its rejection of outside 'interference', underlined its willingness to co-operate. The close links between the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield were important in offsetting any adverse reaction from the NUM branch at Maypole. Through the benchmark established by Maypole the divisional board was aware that the NUMLA was prepared to support industrial change in Lancashire with few reservations. Significantly, as the case of Maypole illustrated, co-operation extended to include closure on 'economic' grounds as well as 'exhaustion'. Co-operation had a more profound aspect. The NUMLA and leadership and Labour in the coalfield chafed at the Tories over fuel policy blaming the Government for the closure of Maypole. These attacks rarely extended to the Coal Board. The Board, in pursuing these policies was seen as acting for its Tory masters. There was, in this view, nothing wrong with modernising the industry and closing pits as long as this was the prerogative of a Labour government undertaking the scheme in a more effective and 'humane' way. Consequently, the closure of pits which had expended their useful life was a certainty. For Maypole, and the other pits from the past, the powerful range of forces impelling modernisation meant that there was nothing else to expect other than extinction.

ii. SANDHOLE COLLIERY 1962: A SACRIFICE TO MODERNISATION

Sandhole colliery was situated between Swinton and Walkden, 5 miles south east of Bolton and 6 miles north west of Manchester in the Manchester district of the coalfield. Its closure in September 1962 came toward the end of a period in which closures under the 1959 *Revised Plan for Coal* had seen nineteen of the 24 scheduled collieries close by mid-1962. Sandhole colliery was one of five collieries in Lancashire added to the original 1959 Revised Plan under the 'Review of the Revised Plan' undertaken during 1961-1963. The

four years following the 1959 Revised Plan marked one of the most intensive periods of colliery closure in the history of the coalfield. Sandhole's closure was much less one announcement than one achieved by stealth beginning in late 1960 and ending with final closure in 1962.

Unlike Maypole and many of the pits closed under the 1959 Revised Plan, Sandhole was a controversial and contentious closure. The main source of conflict was its future as a mining proposition. The NUMLA including the branch committee at Sandhole contested closure. Sandhole represented a golden opportunity for the NUMLA to oppose a closure for the first time amid increasing dissatisfaction within the union over the scale and rapidity of closures. While arguments over closure centred on its future as a mining proposition the overriding reason was to release manpower to facilitate the modernisation programme. The fact that this became a necessity for the NUMLA as well as the divisional board saw the union in a spectacular retreat in its first test of resolve in confronting the board over closures. Sandhole was expected to have a future until at least 1974.⁸⁶ Even by exigencies of the 1959 Plan, Sandhole was a reasonable mining prospect.⁸⁷ For the NUMLA and Sandhole miners there was no reason to expect the colliery would close, it was a receiving pit for transferees from other collieries and a 'minor' re-construction having gained a reputation as an experimental pit for new equipment and techniques.⁸⁸

The first indication that there might be trouble came in August 1960 when one of the mines (underground district) at Sandhole became the source of a dispute. Colliery management and the NUM branch committee clashed over a decision to begin concentration at Sandhole by closing the mine and re-deploying miners to other mines within the colliery. As branch union officials argued with management the real reason for closure became apparent. The move was less to do with the feasibility of the mine than about manpower. The Manchester district continued to suffer the most chronic recruitment and retention problems in the coalfield even after the ban on adult recruitment had been lifted.⁸⁹ The manpower situation at Sandhole was worsened as mineworkers left the industry because of worries over pit closures. Concentration was therefore more about effectively utilising available manpower than about technical feasibility. On this occasion, the branch was fully supported by senior NUMLA officials. They believed that the move at Sandhole was inappropriate and unfair. It was felt the management was forcing through a scheme of

concentration, with the support of the divisional board, which was unjustified on technical grounds. Sandhole branch committee harboured more sinister suspicions believing management reluctance to offer assurances on further concentration raised concerns over the future of the entire colliery.⁹⁰

The divisional board was moving toward a decision during 1960-61 to close the whole colliery. It was beginning to incur heavy losses because of mining problems although this was not exceptional in the coalfield. The main reason for closure was manpower. The divisional board had, by early 1961, designated Sandhole as an extra manpower 'reservoir' to 'man-up' Agecroft. The board was concerned Agecroft might be unable to move into full production without a sufficient manpower complement thus jeopardising the whole modernisation scheme in Lancashire and with it the future of the coalfield.⁹¹ Given the manpower crisis in Manchester district more collieries had to close to provide Agecroft with the necessary manpower. Existing closures earmarked as 'manpower reservoirs' had proved insufficient.⁹² As the new colliery at Agecroft neared completion so the arguments for full closure of Sandhole on "manpower grounds" gathered momentum. By 1962 Sandhole's complete closure was seen as essential by the divisional board.⁹³ The board felt it was more effective to transfer the trained mineworkers at Sandhole to Agecroft with a "productive future" than have them drift away from Sandhole as it began to experience mining problems. A phased closure was preferred because it allowed men to be gradually transferred to Agecroft so that closure and manpower build-up was synchronised. The divisional board did have reservations over the Sandhole closure. The chief concern was that the NUMLA, particularly at branch level, would oppose closure based on an argument in favour of Sandhole as a mining proposition. The branch at Sandhole had a 'militant' reputation and the pit had a poor industrial relations record. Accordingly, the board prepared for an adverse response.⁹⁴

The industrial relations situation at Sandhole highlighted a concern that became a feature of closure. Colliery management had been at loggerheads with the branch committee over the implementation of power loading. This change was seen as vital if the remaining mines at Sandhole were to stay operational. The concentrated workings were those in which it was expected that power loading would operate most effectively. The board believed that politically motivated 'militant' officials at Sandhole were orchestrating this issue, together

with other pit level issues, in collusion with other factions throughout the Manchester district.⁹⁵ The two leading NUM officials at Sandhole: Joe Clarke and Ted Woolley were two prominent left-wingers within the NUMLA. Clarke, in the Labour Party, but on the left, also sat on the union executive as delegate for the panel which included Sandhole. Woolley was member of the Trotskyite Socialist Labour League⁹⁶. The divisional board described dealings with branch officials at Sandhole thus:

“The industrial relations situation has always been very poor. The NUM branch secretary is a Communist or fellow traveller who is more concerned with witch hunting to pillory management with responsibility than to do anything constructive to help the colliery”.⁹⁷

The divisional board’s solution to poor industrial relations at Sandhole was to threaten it with closure by concentrating it to the point where closure might become inevitable. It hoped that by holding the sword of Damocles over the colliery it might frighten the NUM branch committee into co-operating with the arrangements and terms for concentrating production and introducing new technology while simultaneously extracting ‘suitable’ transferees for Agecroft.⁹⁸

The board’s strategy of letting the pit wither in the hope that it could force a more co-operative spirit while extracting transferees and retaining the option of keeping the pit open in some reduced capacity was highly problematic. The strategy was destined to have negative consequences because it inflamed rather than soothed pre-existing tensions. The branch committee became more aggrieved believing that the board was “softening them up” for closure while the state of uncertainty it created worsened the problem by increasing ‘manpower drift’.⁹⁹ The final closure of the colliery announced under the ‘Review of the Revised Plan’ in the spring of 1962 was the last word. However, matters had come to a head during the summer of 1961. These events effectively sealed the fate of the colliery before the pressure of the Review made Sandhole a candidate for closure.¹⁰⁰

The summer of 1961 saw matters reach a critical point. The divisional board’s strategy of concentration meant it was faced with a decision over whether to close further mines. It accepted that these mines were essential to the colliery’s future viability. Closure meant

sounding the death knell for the colliery by leaving only those mines which had a doubtful future. The issues for the board included economic and technical feasibility and the continuing industrial relations problems, particularly those arising from technological change. However, it was the prospect of the manpower release through the closure of Sandhole which was paramount in these considerations. It was felt that the declining workforce at Sandhole should be released to Agecroft in order that this project could proceed to completion without delay.¹⁰¹

The NUMLA regarded the closure of mines at Sandhole as crucial to its response to colliery closures not just at Sandhole but throughout the whole coalfield. During the 'process' of closing Sandhole there was much support for the branch committee from the NUMLA executive and delegates from other collieries, especially in the Manchester district. There was a widespread belief that the divisional board was not only closing a colliery which should remain open but that they had gone about it in a shabby way.¹⁰² The manner of closure was in part influenced by the accession of Anderton as divisional chairman. Anderton - a technocrat and 'moderniser'- wanted to push through industrial change much more rapidly than his predecessor. Critically for Sandhole, he wanted the new collieries, such as Agecroft, and the re-constructions, operational without further delay. Anderton was much more the ambitious modern professional mining manager than his predecessor Colonel Bolton, who would have handled matters in a less insistent manner¹⁰³. The branch committee at Sandhole was adamant that the question of further concentration should be fought at all costs. They argued that the issue should represent the point at which the NUMLA should not accept further colliery closures. The committee's assertion received full backing from the NUMLA leadership and branch delegates.¹⁰⁴

By the summer of 1961 the NUMLA appeared to be saying in unison that pit closures should go no further. While the NUMLA seemed to be girding its loins for a fight the situation was in reality much more ambiguous. On the one hand, while the branch committee at Sandhole and its supporters wanted to make a stand, there were indications of greater reluctance from the union leadership. Leading union officials only lent their support because of the strength of feeling developing in the branches. Even that support was contingent, expressed through strong protests to the divisional board and a great deal of rhetoric. Gormley seemed to mean business when he pledged support for Sandhole and

made it clear to Anderton that the board was pushing its ambitions on rationalisation to the limit if they felt they could close Sandhole. Gormley told Anderton that Sandhole was the issue on which the NUMLA was prepared to engage in a "struggle" to fight the board's attempts to destroy the coal industry in Lancashire.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Hammond dutifully appeared on the pit-bank at Sandhole promising personally to lead a crusade to keep the pit open.¹⁰⁶

Gormley had, however, already set clear limits on his commitment to fight for the colliery. Clarke from Sandhole, supported by delegates from the Manchester district, had called for a "a fight against Coal Board policy" at the 1961 NUMLA annual conference. Gormley, had rejected this demand in favour of the "constructive" approach of dialogue with the NCB. Again, he argued that industrial action might be counter-productive to transferring men to other collieries while a "negative attitude" might threaten the opportunity to demonstrate that Sandhole could become viable. He asked delegates to think of the future of the Lancashire coalfield with a "progressive outlook". This was a long way from fighting talk. It very nearly amounted to an endorsement of Coal Board policy. If the union leadership felt reluctantly constrained to take some form of action it was to tackle the divisional board over Sandhole as a mining proposition. Hammond, while sympathetic to the demands of delegates for the union to take action, took a more cautious line - what he called the "sane approach" - by asserting that the union had to be certain of its own case on the colliery as a mining proposition before taking the fight to the Board. It was at Hammond's suggestion, with delegate and the divisional board agreement, that the union engaged the services of an independent mining engineer to undertake a detailed report on Sandhole. This too constituted a conciliatory gesture from the union because the other option was to have demanded a joint NUM-NCB investigation, as was frequently the case in disputatious circumstances, thus giving the union some direct influence over the progress and outcome of the inquiry.¹⁰⁷

That the NUMLA leadership was reluctant to sanction any form of action to save the colliery was evidenced in a dramatic way during formal negotiations with the divisional board over the future of Sandhole. The retreat in front of the board represented a monumental climb down. It was enough to surprise the divisional board who were anticipating some form of industrial action over the decision to effectively close the

colliery by abandoning further mines. In particular, Gormley's warnings to Anderton over Sandhole were taken seriously as a threat of imminent industrial action. In fact, they were hollow threats used as an opportunity for the new NUMLA secretary to show the new divisional chairman he was no pushover. The crucial meetings over the colliery's future took place in June 1961. Discussions centred on the future feasibility of Sandhole. The NUMLA delegation including members of the executive and branch officials accepted without reservation the divisional board's argument that the mines in question should close, thus preparing the way for a complete closure of the colliery. The only 'concession' wrung from the board was an undertaking that the closure of the affected mines should be delayed until after the September wakes. Anderton could scarcely believe his good fortune.¹⁰⁸ After all the furore and threats of a showdown over Sandhole the NUMLA had made an unconditional surrender. Anderton was able to write to London that: "opposition to the phased closure of the colliery was less violent than indicated in the tone of the attached letter" (From Gormley)¹⁰⁹

The reason for the complete collapse of union opposition was clear. While the union had argued that the manpower issue was merely a pretext to close the pit, the divisional board indicated that a phased closure of Sandhole was essential to provide the potential future manpower requirements of Agecroft. The board convinced the NUMLA that without the trained manpower from Sandhole the whole Agecroft project would be delayed or jeopardised. Under these circumstances there was absolutely no possibility of the union fighting closure. The board knew that the union wanted the modernisation project to succeed as much as they did. The NUMLA in Lancashire fully appreciated the ramifications of the manpower issue.¹¹⁰ The arguments over economic and technical feasibility assumed secondary importance. This had always been their status.

This retreat provoked conflict between the NUMLA leadership and the branch committee at Sandhole and others in the Manchester district. The union stood accused of reneging on a mandated resolution to oppose the closure agreed at the 1961 NUMLA annual conference supported by a leadership promise that Sandhole "would be backed up to the hilt".¹¹¹ At Sandhole there was a great deal of bitterness and frustration. This tended to obscure the fact that the union leadership, while uttering the language of opposition, had been looking for a way out of opposing closure since the 1961 annual conference. Gormley

took Clarke to task by suggesting that Clarke, as an executive committee member, had been privy to the union's discussions on Sandhole at the highest level. Gormley argued that it was not as though the 'rank-and-file' at Sandhole had been ignored since the executive had sent its own investigating teams into Sandhole to assess the situation and talk to the men. Gormley felt that the idea of the independent inquiry was an appropriate measure which had the support of all parties including the miners at Sandhole. Similarly, Hammond, believed that it was not a case of the NUMLA "leaning over backwards" to accommodate the Coal Board. In his view, they had done more in Lancashire to oppose the closure of mines at Sandhole than cases in the "so-called left-wing areas" such as South Wales.¹¹²

The challenges and defences offered over the retreat on Sandhole demonstrated the widening chasm which had developed between the leadership and the Sandhole branch committee. While there were pre-existing ideological differences which increased tensions, the situation was aggravated by the increasing discomfort felt by the union leadership over the conduct of opposition to closure by the branch committee. Neither Gormley or Hammond liked the way the branch committee and others in the Manchester district had taken it upon themselves to make Sandhole a martyred pit with which to start a holy war against the divisional board. They believed that such action was dangerous and detrimental to the 'progress' of modernisation. Similarly, they believed that the vehemence of 'militant' branch officials at Sandhole in opposing closure was indicative of the general situation at the colliery in which they had made a hash of industrial relations. Although leading figures such as Gormley and Hammond had initially supported the Sandhole cause because they believed it to be just, their support was collapsing by the day throughout 1961. For them, the only way forward became enunciated in Hammond's "sane approach".¹¹³

In the caustic atmosphere of accusations of betrayal the union leadership sought its excuses. Hammond struck an optimistic note suggesting the recent decision by the divisional board to close the mines might not be the "end of the road" for Sandhole. Few believed him. It had been tacit in discussing the closure of the mines at Sandhole that this would effectively mean the closure of the whole colliery. Another excuse presented itself with some opportune timing. In August 1961, some weeks after the union had conceded

Sandhole's effective closure, the report of the independent inquiry was published. It was balanced and judicious in its findings but came down on the side of the divisional board in its estimation that Sandhole had a bleak future as a mining proposition. For the union leadership it could not have arrived at a better time, as they stood accused over Sandhole. Its findings were seen as a vindication of the leadership's decision to discontinue opposition to closure over which they wanted to draw a veil.¹¹⁴ For the Sandhole branch committee there was the option of making a lone stand against closure with support from Mosley Common and Bradford in the Manchester district. This was rejected as suicidal. There had been overtures from NUM branches in the Yorkshire coalfield, where action was taking place against closures, for the Manchester district to spearhead a fight against closures in Lancashire. Sandhole branch committee rejected such action with an overwhelming majority believing that the divisional board and the right-wing NUMLA leadership were looking for this kind of excuse to hasten closure.¹¹⁵ Thereafter, opposition faded as quickly as the men were transferred in the phased closure throughout 1961 and 1962. The bulk of the workforce who wished to stay in the industry went to Agecroft. The 'Review of the Revised Plan' brought Sandhole's final demise in September 1962 with the remainder transferred just twelve months after the phased closure had begun.¹¹⁶

The transfers to Agecroft assumed an even greater importance for the NUMLA than the need to maintain manpower for the Agecroft thus making the union more amenable to the Sandhole closure. The divisional board promised improved terms for the men transferred to Agecroft. Central to these promises was the establishment of new power loading teams on better rates of pay. The board believed that in the Manchester district the NUMLA wanted to use new technology to extract concessions from them. The board turned this situation to its advantage by using new technology as a way of persuading the NUMLA leadership to accept closure of Sandhole by enticing them with improved terms and conditions for miners at Agecroft where better economic and technical conditions enabled the board to justify enhanced terms. The board thus saw an opportunity to exploit union ambitions on the power loading issue to induce the NUMLA leadership to ditch Sandhole in favour of Agecroft.¹¹⁷

The union leadership while seemingly prepared to fight the Sandhole closure was preparing the ground for retreat. The leadership came to the realisation that Sandhole had

to be sacrificed to maintain the Agecroft scheme. Arguments over the future of Sandhole as a mining proposition were increasingly superfluous to the debate. There is even some doubt whether the union leadership ever intended to make a serious issue over Sandhole as a mining proposition because of the cautious position it adopted on tackling the divisional board. As Clarke indicated, if the union was not prepared to make a firm stand on collieries like Sandhole where was it prepared to make a stand? ¹¹⁸ The leadership had only been reluctantly pushed into opposition by the strength of feeling at a number of important NUM branches. Ultimately, they embraced Gormley's call for a "progressive view" of the future of the coalfield. In doing so the leadership wholeheartedly endorsed industrial change. The NUMLA leadership saw this as the best way of maintaining coal in Lancashire. For the Coal Board, it was clear from the beginning that Sandhole was a pit which had to be sacrificed for the modernisation project. The question of feasibility and the technical issues were a vast feint. These concerns were seized upon by the divisional board as a convenient excuse to propel the Sandhole closure to sustain the manpower requirements of Agecroft. The union did not as much fall for this feint as energetically engage with it because it dreaded having to face what was the main thrust of the attack - manpower for Agecroft. A bemused Joe Clarke had asked what was Coal Board policy on Sandhole ? Did they want to close the pit because of "economic policy" or the "manpower question" ? It was the manpower question which became crucial.¹¹⁹ The events of 1961 leading to Sandhole's closure demonstrated the limits on how far the NUMLA was prepared to go in defending a pit against closure in circumstances where it was abundantly clear it had a case to contest it. The fact that the NUMLA leadership had made an ignoble retreat signified that it had embraced the objectives of industrial change - objectives it shared with the Coal Board. Sandhole colliery became a sacrifice to modernisation.

iii. CLOCK FACE COLLIERY 1965: CLOSURE AND REVOLT

Clock Face colliery was situated in an area of St.Helens of the same name some 2 and a half miles from St.Helens town centre. It was closed in March 1966 following the announcement in November 1965 of the ACP. ¹²⁰ The circumstances are important because they highlighted the priorities of the 'rank-and-file' toward closure. Furthermore, the closure illustrated the growing potentiality for problems from the cumulative effect of closures which increased tensions under the ACP. This growing frustration did not

manifest itself over the closure of Clock Face *per se* but rather over the manner of its closure. Like Sandhole, the events at Clock Face revealed the continuing reluctance of the NUM leadership to stem the rising tide of closures. Similarly, the attitude of the NUMLA leadership toward industrial action at Clock Face over closure indicated the extent to which it continued to seek co-operation rather than confrontation with the Board in implementing closures under this new phase. Finally, the closure at Clock Face revealed much about the Coal Board's priorities for modernisation.

The colliery had been the subject of a major re-construction scheme during the 1950s but increasing financial and technical problems gave rise to such concern that it was placed on a possible closure list in 1958. However, because it was situated in an expanding area of the coalfield it avoided an earlier closure under the 1959 Revised Plan. The main reason for reprieve was a political decision by the Coal Board. It survived because of the divisional board's sensitivity about closing pits in the St.Helens district. The divisional board wanted to encourage the notion that Lancashire was not a dying coalfield.¹²¹ The St.Helens district was an area of expansion with which to reinforce this idea. Closing Clock Face then would have sent the wrong signals about the future of the coalfield which risked poisoning relations with the NUMLA with whom the divisional board desired maximum co-operation. Likewise, closure would have caused panic in terms of the 'manpower drift' in the important St.Helens district with a new colliery at Parkside and five major re-constructions.¹²² Operating Clock Face at a financial loss made no economic or technical sense given that the board was closing collieries elsewhere in similar circumstances. Prior to the ACP there were few closures in St.Helens district. Ravenhead colliery was included in the 1959 schedule but deferred until the ACP with a further reprieve as a second phase closure. Clock Face was the first colliery to close in St.Helens district with the exception of Lea Green in 1964.¹²³ Lea Green had been scheduled for closure in 1959 but was reprieved until 1964 when it was closed because of the intrusion of another of the divisional board's priorities - the manpower requirements of Parkside.¹²⁴

Clock Face remained open because of the political expedients of the divisional board. In one sense the ACP changed this position as its ambit reached to marginal collieries such as Clock Face. In another sense, Clock Face was closed under the ACP because it had

fulfilled its purpose. It could be dispensed with since the modernisation of the coalfield had been virtually completed. The board was less worried about upsetting the NUMLA over closures because the union had shown its willingness to accept closures without opposition. On the manpower question, the divisional board had successfully 'manned-up' the new projects to the extent that 'manpower drift' was a declining concern. There was thus a decreasing need to 'stockpile' manpower for the new pits and re-constructions by keeping open a marginal pit like Clock Face.

The decision to close Clock Face was accompanied by new tensions because, although the divisional board saw the above as positive developments, the changing priorities that resulted had negative consequences for mineworkers. For example, on the issue of manpower, there was less opportunity for the miners at Clock Face to move to the new Parkside colliery or to the re-constructed collieries in the district. The miners at Clock Face were confronted with a painful choice between either leaving the industry or depending on the divisional board and the NUMLA to arrange transfers to other collieries. During previous closures it became apparent that the problems of transferring men to existing pits was more difficult than transferring them to the two new collieries. It raised contentious questions about the status and remuneration of transferees and the 'attitude' of existing workers towards the new 'placements' at receiving collieries. For this reason the role of the divisional board and the NUMLA in assisting transfer became critical.

The question of transfer of manpower led to one of the few instances of industrial action over closure.¹²⁵ Ostensibly, the dispute at Clock Face was a strike against closure. The dispute involved an initial two-day 'stay-down' protest by nine mineworkers which developed into a sympathy strike involving the entire 700 workforce at Clock Face followed by a 'work-to-rule'. At its height, the action threatened to take in other pits in St. Helens district in support of Clock Face. Michael McDermott, the NUM branch treasurer led the 'Clock Face nine'. He was joined underground by the branch president and other branch officials. The branch secretary at Clock Face, Paddy Meeghan, coordinated the action on the surface. He paid tribute to his colleagues, describing the "nine lads" as "heroes" who had made a valiant stand against pit closures 2,000 feet underground sustained against freezing temperatures and the damp by a diet of tea, sandwiches, tobacco and a telephone link to surface.¹²⁶ The 'heroes' of Clock Face were not protesting against

closure, they were protesting against the manner of closure. Specifically, they were protesting about the nature of their transfer from Clock Face to other pits. The men involved felt the divisional board was wrong to delay closure until March 1966 when the board wanted to synchronise transfer from Clock Face to the two receiving pits at Bold and Sutton Manor. The Clock Face men demanded immediate transfers. They believed the board was deliberately delaying closure in the hope that men would “drift away” during the winter leaving less men to transfer in March thus making placement a smoother and less troubled affair. Miners feared a lack of placements at the receiving pits thus forcing them out of the industry. Additionally, there were anxieties about reduced pay and status.¹²⁷

What was characterised as a ‘rank-and-file’ action against closure was an action over the terms of closure - the miners at Clock Face had already accepted the principle of closure. The dispute revealed much about the priorities of Lancashire miners during industrial change. These were influenced less by concerns over closures *per se* than about the manner of closure. However, the action showed the ‘rank-and-file’ had concerns over closures which transcended questions of money and status. As one miner involved in the ‘stay-down’ commented about the Board’s policy: “we are trying to call their bluff”.¹²⁸ There was a growing sense among miners that the divisional board had a much-restricted scope for transfer. This increased fears and tensions. The Clock Face miners wanted to highlight their concerns through this protest. At the same time, the dispute was a public demonstration by the ‘rank-and-file’ against the poverty of closure policy and the manpower transfers which accompanied it. The protest was primarily against the Coal Board rather than Labour Government policy. The progress of the dispute also brought into question the continuing attitude of the NUMLA leadership over closures.

The NUMLA leadership demonstrated its willingness to co-operate with the divisional board over further contraction. In the case of the Clock Face closure it also introduced the suspicion that it was colluding with the divisional board in determining outcomes for closures and transfers. Events surrounding the ‘stay-down’ dispute support this view. Clock Face did not have a reputation for militancy. The ‘stay-downers’ were not politically motivated. There is no question of this dispute *ab initio* being a ‘rank-and-file’ crusade against NUMLA leadership policy. That it did develop into an assault on the union leadership was a state of affairs brought about through the actions of the leadership. The

branch committee at Clock Face had assumed they would be fully supported by the leadership. When the closure was announced there were demands from St.Helens panel for an inquiry into the future of the colliery. Gormley initially intimated that he was unhappy about closure of a re-construction such as Clock Face in an expanding area of the coalfield. Thereafter, he shifted his position in favour of acceding to closure because he accepted the divisional board's argument that the future of the St.Helens district would be better served by re-deploying the trained manpower from Clock Face to Bold or Sutton Manor.

This did not prevent Clock Face branch officials meeting with Gormley prior to the dispute. Having effectively surrendered the pit because of lack of support, the branch representatives still confidently expected Gormley's personal intervention to ensure the pit was closed immediately and the men transferred to receiving pits before the end of 1965. Gormley's rejection of this limited demand was instrumental in precipitating unilateral industrial action at Clock Face. Gormley felt the divisional board was right to have one closure date in March 1966 because he accepted the board's view that miners at Clock Face would not be unduly prejudiced in obtaining placements at receiving collieries. In one sense this view was based on a tradition of labour mobility in the St.Helens district where miners had been moving between Clock Face and the two receiving pits for years. Likewise, Gormley argued that during the 1959-1965 period the majority of transfers had been relatively smooth affairs. What both the divisional board and Gormley failed to appreciate was the decreasing opportunities for transfer, together with declining opportunities both inside and outside of the industry. The prospect of hundreds of miners turning up at Bold and Sutton Manor on a day in March filled the Clock Face miners with dread. Throughout the dispute the branch committee launched simultaneous attacks on both the union leadership and the divisional board.¹²⁹ The attitude taken by the union leadership towards events at Clock Face was more spectacularly illustrated during the aftermath of the dispute.

The dispute was ended by the 'stay-downers' after they had made their protest. The divisional board indicated a willingness to talk to the Clock Face men in exchange for a full return to work and an end to threatened sympathy actions. The NUMLA executive was also keen to talk to the Clock Face men. The divisional board made a significant gesture toward the Clock Face miners by agreeing immediately to transfer an initial batch of 200

men to the receiving pits followed by a phased run-down during the winter of 1965-66 without waiting for the final closure date. In addition, the board agreed to a non-victimisation policy against those involved in the Clock Face action.¹³⁰ That appeared to be the end of the matter. The issue, however, re-ignited in a dramatic fashion. This time, Gormley stood accused not only of co-operation with the divisional board, but of collusion. Gormley was livid over the events at Clock Face. He believed the dispute seriously undermined the NUMLA's relationship with the divisional board at a critical time.¹³¹

The tensions surrounding the closure of Clock Face re-emerged during early 1966 in two ways. Firstly, during the transfer of miners from Clock Face the divisional board was criticised for reneging on its non-victimisation policy because it 'kept back' five of the 'Clock Face Nine' with no guarantee of placement at receiving collieries. The inference was that the board wanted them out of the industry. Secondly, the board was accused of a fiasco over the inevitable problems created by trying to 'place' the Clock Face men at the receiving collieries, with men turning up for non-existent jobs, lower pay and reduced grades. It was not only the divisional board which stood accused. St.Helens panel charged Gormley of connivance with the board by assisting closure; of acquiescing in the alleged victimisation of the 'nine' and of being so eager to help the board that he became actively involved in the maladroit handling of transfers. There were disturbing allegations of Clock Face miners being assured of transfers to Sutton Manor by the NUMLA without management awareness, let alone authorisation. Gormley, issued a typically stout personal defence while re-iterating his belief that there had been a relatively smooth transfer situation during previous years.¹³² Yet, it was certain that endorsing union participation in transfer and placement might sooner or later lead to problems especially when undertaken without proper liaison with the divisional board. These issues were becoming difficult enough without leaving this practice in the hands of union officials under Gormley's tutelage. This was a highly questionable arrangement given the already controversial nature of the Clock Face closure. In the event, Gormley's role was criticised not just from St.Helens panel but from across the coalfield.¹³³ Rising tension arose from a growing sense of insecurity felt by mineworkers. There was a widespread belief that the Clock Face affair had been badly handled. Gormley's role in the affair raised serious questions not only about his willingness to co-operate with the divisional board but also over his personal integrity.

One notable feature of the Clock Face affair was the level of support Gormley received from Hammond who skilfully rallied the 'rank-and-file' behind the leadership. This level of support ensured the leadership prevailed over the Clock Face protest. Unlike Gormley, the affair left Hammond's personal authority untainted, although he too was angered by these events leading to an emasculation of the Clock Face protest through his intervention. Hammond saw the Clock Face dispute not as a blow against closure policy but a blow directed at the union's authority. Hitherto, Hammond, like Gormley, had felt that closure and transfers had been arranged relatively amicably. Hammond felt direct action ruined the union's chances of 'successful' negotiations with the divisional board over closures. He believed it was union leadership's prerogative to negotiate and, if necessary, protest. Hammond stressed the need for discipline in the movement - a legacy of his Communist Party involvement. He was particularly critical of allegations of victimisation, describing the Clock Face men as those who "hungered for martyrdom". Hammond invoked these arguments to marginalise the Clock Face protest. At the same time he cannily cast himself in the role of peacemaker. At his insistence, the St. Helens panel agreed to co-operate in the orderly transfer of the remaining workforce at Clock Face.¹³⁴ This came too late for miners who were forced to leave the industry during the *imbroglio* of closure. Through these manoeuvres, Hammond gathered a majority of the 'rank-and-file' behind him to win a debate to "drop this talk of victimisation". Nevertheless, accusations of victimisation persisted together with continuing allegations of shoddy treatment by both the divisional board and the NUMLA in arranging transfers from Clock Face. In winning over a majority of the union, Hammond obtained high levels of support from those branches where closure and transfer had been handled in a smooth and open-handed way. Hammond's practised manipulation of the sentiments expressed by these branches was effective in strangulating the Clock Face protest.¹³⁵

The Clock Face affair raised some highly relevant questions about the character of closures in Lancashire under the ACP. Clock Face should, by the conventional wisdom of the time, have been closed prior to 1965 but was retained by the divisional board because of the expedients determined by its broader modernisation agenda. With the ACP came the need to jettison collieries like Clock Face. The completion of modernisation of coal in Lancashire meant pits like Clock Face could be closed without risk of collateral damage to

the board's strategy. At Clock Face, the dynamics of industrial change were of sufficient concern to miners to produce a negative response to closure. Although it was not a protest against closure *per se* it was a response from an increasingly fearful workforce about decreasing transfer opportunities. The outcome of the Clock Face affair indicated that although there was anxiety over the ACP, the level of resistance to change was a function of the circumstances of closure and transfer at individual pits. This situation was evidenced by Hammond's ability to isolate the Clock Face 'cause'. This did not bode well for collective action against the ACP. The Clock Affair also demonstrated that the NUMLA leadership did not appreciate increasing concerns expressed by the 'rank-and-file' over further contraction. Both Gormley and Hammond continued to pursue maximum co-operation with the divisional board. In this, Gormley seriously overstepped the mark, bringing opprobrium for his alleged chicanery. On the other hand, Hammond emerged to placate the situation. Still, both men continued to believe these protests were counter-productive to the proper execution of closure and transfer of manpower. Both men seriously mis-judged the moment. They shared a lack of sensitivity toward miners facing onerous outcomes from closure. It could be argued that the NUMLA leadership had not yet come to terms with the dynamics of industrial change under the ACP. During the debate over Clock Face the NUMLA leadership reiterated the point that hitherto there had been relatively few problems arranging transfers.¹³⁶ The portents from Clock Face were not good for the remaining closures under the programme. Henceforth closures would become increasingly fraught. The question is whether the leadership would have reacted differently had it appreciated this rapidly changing situation. There is a strong case to suggest that it would not have acted differently given the level of co-operation it offered the divisional board over closures during 1959-1965 under rationalisation. By the same token, there was nothing in the experience of further closures under the ACP to suggest there would have been a different response.

iv. MOSLEY COMMON COLLIERY 1968: A MODERNISATION TOO FAR

Mosley Common colliery was situated at a hamlet of the same name near the township of Tyldesley and the villages of Boothstown and Ellenbrook approximately 3 miles east of Leigh, 5 miles south of Bolton, and 7 miles west of Manchester in the Manchester district of the coalfield. Although the colliery was closed in 1968 under the ACP its problems had straddled the post-war period. If one colliery symbolised industrial change in the coalfield - for all the wrong reasons - it was Mosley Common. While there were successes in the coalfield, Mosley Common stood as a beacon of failure underlining the limits of modernisation. The history of the colliery up to closure assumed legendary proportions throughout the coalfield and beyond. One widely held view, expressed by both NCBNWD and NUMLA officials including Gormley, was that Mosley Common 'failed' because of "human factors".¹³⁷ Clearly the failure had 'human' influences, yet it substantially resulted from an ill-conceived decision to proceed with modernisation undertaken during the earliest days of public ownership. For this reason, the failure as a modernisation project was primarily a 'physical' one rather than a 'human' one. Matters were seriously and fatally compounded by an overwhelming desire to ensure this re-construction project succeeded at all costs - a view held by both the divisional board and the NUMLA. In another way, the frustrating complexity of problems thrown up by the failings at Mosley Common tested NUMLA co-operation to the limits at all levels within the union. Co-operation prevailed because failure was something which could not be countenanced on either side of the industry as it would have questioned the whole future of industrial change in the coalfield. As the divisional board affirmed, the desired success of the three major re-constructions in the Manchester district in general, and Mosley Common in particular, marked the district out as the crucible of industrial change in Lancashire.¹³⁸ Ultimately, all efforts ended in failure because attempts to revive the faltering Mosley Common project were themselves impaled on the 'flawed concept' that was Mosley Common colliery; this was a modernisation too far.

Prior to the decision to proceed with the new projects at Agecroft and Parkside the Mosley Common scheme was the most important in the coalfield. It was certainly its grandest re-construction. As a 'showpiece' colliery of the post-war era it owed its beginnings to major improvements undertaken during the 1930s by Manchester Collieries Ltd.¹³⁹ Following

nationalisation the colliery was designated as a major re-construction.¹⁴⁰ Even at this early stage there were major differences over the efficacy of re-development on the selected basis. The point of disagreement within the NCB was over the scale of re-construction. There was widespread agreement that improvements to Mosley Common should proceed but a substantial body of opinion felt that the grand re-construction planned was too ambitious. The national and divisional boards were amongst the most enthusiastic about the massive re-development of Mosley Common to produce a “multi-shaft combined mine”. The NUMLA executive, which saw a project on this scale as symbolising a real investment in the future of the coalfield, joined them. It involved an extension of the existing one pit colliery into a four-pit colliery together with extensive underground tunnelling to access new reserves, intensive mechanisation and substantial surface re-construction.

Misgivings about the scheme were most pronounced at area, but more especially colliery, level where a majority of the older coalfield ‘hands’ now in NCB colliery management believed the scale of re-development too ambitious and doomed to failure. In this, the NUM branch and colliery consultative committee joined them. Colliery management later argued that the project had been less about the re-development of a single production unit than about the development of a cluster of pits without adequate integration, planning or operational control. The complexity of operations between the four pits necessitated two distinct management teams responsible for a pair of pits each with separate union branches at Boothstown and Mosley Common. One senior official NCBNWD was transferred because of his opposition to the proposed scheme. He believed that a less ambitious single pit re-construction was more appropriate with a greater chance of success. This disagreement became the basis of a schism within the NCB from the very start. It was a conflict which overshadowed the re-development of the colliery in such a way as to complicate an increasingly complex set of difficulties accompanying re-construction. The initial battle lines had been drawn over the colliery’s future before re-construction had begun. On the one hand, there were those who saw in Mosley Common the grand vision of a large modern development acting as an affirmation of the coalfield’s future. As a NCBNWD official noted, Lancashire was desperate to secure a “big producer” in the days before the Agecroft and Parkside projects. On the other hand, there were those who believed the scheme was a fanciful folly which would very quickly run into trouble.¹⁴¹

By 1961, as the colliery experienced serious problems the foreboding seemed justified. Management spoke of the colliery as a “flawed conception” in which: “mining conditions were not conducive to profitability nor good labour relations” .¹⁴² As the re-construction proceeded it began to stall. The Coal Board was asking Mosley Common to achieve two mutually incompatible objectives by demanding it become a big coal producer and that modernisation proceed unabated. The result was a colliery struggling to reconcile current production needs with re-construction work. Eventually, re-construction was relegated in favour of maximising output. Later, with the collapse in coal consumption, the focus of efforts shifted away from production toward re-construction. Re-construction had been so handicapped by production needs that it was well behind schedule by the late 1950s. There then followed a dash to bring modernisation back on schedule within a short space of time.¹⁴³ This ensured the late 1950s and early 1960s were an extremely fevered and fractious few years for all concerned.

The modernisation of Mosley Common put uncompromising demands on both sides of the industry. By the late 1950s those demands were beginning to place severe strains on both management and union officials and the 3,000 workforce. While re-construction was in trouble, industrial relations and ‘morale’ were near to collapse.¹⁴⁴ The scale and complexity of the issues involved were manifold. At the centre was a continuance of tensions within management. This was seen through the pressure applied from divisional and area management on colliery management. It was believed the pace of modernisation had been lacking due to management inertia at colliery level resulting in an inability to ‘hit’ production targets. Similarly, colliery management was blamed for anaemic productivity while it was clear that as a loss leader the colliery was becoming a source of embarrassment from national level downwards. One particularly injurious accusation made at divisional level was that colliery management had not proceeded with concentration fast enough and in a rigorous enough way to exploit the most productive faces. This accusation questioned the professionalism of colliery officials. One noticeable feature of the colliery - which the NUMLA was quick to point out - was the high turnover of NCBNWD officials. By the late 1950s the colliery had become a bed of nails for any career-minded mining professional. Tensions within management were underpinned by continuing disagreements over the most effective method of re-development.¹⁴⁵ These tensions were just one element in the increasingly ugly mood that enveloped the colliery. Management at odds hardly

augured well for the success of other crucial relationships. It was the issues arising out of the modernisation of the colliery which served to make management-union relationships so baneful.

Analysis of the colliery's failure requires the dismissal of a number of myths and misconceptions about the nature of failure. By the late 1950s labour relations had plummeted. Area management believed labour relations had been poor since nationalisation.¹⁴⁶ Management laid the blame for poor labour relations on the workforce and local NUM branches. It was argued the colliery was dominated by a highly motivated group of militant activists hell-bent on undermining management authority and circumventing 'established' conciliation procedures. There was also a belief that the colliery had a legacy of poor industrial relations in which management attempted to portray it as having an exceptionally bad record by the standards of the relatively quiescent Lancashire coalfield. As one NCBNWD area official noted, the three key collieries in the Manchester district: Bradford, Mosley Common, and Sandhole were coming under the influence of: "a Communist, Trotski-ist fellow traveller element - I am not sure I can tell the difference".¹⁴⁷ Management believed groups at these collieries were in liaison with each other and with militants on the Yorkshire NUM's Number Two Area Panel (Doncaster) who, having orchestrated industrial militancy in the Yorkshire coalfield, were keen to 'export' it over the Pennines.¹⁴⁸ However, management exaggerated the degree of cohesion between these groupings and failed to appreciate differences over ideology, strategy, and objective. There is no evidence to suggest Mosley Common was part of a broader left-wing conspiracy to undermine the NCBNWD and the NUMLA.

On the issue of militant activism, the Communist Party targeted Mosley Common and other collieries in the Manchester district because they were important post-war developments. The Party, embarrassed by its lack of success in the coalfield, had been encouraging activity throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Mosley Common was the subject of a sustained recruitment and propaganda campaign during this period.¹⁴⁹ The NUM secretary at Mosley Common, Mick Weaver, had emerged as a party stalwart in Lancashire, having been 'groomed' for work as an industrial "propagandist" in the coal industry.¹⁵⁰ His presence at Mosley Common, together with his notable band of "henchmen" - as the divisional board referred to them - increased the pitch of industrial

tension.¹⁵¹ Added to which, on a personal level, Weaver was an incendiary of a man who launched an unrelenting campaign to harangue management over a plethora of pit level issues.¹⁵² Weaver, further incurred the wrath of management by resorting to pre-nationalisation procedures of 'consulting' management through the most direct method available - the 'pit deputation'- rather than using agreed consultative machinery - a fact Weaver attributed to his debarment from consultative meetings by management because of his recalcitrant attitude.¹⁵³

Undoubtedly, in Weaver, the management had a 'hot potato' to handle, such that many area and colliery officials felt threatened by his presence. This led management to argue Mosley Common's difficulties arose directly from the 'Weaver problem'. However, there are number of points on Weaver's authority and influence which are germane. That Weaver had a 'reputation' across the coalfield there is no doubt. His effective and formidable reputation with management earned him much support amongst miners to the extent that he maintained his position as secretary at Mosley Common. Similarly, Weaver had enough support to represent the panel serving the two union branches of the colliery on the NUMLA executive. On the other hand, Weaver's influence was more limited and of a passing temporal character than management alleged: Weaver's influence reached its zenith during the late 1950s and early 1960s when the problems arising from reconstruction came to a head. His influence waned after the early 1960s. At the height of his influence in 1960 Weaver unsuccessfully contested the vice-presidency of the NUMLA. As a measure of Weaver's influence at its peak, the voting patterns of the election demonstrated his influence was restricted to a few branches in a tight geographical area around Boothstown, Mosley Common and Tyldesley. Weaver made an indifferent showing at putative 'militant' branches elsewhere in the coalfield. Moreover, even Weaver's support within Mosley Common was limited. The bulk of his support came from the two pits under the control of his Mosley Common branch but his support within the two pits under the control of Boothstown branch was mixed - hardly a ringing endorsement of this 'militant' thorn in management's side.¹⁵⁴

The 'Weaver problem' was plausible in explaining why Mosley Common did not work. Weaver was clearly a figure of considerable influence at Mosley Common where he made his presence felt over a range of pit level issues. However, the importance of this factor in

explaining 'failure' at Mosley Common was greatly exaggerated. It was area and colliery management under pressure to improve performance which invoked the presence of Weaver as a convenient excuse to explain why persistent labour problems continued to undermine the colliery's performance. Weaver's aggression certainly unsettled management. Yet, it was rare for Weaver to take up an issue unless it had been the source of a justifiable complaint.¹⁵⁵ It was just that there were so many issues to complain about at Mosley Common. In the same way, management sought a more general excuse in the way in which it attempted to create a 'myth of militancy' about the colliery.

Area and colliery management also sought to explain under-performance through the general industrial relations record of the colliery. They argued Mosley Common was the most disputatious colliery in the coalfield. Management presented the colliery as an 'exceptional' case in Lancashire. However, its dispute record was not unique in the coalfield. There were a number of large-scale, high profile and protracted disputes, but the pattern was one of a colliery beset by many minor stoppages arising from routine pit level problems resulting directly or indirectly from aspects of re-development work - a situation worsened, in aggregate, by the colliery's size.¹⁵⁶ Management missed this point in its attempts to present a picture of a disputatious pit infested with militant miners close to anarchy and break down. Management did not stop there. It attempted to demonstrate that Mosley Common had an historical record as a 'militant' colliery. This was complete mythology. During the inter-war period it had a relatively quiescent industrial relations record. Prior to 1923, Mosley Common, was one of the Earl of Ellesmere's pits. These were the collieries of land owning Lancashire characterised by paternalism, deference and docility; held forth by contemporaries as exemplars of industrial quiescence in an otherwise troubled industry. The colliery only accumulated any kind of industrial relations 'record' after it passed into corporate ownership during the 1920s.¹⁵⁷ This is supported by the testimony of miners who worked at the colliery for most of the twentieth century. They confirmed the almost 'sleepy' nature of industrial activism before the Second World War.¹⁵⁸ Mosley Common's industrial relations record, and its reputation for 'militancy' were post-war phenomena produced by a specific confluence of events and processes arising from modernisation and re-construction.

Another indication that the 'myth of militancy' was a cloak to cover the difficulties management were experiencing in re-developing Mosley Common can be gauged by scepticism at divisional level over claims that performance had been undermined by 'militancy'. While divisional management was sympathetic over the 'Weaver problem' it believed 'militancy' was used as a fig leaf by area and colliery management to cover its inadequacies. This resulted in more sniping down the levels of management over the colliery's persistent poor performance, again raising tensions over the efficacy of the Mosley Common project.¹⁵⁹ At area, and more particularly colliery level, harassed officials seized upon the 'Weaver problem' and the 'myth of militancy' as excuses to articulate a response to divisional management criticism. Having dismissed the myths and misconceptions offered for 'failure' attention now focuses on the root of the colliery's problems which eventually led to its closure.

At the development stage the physical dimensions of the colliery were such that it was described as "a monster". Underground, miners had to endure substantial travelling distances to access faces even by the standards of the Lancashire coalfield. Distances were traversed on the steepest gradients in the coalfield. Excessive and difficult underground travelling times were in addition to lengthy surface travel from over a wide area.¹⁶⁰ Although, these circumstances were not unique in Lancashire they were on a larger and more complex scale than elsewhere. It was not an 'attractive' environment in which management-workforce co-operation could flourish. Undertaking difficult re-development work while at the same time attempting to maximise production worsened the situation. These circumstances were exacerbated by another aspect of the modernisation drive - the introduction of double-shift work to a workforce largely accustomed to working a single shift.¹⁶¹

Against this background, re-development was at the root of problems at Mosley Common. Re-construction work during the late 1950s and early 1960s saw a huge number of operational difficulties emerge. There were frequent problems with equipment: breakdowns, faults and shortages. In addition, the scale of the re-construction work meant there were insufficient workers available to undertake re-development tasks - a situation worsened by miners being taken off re-development tasks for re-assignment to production work. Re-assignment caused aggravation because it meant re-negotiating terms and left re-

development teams chronically undermanned. There were also questions of status and demarcation to confront. On top of these problems, re-development necessitated wholesale re-organisation to concentrate production on the most productive faces for the installation of power loading. The sheer task of managing a colliery with four pits and sixteen major faces was difficult enough without having to manage organisational and technological change on this scale. In order to implement technological change management introduced much resented alterations to working practices including double-shift work - a matter of huge contention. At the same time, management had to re-negotiate the terms for using power loading in an already difficult atmosphere.¹⁶²

A number of issues emerged from the problems associated with re-construction. Industrial relations and the dispute record of the colliery became a function of the difficulties described. The dispute record did not result directly from the activities of the 'militants' although this factor raised the profile of these issues. Rising pit level tensions were manifested in a dispute pattern dominated by short, small-scale labour disputes during the main period of re-construction between the late 1950s and early 1960s - see Appendix to this Chapter. This is with reference to disputes resulting in the loss of less than 100 working days, between 1955 and 1961.¹⁶³ Furthermore, the post-war trend of disputes at Mosley Common peaked during this period when the re-development work was at its height.¹⁶⁴

Within this pattern certain groups of workers emerged as particularly troubled. Power loaders and fillers were especially afflicted. However, it was the craftsmen who found themselves in the eye of the storm. They formed the fulcrum around which modernisation of the colliery became dependent. They were a group of aggrieved workers who became influential in colliery politics. The craftsmen complained about a lack of management support; frequent arbitrary re-assignment to production tasks; being taken off task to meet training requirements; and a shortage of skilled men resulting in excessive week-end work. As the craftsmen put it, they were being "flogged to death" by management to make Mosley Common "work". The rising tension within this group reflected more widespread dissatisfaction among craftsmen during the early 1960s in Lancashire over issues of differentials and status to such a degree that they were involved in industrial action at Mosley Common and elsewhere. At Mosley Common, the 'uprising' of the craftsmen

came to symbolise the problems associated with faltering attempts to re-develop the colliery.¹⁶⁵

Pit level issues which gave rise to problems at Mosley Common might be said to have had one single cause - management. Evidence abounds of poor management control, planning and practice.¹⁶⁶ However, this was not the complete explanation of Mosley Common's problems. It would be just as erroneous to say that Mosley Common's failure resulted from 'bad management' as it would to say that it resulted from poor workforce discipline and union militancy. Weaver, that indefatigable hammer of management, later admitted that in all his years of barking at management he did not believe the colliery's problems stemmed from individual or collective management deficiencies. Rather it was a result of asking management to perform an impossible task.¹⁶⁷ Weaver was right. The colliery was a misconception from the start. The great obstacle at Mosley Common was that feelings ran so high on either side of the industry it became difficult to diagnose the problem accurately or with impartiality. In the highly charged atmosphere that became Mosley Common entrenched positions developed on both sides as each blamed the other for the colliery's failings. A state of mutual distrust pervaded all aspects of operations imbuing a level of malevolence that militated against any prospect of improving its feeble productivity, disappointing output and huge financial losses.¹⁶⁸

The task of reviving the colliery's fortunes had first to address the state of collapsed management control, poor labour relations and morale. This takes the discussion to the crucial role played by the NUMLA. It revealed much about the extent to which the union was eager to see the modernisation agenda succeed in Lancashire in a colliery where management had all but given up. Equally, for the NCB, particularly at the national and divisional levels, there was a need to ensure Mosley Common did not fail. The size of the difficulties facing Mosley Common meant it was first considered for closure in 1958. This threat was lifted because it was believed modernisation had not reached a sufficient level for the colliery to "prove itself". A belief that more investment, more mechanisation, and more re-development would improve results impelled the case against closure. Importantly, it was felt that the *raison d'être* of the colliery still persisted. It continued to be a highly visible symbol of modernisation in the coalfield - a key part of a future which

would otherwise have been bleak before the Agecroft and Parkside projects came to fruition.¹⁶⁹

The reprieve lasted only as long as four extremely bad years for the colliery. The second closure threat in 1961-1962 was more serious. This time divisional patience was at breaking point, while grave and continuing problems produced more intense scrutiny from London. A divided divisional board faced a dilemma. The losses incurred by the colliery were described as "uneconomic and irretrievable" while operational and labour problems had worsened. Crucially, the re-development work had not borne fruit. For many at divisional and area levels the preferred solution was to cut their losses and close the colliery in 1961 or 1962. Anderton emerged as a leading advocate for closure. However, another view held that re-development work had come too far. It was argued it should be seen through to a conclusion that was close, after which the colliery would "prove itself".¹⁷⁰

With splits within divisional management it was the intervention of the Ministry of Power and the NCB in London which saved Mosley Common. Both Lord Robens and his deputy, Humphrey-Browne, were aware of the situation at Mosley Common. Robens wanted to give the colliery an opportunity to "prove itself" through a trial period. Humphrey-Browne was even more supportive of Mosley Common. He knew the colliery well, having been a director of Manchester Collieries Ltd and later, as production director of the NCBNWD, was involved in the formulation of the Mosley Common 'grand scheme'. There was an element of personal prestige at stake. Aside from this factor, why did officials at the highest level act in such a decisive way to save Lancashire's infamous white elephant? In one sense they were persuaded that the colliery should be given the opportunity to 'prove itself' after modernisation was completed. They felt the original vision of a 'super-pit' in this 'dying coalfield' was so critical to their commitment to its resurrection that they should see modernisation through to its conclusion. However, the main factor persuading them to keep the colliery open was the position adopted by the NUMLA on the future of Mosley Common.¹⁷¹

The intervention of the Coal Board at the highest levels resulted from both national and divisional officials becoming increasingly impressed by the willingness of the NUMLA to

support moves to keep it open by tackling its problems. Up to 1961, the NUMLA executive and senior officials had been observers of the colliery's stuttering performance. In 1961, at the suggestion of Jim Hammond, the NUMLA and divisional board agreed to convene a Joint Investigation Committee (JIC) to assess and deliberate on the gamut of pit level problems afflicting the colliery. The NUMLA felt saving Mosley Common was a major priority because, like the NCBNWD, they saw its success as absolutely vital to modernisation in Lancashire. As a measure of the gravity with which the union viewed the situation its side of the JIC was led by three senior figures: Joe Gormley, Jim Hammond, and Sid Vincent. Hammond and Vincent led the NUMLA contingent of the joint teams sent into the colliery with the role of 'trouble-shooters' at large.¹⁷² The formation of the JIC was a defining moment in the history of the colliery. Yet, the union's willingness to join with the divisional board in ensuring that the vision of Mosley Common still burned brightly against all the warnings to the contrary proved to be its final undoing. The need to press ahead with further modernisation stretched divisional board - NUMLA relations to breaking point, ensuring that all attempts to revive the colliery failed.

The JIC did sterling work tackling the immediate causes of Mosley Common's difficulties. Such was the shock of the closure threat that a mood of businesslike co-operation descended under the auspices of the JIC. Among its achievements it could number the managed and agreed re-deployment of mineworkers; the further concentration of workings with relatively little rancour and the planned deployment of a 'dedicated' central team of craftsmen with an adequate corral of materials and equipment. These were tangible achievements in a colliery that had failed so miserably to deliver even these basic operational requirements. Significantly, the JIC was successful in providing an arena in which pit-level grievances could be discussed and resolved in a co-operative atmosphere. In this, Weaver recognised the JIC as a legitimate forum while the union leadership was able to keep a close eye on the colliery. Both Hammond and Gormley were omnipresent, while Gormley had in Vincent 'his' man in the colliery. Vincent was to become Gormley's heir apparent. For the management, there was initial delight in the co-option of the union at the highest level to help solve Mosley Common's problems.

The JIC presided over an interregnum of relative peace. The industrial relations climate improved to the point where there was a reduction in the number of smaller-scale disputes

after 1961, though the colliery was troubled by larger-scale disputes during 1962-1964 - see Appendix to this Chapter. Not only was there improvement in industrial relations, the long-awaited improvement in performance finally arrived with signs of increased productivity; better financial results and the attainment of production targets.¹⁷³ The improvement, however, was less a function of the splendid work of the JIC - though that was important - than the fact it coincided with the end of the most disruptive period of re-construction and re-organisation. Nevertheless, for those who had kept faith with the vision of Mosley Common these welcome features were something of a vindication.¹⁷⁴ This period of relative tranquillity proved to be short-lived as the seeds of destruction once again germinated. This time the crisis at Mosley Common became apparent within the JIC over the modernisation of work processes.

Smouldering beneath the undergrowth of the JIC's deliberations were a number of issues which would ignite Mosley Common once again. This time difficulties sprang from the divisional board's expectations of further co-operation from the NUMLA at the highest level in the modernisation of the colliery. The NUMLA had already shown its willingness to participate in the removal of obstacles to the modernisation of Mosley Common. There was no reason for the divisional board to doubt the NUMLA would assist in further modernisation by co-operating in controversial changes to work practices. Gormley's view on Mosley Common was clear : it was a 'human' problem. Gormley repeatedly argued for maximum co-operation between the management and the workforce in which "mutual distrust" was put aside.¹⁷⁵ This was the sort of language the divisional board wanted to hear in terms of 'modernising' work processes. Fatally, it continued to ignore the 'flawed concept' thesis of Mosley Common. Gormley, like Board officials, was mesmerised by the vision of Mosley Common. Solve the 'human' factor at Mosley Common and the results would follow ran the argument. However, it was patently obvious that the problems of Mosley Common arose from basic difficulties of attempting to modernise a highly problematic colliery firstly as a 'physical' entity and then later as a 'human' entity. The success of the JIC had been mainly in bringing improvements to 'physical' and organisational aspects of the colliery. Improvements to labour relations had largely resulted from the end of major re-development and re-organisation work together with the efforts of the JIC. The problem for those who continued to believe in Mosley Common was that they

could not bring themselves to accept that the difficulties faced by the colliery resulted from the modernisation scheme because they were so wedded to achieving its success.

This attitude had damaging consequences for Mosley Common. On the one hand, it appeared that the divisional board and the NUMLA were in complete agreement over the causes and cure for the colliery. On the other, it produced a 'crisis of expectation' which eventually destroyed Mosley Common. Gormley became known for his public attacks on the 'militants' at Mosley Common. In fact, his position was to condemn both management and workforce in circumstances where he felt a "lack of co-operation" had a detrimental effect on the colliery's performance. Gormley's visceral attacks on management, mainly at area level, have received less attention than his assaults on the 'militants'. Gormley clashed with Weaver over a range of issues - the two were ideologically poles apart - yet, he rarely made such attacks within the JIC, frequently defending Weaver against management criticism.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the NCB, certainly at divisional level, believed Gormley was a staunch ally in the modernisation drive. His direct involvement in the JIC further encouraged the divisional board to believe he was the central figure who would assist in the further delivery of modernisation at the colliery on a wide range of difficult work process issues.

There were ominous developments through the work of the JIC which formed the backdrop to further modernisation. Colliery level tensions were transferred upwards to divisional board-NUMLA level through the JIC. Area management became less enthusiastic about the JIC than either divisional or colliery management. Again, this led to differences between area and division. Division saw union co-operation as vital in keeping the vision of Mosley Common alive, while at colliery level hard-pressed officials welcomed the assistance of the JIC in taking them directly out of the firing line. Resentment at area level became palpable because it was felt the JIC circumvented many of its functions; acting as sort of 'star chamber' making decisions which would ordinarily have been made at area level. In addition to rancour over union co-option in the management of the colliery, there was a belief that Gormley was using the JIC for personal *aggrandisement*; claiming the credit for measures to save the colliery which were not entirely his own. This was the source of a personal clash between Tom Knowles - the area

manager - and Gormley. These tensions underpinned continuing disagreement over aspects of modernisation.¹⁷⁷

Growing tensions within the JIC were accompanied by the persistence of difficult issues. This provoked the 'crisis of expectation' as the divisional board expected the NUMLA to give positive backing to further modernisation. Amongst these was the board's insistence that the colliery's problems should be scrutinised through the imposition of the study method - a form of work assessment. The study method had been an issue which had exercised management and the union since the late 1950s having been debated nationally. The Coal Board wished to deploy it to pave the way for changes in technology, working practices and methods of payment. In this way, it was linked to the vexed question of the introduction of power loading and of shift work. It was thus a crucial aspect of modernisation. The Coal Board saw Mosley Common as a colliery in which the study method should be applied given its special problems. However, imposing the study method in the extremely strained atmosphere of Mosley Common was an option too far. It became a favourite hobby-horse for Weaver and the branch committee at Mosley Common as they vehemently opposed it.¹⁷⁸ Although the JIC assuaged many of the grievances arising from application of the study method its imposition increased tensions within the JIC itself. Gormley and Knowles angrily clashed over imposition. Both colliery and area management began to distrust Gormley and Hammond because they believed both had become sympathetic to Weaver on this and other pit level issues. In particular, they felt that Hammond had become the *eminence grise* of Mosley Common through his close involvement with the JIC from where it was believed he was orchestrating pit level tensions. Hammond - a one time associate of Weaver in the CPGB - felt that Weaver was often justified on issues with which he confronted management. However, Hammond was not using the opportunity to pursue an 'agenda' over changes to work practices. He supported modernisation, but had to strike a balance between appeasing the 'rank-and-file' and accepting the tenets of the modernisation dictated by the divisional board.¹⁷⁹ In fact, these suspicions arose from management frustration over continuing difficulties in implementing further modernisation in which they not only faced 'rank-and-file' opposition but were beginning to experience equivocation, if not outright opposition, from more senior figures within the NUMLA. The divisional board had expected the NUMLA

leadership to accept changes to work practices with few reservations with the JIC providing the medium through which implementation could be achieved.

Disagreements over the imposition of the study method presaged what became the key issue upon which Mosley Common's fate finally turned - the introduction of treble-shift or multi-shift work. On this issue the 'crisis of expectation' finally and irrevocably blew wide open destroying any hope of continued co-operation with the NUMLA on which the future of the colliery depended. Introduction of double-shifts had caused enough problems before the imposition of multi-shift work.¹⁸⁰ The Coal Board saw multi-shift as the cornerstone of its modernisation of the industry; the issue on which much of the rest of modernisation would be determined including the all-important question of technological change and changes to methods of remuneration. The objective was continuous mining using power loading to full capacity. Anderton was a zealous disciple, arguing it was the major change required to secure the future of the industry in Lancashire. With multi-shift, further mechanisation could be achieved to deliver the increased output and productivity in the capital-intensive pits of the future. Anderton indicated portentously he wanted maximum co-operation from the NUMLA on multi-shift noting there had traditionally been opposition to shift work in Lancashire in a coalfield where it had not been the norm.¹⁸¹ The introduction of multi-shift was thus not an issue restricted to debate at Mosley Common, it was already an issue of some import at the national and regional levels.

Mosley Common was earmarked as a colliery in which multi-shift was to be introduced as the finale to its modernisation, together with the full implementation of new technology. The divisional board assumed it would be able to introduce multi-shift with the assistance of the JIC and the active co-operation of the NUMLA's senior officials. The exercise once again produced a crisis at Mosley Common. Widespread objections were raised. At branch level there was strong opposition to introduction with the significant support of Sid Vincent through the work of the JIC. Vincent became a leading opponent of multi-shift at Mosley Common with the backing of both Gormley and Hammond. The arguments against multi-shift did not emerge from bloody-minded 'militant' rejection of the system. Rather, they were based on the circumstances of the colliery's 'flawed conception'. Weaver was consistent on this point. The branch committee had already rejected more intensive double-shift working. They envisaged an operational and logistical nightmare in implementing

multi-shift. There were practical problems because the residential disposition of the workforce meant there were obstacles concerned with both surface and underground travel with consequent social hardship. Furthermore, objections were raised because of operational problems involved in rotating different grades at the four pits which had caused trouble under double-shift working. Additionally, there was the unprecedented practice of using lower grades of mineworkers in shift work. It was felt double-shift work had been a disaster at the colliery, compounding its operational problems. Moreover, parts of the colliery had been working a 'skeletal' three-shift system for some time. This had given rise to a range of problems thus raising anxieties further. As Vincent concluded, they would be opposing multi-shift because "it wouldn't work". The branch committee argued that these issues were of such an intractable nature they outweighed questions of whether it should accept extra payments for working multi-shift. There was thus a fundamental objection to multi-shift at Mosley Common. Importantly, these sentiments gained support not just from Vincent through the JIC but also from both Gormley and Hammond. While management anticipated objections at branch level, they were surprised at reaction from more senior levels in the union. Gormley and Hammond emerged as strong critics of management through the JIC over the introduction of multi-shift at Mosley Common.¹⁸²

Gormley and Hammond were dismayed at the imposition of such a contentious issue as multi-shift to a colliery with a recent record of strained relations which was just beginning to emerge from years of difficulties. In addition, they argued there were difficult wage re-negotiations to confront with the introduction of multi-shift, while the concept of putting the entire colliery on multi-shift rather than particular productive sections - which would have been the norm - stretched co-operation to the limit.¹⁸³ Again, it was evidence of pushing modernisation too far, this time on issues of work practices, accompanied by objections at all levels of the NUMLA. The 'crisis of expectation' had now arrived, as the divisional board believed it was losing crucial support from those whom it expected would back modernisation without question. This realisation marked the point at which there was gathering momentum in favour of closing the colliery at both national and divisional levels at a time when performance was improving. However, there was one final scenario for the colliery. This involved a switch of emphasis by both Hammond and Gormley on the question of multi-shift.

While the branch committee at Mosley Common anticipated continuing support from Gormley and Hammond, both had been engaged in a process of steadily consolidating and modifying their position on multi-shift throughout 1964-1965. They came to the view that the introduction of this pivot of modernisation was inevitable. Gormley argued that multi-shift had been practised in other coalfields and was of increasing application throughout the industry. It was not entirely unknown in Lancashire as some pits had always practised it, though they were relatively few. Nationally, Lancashire had been in the forefront of debates on the more general application of multi-shift in which Hammond had been an important participant. The wider debate increasingly turned from questions of 'should it be accepted generally' to one of 'at what price should it be accepted'. In Lancashire, this debate raged throughout the second half of 1964. While the branch committee at Mosley Common stuck to non-acceptance supported by a minority of NUMLA branches, there was an increasing preparedness to move the debate toward acceptance on the right terms. This was a perspective which both Gormley and Hammond began to advance in earnest in moves to isolate the branch committee over multi-shift. Still, it was accepted that implementation at Mosley Common would be difficult, if not impossible. Gormley urged Weaver to accept multi-shift with increased pay, to no avail. Weaver upped the tone of debate by calling for industrial action over multi-shift.¹⁸⁴

Crucially for Mosley Common, the continuing debate over acceptance of multi-shift produced a complete collapse of confidence in the future of the colliery by NCB management at all levels - the first time the NCB had been united on anything connected with Mosley Common. The 'crisis of expectation' shattered any hope that the colliery had "turned the corner", raising doubts over its future. This, combined with a growing weariness with the colliery, finally broke management faith. The breach of faith coincided with a recrudescence of labour troubles during 1964 partly precipitated by attempts to introduce multi-shift, although the reduced trend of smaller-scale disputes continued - see Appendix to this Chapter.¹⁸⁵

The collapse of confidence within the NCB was demonstrated in March 1965 at a routine meeting of the JIC. The language used by the area manager was apocalyptic. He announced that the future of the colliery depended on the successful unopposed implementation of multi-shift work despite continuing objections from Mosley Common

branch. While Hammond continued to give qualified support to the branch, it was Vincent - the close ally of Gormley - who once again emerged as a champion of the branch cause at the meeting. Mosley Common's fate was effectively sealed in March 1965 before the ACP announcement and some two years before it eventually closed.

The ACP did not close the colliery but put it under scrutiny.¹⁸⁶ Mosley Common's remaining two years were spent against a background of persistent rumours about closure. Through the JIC, management at all levels made it clear the colliery's future was in the balance. All the old arguments about labour troubles, militancy and under-performance re-surfaced while the difficulties associated with the implementation of the National Power Loading Agreement added a new dimension to management concerns.¹⁸⁷ Contrary to management assertions Mosley Common's performance during its final years did not initially deteriorate from its more recent improvement, although performance did deteriorate appreciably between 1966 and 1967 when closure beckoned.¹⁸⁸ There is even counter-factual evidence to suggest that Mosley Common was continuing to improve during the mid-1960s. For example, in early 1966, the colliery became the first in the division to attain the coveted one million-ton production target. NCBNWD officials were publicly talking about the "coming of age" of the "ultra modern pit" which had surmounted its early difficulties, admitting publicly for the first time that these were caused by the "cumulative effects of re-construction work and modernisation". There was one important proviso to their optimism. They indicated that for the colliery to have a future there was an urgent need to implement changes to working practices.¹⁸⁹ Clearly, multi-shift was the main focus of management attention.

Labour's prescriptions on further contraction put Mosley Common under the spotlight because of its financial position. Yet, although there was deterioration in financial results during 1965-66, financial losses at the colliery were more of an historical and accumulated nature than of a current or continuing kind.¹⁹⁰ In any case, if the main reason for closing the colliery was poor financial or operating performance then it could have closed at any time since 1947. Furthermore, despite management claims of a deteriorating industrial relations climate at Mosley Common, the final years of the colliery were ones of relatively low dispute-proneness - see Appendix to this Chapter. It was more a case of management nervousness increasing again as a result of new tensions.

Given these facts, the divisional board was fabricating a set of negative factors for the colliery pursuant to closure. While it could point to operational and technical problems these were hardly insuperable given the recent record of the colliery in overcoming them. Likewise, the divisional board gave the colliery a set of unattainable objectives to achieve, including the clearly contradictory one of remedying "a shortfall in output". The board was turning the screw on Mosley Common in order to precipitate its closure.¹⁹¹ The reason was the board's continuing anxiety over its inability to implement further modernisation. The divisional board faced opposition, or lack of wholehearted support, over implementation of multi-shift. This was the main reason for Mosley Common's final demise. Gormley had accurately warned Weaver that failure to implement multi-shift would see collieries close.¹⁹² The colliery was proposed for closure in 1967 but earned a deferment through a trial period agreed by Gormley once again to 'prove itself' against impossible targets. However, it was the intervention of Harold Wilson over closures which earned the colliery a reprieve until its final closure in February 1968.¹⁹³

The events surrounding closure were the stuff of high emotion and drama. Amid the gnashing of teeth at its passing there were protests, eleventh hour interventions, and calls by Weaver for industrial action and a public inquiry.¹⁹⁴ They all amounted to nothing. The dye was cast, and it had been for some time. Events leading up to closure saw some of the most acrimonious exchanges in the turbulent history of the colliery in which blame was apportioned and scapegoats sought. In particular, Gormley, writing later in his memoirs, found an excuse for the colliery's failure in his celebrated attack on the militant wreckers of Mosley Common who he alleged closed the colliery. This attack was all the more piquant given Gormley's frustration over his failure to persuade Weaver to accept multi-shift. This had strained relations within the JIC and between Weaver and Gormley.¹⁹⁵

However, it was Gormley, Hammond and Vincent who played an equal part in precipitating closure. Their opposition to changes to work practices was instrumental in bringing about the collapse of confidence within the NCB over Mosley Common's future. The fact that both Gormley and Hammond modified their position on multi-shift more generally was not enough to reduce the divisional board's anxieties over Mosley Common one iota. They failed to deliver the branch committee in support of their modified position,

while it was clear that all three men continued to harbour grave doubts about the efficacy of introducing multi-shift in the circumstances of Mosley Common. For the divisional board, obstacles to the introduction of this vital piece of modernisation was the final blow hastening closure.

The concept of the Mosley Common project was accompanied by serious misgivings from the beginning to a degree which undermined management cohesion throughout the life of the colliery. These differences ran long and deep. Fundamental management disagreement permeated decision-making and manifested itself in poor planning, lack of control and obfuscated communication. Although management was divided at all levels the higher echelons of management remained more convinced of modernisation on the scale and complexity undertaken. The NUMLA, who saw the colliery as 'one of the premier modernisation projects, supported them. The growing problems and under-performance of the colliery were a direct result of this misplaced judgement. The increasing list of problems included an upsurge in pit level tensions and dispute-proneness. This was used by sections of management to blame to 'militancy' and a legacy of poor industrial relations as a cover for the colliery's failings. The faith placed in the colliery's future at the most senior levels of the NCB saved it from earlier closure. But, the overriding reason for survival was confidence in the NUMLA leadership to assist modernisation through its participation in the JIC. This faith was severely tested in the 'crisis of expectation' as the NUMLA leadership's enthusiasm to overcome obstacles to the colliery's modernisation was not present to the same degree when it came to modernising work practices. This factor was the main reason for closure, not financial or operational problems, militancy or poor industrial relations.

There are a number of issues which emerge from the analysis of the situation at Mosley Common. Firstly, the role played by the NUMLA leadership on the JIC and its part in provoking the 'crisis of expectation'. Given the reluctance of the leadership to oppose the divisional board on colliery closures more generally, why did it engage the board in a more definite way at Mosley Common on work practices? These issues were of relevance beyond Mosley Common. They were of major importance to the future of the whole coal industry. For the senior officials at the centre of the multi-shift debate at Mosley Common these issues were about securing the future of the industry. Mosley Common was just one

rather important arena in which the battle for the industry's future took place. For Gormley, Hammond and Vincent colliery closures were an irrelevance because they were about a battle for the industry's past. The battle over the problems of Mosley Common was about securing the industry of the present. But, the battle over work practices was a battle for the industry's future. This was the only issue of importance on which they felt it was worth fighting. This explains why Gormley and Vincent supported Weaver - an ideological opponent - through the work of the JIC on work practices. Support on pit level questions was about working toward a broader agenda than the narrow concerns of Weaver and Mosley Common. The shift of emphasis on multi-shift was indicative of the way the debate was being steered toward securing the terms of the coal industry of tomorrow. Mosley Common's 'moment' was passing as priorities switched toward focusing on work process issues, such as multi-shift, to obtain the best deal inside the modernised industry after the completion of industrial change. In this respect Mosley Common was less important by the mid-1960s as attention turned from this 'failed' modernisation project to securing the best terms within the two new collieries and the 'successful' re-constructions.

A second question concerns the extent to which problems at Mosley Common were exceptional. There were 'successful' re-constructions elsewhere in Lancashire which survived. Equally, the problems which afflicted Mosley Common's modernisation were not *sui generis*. It was not unusual as a 'failed' re-construction either in Lancashire or elsewhere. Less than half the major re-constructions in the coalfield survived the 1960s. Other re-constructions, such as those in St. Helens district - which was less troubled and a more 'attractive' mining area - experienced similar difficulties to those at Mosley Common.¹⁹⁶ The argument that the problems of Mosley Common were not exceptional was one advanced by some sections of management. However, as others conceded, Mosley Common's difficulties were of a different order, certainly in Lancashire. They were certainly on a different scale from other re-constructions.¹⁹⁷ The complexity, extent, and sheer profusion of problems had NCBNWD officials fleeing to leave.

It was not only the complexity and physical scale of the colliery which gave rise to problems. The colliery's difficulties were unusual because of an absence of managerial agreement on the most basic operational issues arising from fundamental disagreements over re-development. This situation compounded an operational and logistical nightmare of the

first order. In formulating their revised position on multi-shift both Gormley and Hammond acknowledged the situation at Mosley Common was 'different'. The Mosley Common project was so 'flawed' it ate into every facet of its existence. While sections of management denied the problems were exceptional, they were keen to stress its uniqueness in terms of its 'militancy' and poor industrial relations. The only aspect of its 'militancy' and the industrial relations record that was exceptional was the matrix of problems which gave rise to it. During the extirpation of emotion accompanying closure the most profound question being asked was: "Who Killed Mosley Common" ?¹⁹⁸ Mosley Common died at its own hands - verdict: suicide - Mosley Common was a modernisation too far.

4.5 CONCLUSION

It is clear from the investigation of rationalisation and the ACP in the Lancashire coalfield that there was an overwhelming acceptance of industrial change by both the NCBNWD and the NUMLA. This acceptance extended to the need for the rationalisation of the industry. The ACP brought rising tensions. In Lancashire, this had both a specific dimension, related to the character and operation of industrial change, and specific outcomes, related to the priorities of the industry which remained.

The analysis of specific closures has demonstrated that the NUMLA leadership accepted the Coal Board's strategy for closures. The compelling case for modernisation was instrumental in the NUMLA leadership's acceptance of the Maypole closure which paved the way for many more. Recognition by the union of the need to maintain the momentum of change was illustrated by the position it took on manpower issues generally, and on the manpower issues arising out of the Sandhole closure in particular. Not only was the NUMLA leadership willing to accept closures, it actively participated in them, such was its desire to assist the modernisation of the industry. This position was demonstrated on different occasions, under both rationalisation and the ACP, at Maypole, Sandhole and Clock Face. At Clock Face, the advent of the ACP and the increasing problems this heralded for industrial change in Lancashire was not sufficient to prompt leadership opposition to further closures.

'Rank-and-file' opposition to closures was specific, sporadic, and fragmented. It arose from the invidious character or specific outcomes of closure. Collective opposition to closure was absent as NUMLA branches responded to the particular circumstances of closure at their own colliery. This was an important feature of the Clock Face affair where the union leadership was able to re-assert its authority by gathering the support of branches where closure had been untroubled. Only where organisational links existed through union panels or where political links existed between colliery branches was there any hint of collective action such as that associated with the Sandhole closure.

There is no evidence to suggest that the divisional board closed collieries because of 'militancy' or a poor industrial relations record *per se*. It was clearly an excuse at Mosley Common, while elsewhere collieries were closed irrespective of their industrial relations record. However, at Clock Face and Sandhole opposition to the divisional board's plans and the existence of a 'militant' branch at Sandhole were important elements in closure. Alleged 'militancy' or a poor industrial relations record was thus a significant second order issue in closure considerations. This became an issue too for the NUMLA leadership who saw 'militancy' and industrial action as 'unhelpful' to industrial change.

The evidence from these closures points to little involvement from 'outside' the industry, either through the intervention of parliamentary representatives, local authorities or coalfield communities. The potential exception was at Maypole where 'outside' involvement was rejected. At Maypole the relationship between the NUMLA and the Labour Party was influential in affecting closure.

The closure of Mosley Common arose from a different set of circumstances from the others considered. The problems of the colliery arose out of the need to propel modernisation and from the nature of opposition to the process. It was only due to the willingness of the NUMLA leadership to participate in saving the colliery that it was not closed before 1968. In that sense, although the situation at Mosley Common was different, like the others, it was a casualty of the modernisation agenda. The significance of the 'failure' of Mosley Common lay in the contrasting responses of the NUMLA leadership toward modernisation of the colliery with its more general response to rationalisation in Lancashire. While there was never any question of the NUMLA leadership opposing

closures it was readily involved in opposition to changes to work practices. This contrast spoke volumes about the priorities of the NUMLA leadership in its support of modernisation. The conflict over work practices at Mosley Common was part of a wider engagement by the union to ensure that it was able to appropriate the most attractive terms within the new industry emerging from the ashes of the old. These sentiments also played an important part in the closure of Sandhole on questions of technological change. The main pre-occupation of the union was in making a claim on the industry which remained after industrial change had been completed. The union was not interested in saving collieries except in so far as they were current symbols of the modernisation process.

If one person encapsulated this philosophy it was Joe Gormley. He used the occasion of industrial change to ensure that the union staked a claim in the industry of the future, thus signalling his tacit acceptance of industrial change. However, Gormley was not alone, although he owed much to industrial change as the device with which to stamp his personal authority on the Lancashire union. This chapter has concentrated on the closure of four collieries in the coalfield focusing on the involvement of the NCBNWD and NUMLA in industrial change. The following two chapters will assess the NUMLA's more general response to industrial change in the absence of opposition from the leadership. They will also highlight the wider response to industrial change in the coalfield through a variety of actors.

4.6 APPENDIX: MOSLEY COMMON COLLIERY: INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

YEAR	NUMBER OF DISPUTES UNDER 100 WORKING DAYS LOST	NUMBER OF DISPUTES OVER 100 WORKING DAYS LOST	TOTAL ALL DISPUTES
1945	3	4	7
1946	2	1	3
1947	5	5	10
1948	2	2	4
1949	7	0	7
1950	13	4	17
1951	6	2	8
1952	7	0	7
1953	3	1	4
1954	4	1	5
1955	12	7	19
1956	11	4	15
1957	14	3	17
1958	14	1	15
1959	14	2	16
1960	10	1	11
1961	11	3	14
1962	8	7	15
1963	4	1	5
1964	8	6	14
1965	5	1	6
1966	8	1	9
1967	0	0	0
1968	0	0	0
TOTAL	171	57	218

Source: PRO File Nos 34/LAB/62-34/LAB 76,34/LAB/83-34/LAB/90: Ministry of Labour : 1945-1968: Trade Disputes : Coal Industry : Lancashire/North Western Division.

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⁶ North-Western Coalfields, 1945. Plan for Coal: The National Coal Board's Proposals, 1950, NCB.

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⁴² Manchester Evening News 11 August 1967: Report on Bedford colliery closure, 9 February 1968: Report of Mosley Common colliery closure.

⁴³ LRO No NC.acc.7950 No 129: NCBNWD: Relations Dept: Disputes: Industrial and Conciliation 1964-66: Stoppages and Restrictions: General: Industrial Relations Director NCBNWD to all Area General Managers: Double and Treble Shift Working 8 November 1965. Manchester Evening News 31 May 1962: Report on experiments with three shift winding at Golborne colliery to be extended to selected pits throughout the coalfield. Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory 1947, 1948, The Louis Cassier Co Ltd: British coalfield shiftwork statistics.

⁴⁴ Manchester Guardian 12 November 1962: Interview with Joe Gormley:

⁴⁵ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 39: Manpower. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 240: Report on Manpower Residential Analysis 1964.

⁴⁶ The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, April 1967, p.20.

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- ⁴⁷ Chorley Guardian, 31 March 1967: Report on closure of Chisnall Hall colliery. Wigan Observer 18 February 1966: Report on the closure of Summersales colliery.
- ⁴⁸ PRO, File POWE 52/73: Notes on the North Western Division Colliery Closure Programme 1966/68:Lancashire Coalfield.
- ⁴⁹ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1969. NUMNWA, ACM, 23 March 1968. NUMNEC Minutes, Appendix III: Situation in the Industry: Area Profiles 18 January 1968. Manchester Evening News 18 November 1965. In addition to those collieries which closed, Bickershaw-Parsonage, Cronton and Sutton Manor were put under scrutiny by the NCB but survived beyond 1972.
- ⁵⁰ PRO, File COAL 30/82: NCBNWD Report: Improving Colliery Results: Report on Pits Listed in the National Secretary's Letter 17 January 1958, NCBHQ: Note: Uneconomic Collieries 19 March 1958. PRO, File COAL 30/85: NCBHQ Notes of Spécial Meeting with representatives of the NCBNWD 9 June 1959: Revision of the National Plan: Closures North Western Division 1959-1965.
- ⁵¹ Hannavy, J, and Lewis, R, The Maypole: Diary of a Colliery Disaster, 1983,Wigantech Publications, pp.60-61. Ward, C, 'The Maypole Colliery Disaster' in Mining Disasters in the Leigh Area, T.Macquiban and N.Ackers (eds), 1975,Leigh Local History Society, pp.15-18.
- ⁵² Wigan Observer 19 August 1958.
- ⁵³PRO, File COAL 30/85: NCBNWD Report Improving Colliery Results: Report on Pits Listed in the National Secretary's Letter 17 January 1958: Maypole Colliery.
- ⁵⁴ PRO, File COAL 30/82: NCBNWD Report: Improving Colliery Results: Report on Pits Listed in the National Secretary's Letter 17 January 1958: Maypole. PRO, File COAL 30/84: NCBNWD to NCBHQ: 14 November 1958: Board Reviewed Collieries Presently Operating Uneconomically or at Low Productivity: Maypole Colliery. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 254: 1958 Feb: Special Report: Improving Colliery Results: Unprofitable Collieries: Maypole.
- ⁵⁵ NUMLA, ACM, 19 April 1958.

⁵⁶ Iron and Coal Trades Review 12 December 1958.

⁵⁷ PRO, File COAL 30/84: NCBNWD to NCBHQ 14 November 1958: Board Reviewed Collieries Presently Operating Uneconomically or at Low Productivity: Maypole Colliery. PRO, File COAL 30/85: NCBHQ: Special Meeting with representatives of the NCBNWD 9 June 1959.

⁵⁸ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 240: 1964: Staff Dept: Manpower: Residential Analysis of Mineworkers.

⁵⁹ PRO, File COAL 30/84: Colonel Bolton, Chairman NCBNWD to NCBHQ Secretary C.A. Roberts 25 November 1958: Review of Collieries.

⁶⁰ PRO, File COAL 30/84: Colonel Bolton, Chairman NCBNWD to NCBHQ Secretary C.A. Roberts 25 November 1958: Review of Collieries.

⁶¹ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 46: Deputy Chairman's Office 1958 Dec-1959 Jan: Closure of Maypole Colliery: Statements of policy and notes of meetings held with the various unions in the Division, regarding arrangements for closure, Report of Meeting between NCB and NUMNEC Hobart House 3 December 1958, Minutes of Meetings between NCBNWD Board and NUMLA Executive, Grand Hotel, Manchester 17,19, 22 December 1958.

⁶² NUMLA, ACM, 24 January 1959.

⁶³ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 46: Minutes of Meetings between NCBNWD and NUMLA Executive, 17,19,22 December 1958.

⁶⁴ Wigan Observer 12 December 1958.

⁶⁵ Iron and Coal Trades Review 12 December 1958.

⁶⁶ Wigan Observer 19 December 1958.

⁶⁷ LRO, No NC.acc.7960 No 5: NCBNWD: Production Dept: Report 8 May 1959: Revision of the National Plan 1959: Area and Divisional Appreciations: Appendix 4.

⁶⁸ Iron and Coal Trades Review 12 December 1958.

⁶⁹ Wigan Observer 7 November 1958: Brown in Queens Speech debates House of Commons, 12 December 1958.

⁷⁰ Wigan Observer 3 June 1958: Address by Alan Fitch to a Labour Party election meeting Wigan Co-operative Hall and in debate at an open meeting of by-election candidates at the Wigan Parliamentary by-election, 18 July 1958: Maiden speech in House of Commons, 12 December 1958, 5 May 1959: Fitch's address to May Day rally in Wigan. NUMLA, ACM, 18 April 1959: Support for Alan Fitch in advance of the 1959 May Day rally.

⁷¹ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

⁷² NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

⁷³ Wigan Observer 16 January 1959.

⁷⁴ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1958: Speech by Alan Fitch re: his nomination as NUMLA Labour Party candidate to contest Wigan Parliamentary Constituency.

⁷⁵ NUMLA, Special Conference Report, 12 April 1958. NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1958: Alan Fitch nomination speech.

⁷⁶ Simm, G, Parkside Colliery, 1994, p.57.

⁷⁷ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 5:NCBNWD: Production Dept Report 8 May 1959: Revision of the National Plan: Area and Divisional Appreciations: Appendix 4.

⁷⁸ Simm, G, Parkside Colliery, 1994, p.57.

⁷⁹ Iron and Trades Coal Review 12 December 1958.

⁸⁰ NUMLA, ACM, 24 January 1959. NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1959.

⁸¹ PRO, File COAL 30/85: NCB 449th Meeting of the Board, 1959: Closure of Uneconomic Collieries: Review of the Situation: North Western Division.

⁸² NUMLA, ACM, 7 November 1959.

⁸³ NUMLACM, 24 January 1959.

⁸⁴ NUMLA, ACM, 24 January 1959, 14-16 May 1959. A Century of Struggle: Britain's Miners in Pictures 1889-1989, 1989, NUM, Sheffield, p.84: The term 'Industrial Gypsies' was coined at the time to describe the predicament of miners involved in frequent forced pit transfers due to closure.

⁸⁵ NUMLA, ACM, 24 January 1959. Wigan Observer 16 January, 3 February 1959, 29 May 1959.

⁸⁶ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 5: NCB National Secretary to NCBNWD Chairman 6 March 1959: National Plan Review 1959 and reply: NCBNWD Chairman, Colonel Bolton, to NCBHQ Coal Board Chairman, Sir James Bowman.

⁸⁷ PRO, File COAL 31/98: NCB Chairman's Dept: 1960 May -1963 Feb: Colliery Closures North-Western Division: Report: NCB Finance Committee: Sandhole Colliery 31 July 1961.

⁸⁸ Swinton and Pendlebury Journal 8 July 1960, 18 January 1961. Iron and Coal Trades Review 7 January 1961.

⁸⁹ Swinton and Pendlebury Journal 3 May 1961. NUMLA, ECM, 30 May 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 8: Report: The Area as a Whole: A Summary of the General Area Position to the end of 1960.

⁹⁰ NUMLA, ACM, 20 August 1960.

⁹¹ PRO, File COAL 30/86: NCBHQ: Secretary's Dept: Colliery Closures: Closures in 1962: NCBNWD to NCBHQ 7 July 1961. LRO No NC.acc.7950 No 8: Report: Individual Collieries: Sandhole: January 1961.

⁹² PRO, File POWE 37/545: Review of NCB Organisation: Closure of Collieries: Policy, Statistics, Correspondence and Papers 1960-1962:1961:Closures and Concentrations: NCBNWD Memorandum 1 June 1960, Report 17 June 1960.

⁹³ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 203:NCBNWD Marketing Director: Organisation: Closure of Collieries 1962-1964: Report: The Manpower Implications of the Possible Closure of Certain Collieries April 1962 re: Lord Robens request 17 April 1962 for an acceleration of colliery closures.

⁹⁴ PRO, File COAL 31/98: Report: NCB : Finance Committee : Sandhole Colliery Proposed Closure 31 July 1961: Divisional Application: Reasons for Closure 4 August 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 253:Report on Sandhole Colliery 29 May 1961.

⁹⁵ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 8: III: Manpower and Forecasting: Report: Sandhole Colliery: January 1961,Report: The Future: Morale: January 1961.

⁹⁶ Discussion with Mr W. Kelly 27 January 1999: Mr Kelly was an underground mineworker at Sandhole Colliery at the time of closure and knew both men. NUMLA, ACM, 5 December 1959: Socialist Labour League discussed following Report of Labour Party Conference, Blackpool, 1959 and its proscription by Labour NEC March 1959.

⁹⁷ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 8: Report: Individual Collieries: Sandhole January 1961.

⁹⁸ LRO, No NC. acc.7950 No 8: Report: Individual Collieries: Sandhole January 1961.

⁹⁹ PRO, File COAL 30/98: NCB: Finance Committee Sandhole Colliery Proposed Closure Divisional Application: Reasons for Closure 4 August 1961. PRO, File POWE 37/545: Ministry of Power Press Summaries: Joe Gormley interviewed by the *Liverpool Daily Post*: article 7 June 1961. NUMLA, ACM, 29 April 1961: Sandhole Delegate re: situation inside the colliery and management attitudes. NUMLA, ECM, 10 July 1961: situation at Sandhole colliery pursuant to independent inquiry.

¹⁰⁰ LRO, No NC.ac.7950 No 203: NCBNWD Report: The Manpower Implications of the Possible Closures of Certain Collieries April 1962 re: Lord Robens request 17 April 1962 for an acceleration of colliery closures.

¹⁰¹ PRO, File COAL 31/98: Report: NCB Finance Committee: Sandhole Colliery Proposed Closure 31 July 1961: Divisional Application: Reasons for Closure 4 August 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 253: Report on Sandhole Colliery 29 May 1961.

¹⁰² NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961.

¹⁰³ Colliery Guardian 20 October 1960: Profile of James Anderton. St. Helens and District Reporter 22 August 1964: Profile of James Anderton.

¹⁰⁴ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961: Debate on Pit Closures. NUMLA, ACM, 19 August 1961.

¹⁰⁵ PRO, File COAL 30/86: NUMLA General Secretary, Joe Gormley, to NCBNWD Chairman, James Anderton, re: Proposed Closure: Rams Mine: Sandhole Colliery 22 June 1961.

¹⁰⁶ Conversation with Mr. W. Kelly 27 January 1999.

¹⁰⁷ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961: Debate on Pit Closures.

¹⁰⁸ PRO, File COAL 30/86: Joe Gormley to James Anderton re: Proposed Closure 22 June 1961, Report of meetings between NCBNWD Chairman, NUMLA General Secretary, Executive and branch officials re: Sandhole Colliery June 1961, NCBNWD Chairman, James Anderton, to NCBHQ Deputy Chairman, E. Humphrey Browne, 29 June 1961.

¹⁰⁹ PRO, File COAL 30/86: James Anderton to Humphrey Browne 29 June 1961.

¹¹⁰ PRO, File COAL 30/86: Report of Meetings between NCBNWD and NUMLA June 1961. NUMLA, ECM, 30 May 1961.

¹¹¹ NUMLA, ACM, 19 August 1961.

¹¹² NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961. NUMLA, ECM, 30 May 1961, 10 July 1961. NUMLA, ACM, 29 April 1961, 17 June 1961, 19 August 1961.

¹¹³ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961. NUMLA, ECM, 30 May 1961, 10 July 1961. NUMLA, ACM, 29 April 1961, 17 June 1961, 19 August 1961.

¹¹⁴ NUMLA, ACM, 19 August 1961, 19 August 1961: Appendix: Rhodes and Windeler, Consulting Engineers, Manchester: Report: Investigation of Situation at Sandhole 8 August 1961. PRO, File COAL 30/86: Report of Meetings between NCBNWD and NUMLA June 1961.

¹¹⁵ Conversation with Mr. W. Kelly refers 20 May 1999: Mr Kelly was a member of the branch committee at the time. Mr. Kelly and Ted Woolley were the only two members of the branch committee who voted in favour of Sandhole taking unilateral industrial action.

¹¹⁶ Swinton and Pendlebury Journal 6 August 1962. LRO, No 7950 No 203: NCBNWD Report: The Manpower Implications of the Possible Closures of Certain Collieries re: Lord Robens request for an acceleration of colliery closures 17 April 1962, NCB Chairman, Lord Robens, to NCBNWD Chairman, James Anderton, 17 April 1962, NCBNWD Area Manager East Lancashire to NCBNWD Deputy Chairman 26 July 1962: Sandhole Colliery, NCB Chairman to NCBNWD Chairman 8 August 1962, NCBNWD Production Director to NCBNWD Board: Memorandum re: Final Closure of Sandhole Colliery 14 September 1962.

¹¹⁷ LRO, No 7950.acc. No 8: Reports: Power Loading: Non-Productive Manpower and Concentration: Individual Collieries, Part III: The Future: Mechanisation, January 1961.

¹¹⁸ NUMLA, ACM, 19 August 1961.

¹¹⁹ NUMLA, ACM, 19 August 1961.

¹²⁰ PRO, File No POWE 52/72: 1965: Ministry of Power: Ministerial Advice on Lord Robens's letter of 27 August 1965 outlining the programme of accelerated colliery closures: Report: Lives of Individual Collieries: Accelerated Colliery Programme August 1965, Lord Robens to Ministry of Power 27 August 1965, Ministry of Power comments on Lord Roben's letters 3 September 1965, 7 September 1965. Manchester Evening News 18 November 1965.

¹²¹ PRO, File COAL 30/82: NCBNWD to NCBHQ Secretary 27 February 1958: Report: NCBWD: Improving Colliery Results: Report on Pits Listed in the National Secretary's letter 17 January 1958: Clock Face Colliery. PRO, File COAL 30/84: NCBNWD to NCBHQ: Report: Board Reviewed Collieries presently operating uneconomically or at low productivity 14 November 1958: Clock Face Colliery. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 264: Area No 3 (St.Helens) General Manager: 1958 Feb: Reports on Clock Face, Cronton, Garswood Hall and Lea Green Collieries. LRO,

No NC.acc.7950 No 47: NCBNWD Deputy Chairman's Office 1958 Oct-1959 May: Review of Collieries: Output reduction in 1959 by Concentration: NCBHQ Secretary's Dept to NCBNWD Secretary's Dept 31 October 1958, Reply 14 November 1958: Report: Board Reviewed Collieries presently operating uneconomically or at low productiveness 14 November 1958: Clock Face Colliery.

¹²² PRO, File COAL 30/82: NCBNWD to NCBHQ Secretary 27 February 1958: Report: NCBNWD: Improving Colliery Results: Report on Pits Listed in NCBHQ Secretary's letter 17 January 1958.

¹²³ St.Helens and District Reporter 6 June 1964: Report on Lea Green closure.

¹²⁴ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 221: NCBNWD Production Dept: 1962 April: Five and Ten Year Forward Planning Estimates: Lea Green Colliery: recommended for concentration and manpower release to Parkside, 30 March 1962. LRO, NC.acc.7950 No 264: Report on Lea Green Colliery. St.Helens and District Reporter 6 June 1964: Report on Lea Green Colliery Closure. NUMLA, ECM, 5 November 1962. NUMLA, ACM, 14 September 1963.

¹²⁵ PRO, File: LAB/34/75: Ministry of Labour: Trade Disputes 1959: Coal Mining: North Western: Dispute at Reedley Colliery, Burnley, 17 November 1959, File LAB/35/76: Trade Disputes 1960: Coal Mining: North Western, Files LAB/34/83-lab/34/87: Trade Disputes: Coal Mining: North Western: 1961-1965 inclusive, LAB/34/87: Dispute at Clock Face Colliery, St.Helens 25-26 November 1965. During the 1959-1965 period there was only one occurrence of industrial action against colliery closure: a one day token protest strike in 1959 over the terms of closure of Reedley Colliery, Burnley. There had been sporadic incidences of industrial action of a more limited nature over manpower transfer problems arising from closure as well as more frequent stoppages over the terms of re-assignment of mineworkers as a result of concentration.

¹²⁶ Manchester Evening News 25 November 1965, 26 November 1965. St.Helens and District Reporter 27 November 1965. St.Helens Newspaper 30 November 1965.

¹²⁷ St.Helens and District Reporter, 27 November 1965.

¹²⁸ St.Helens and District Reporter, 27 November 1965.

¹²⁹ St.Helens and District Reporter, 27 November 1965.

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- ¹³⁰ St.Helens and District Reporter 27 November 1965. St.Helens Newspaper 30 November 1965.
- ¹³¹ St.Helens and District Reporter 27 November 1965.
- ¹³² NUMNWA. ACM, 26 March 1966, 23 April 1966.
- ¹³³ NUMNWA, ACM, 26 March 1966.
- ¹³⁴ NUMNWA, ACM, 26 March 1966.
- ¹³⁵ NUMNWA, ACM, 26 March 1966, 23 April 1966.
- ¹³⁶ NUMNWA, ACM, 26 March 1966;
- ¹³⁷ LRO, No NC. acc.7950 No 208: NCBNWD: Mining Department: Mosley Common 1961-1967: JIC: Area General Manager East Lancashire District to Area Production Manager re: Mosley Common Colliery 8 August 1963 following meeting between NUM branch and local management, Minutes of JIC, Sandhole Training Centre, 2 December 1965.
- ¹³⁸ LRO, No NC. acc.7950 No 7: Part III: The Future, January 1961.
- ¹³⁹ LRO, No NC. acc.7950 No 251: NCBNWD Secretary's Dept: No 1 (Manchester) Area: Report on the Re-organisation of Mosley Common Colliery: Stage 1.
- ¹⁴⁰ LRO, No NC. acc.7950 No 279: NCBNWD: 1961:February: East Lancashire Area General Manager: Report on Mosley Common Colliery by the Area General Manger: Technical Considerations: detailing the history of the project 21 February 1961.
- ¹⁴¹ Farnworth and Worsley Journal 27 April 1967: One of a number articles appearing around the time of final closure announcement which assessed the antecedents of the project in the light of subsequent developments. LRO, No NC. acc.7950 No 279: East Lancashire Area General Manager: Report on Mosley Common Colliery by Area General Manager: Technical

Considerations: detailing the history of the project 21 February 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 251: Report on the Re-organisation of Mosley Common Colliery: Stage 1.

¹⁴² LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: East Lancashire Area General Manager: Report on Mosley Common Colliery by the Area General Manager: Technical Considerations: relating the history of the project 21 February 1961.

¹⁴³ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: East Lancashire Area General Manager: Report on Mosley Common Colliery by the Area General Manager: Progress to Date, Recent Investigations 21 February 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 280: 1961 March: Appreciation of Current Position and Future Prospects of Mosley Common Colliery: Divisional Report.

¹⁴⁴ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No: 8: Part III: Morale: Mosley Common January 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 220: NCBNWD Production Dept: Review of Mosley Common Colliery: Report on Mossley Common Colliery by an Industrial Relations trainee on his observations at the colliery 2 November 1959-31 December 1959 dated 1 March 1960 sent to NCBNWD Chairman and Board.

¹⁴⁵ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: East Lancashire Area General Manager: Report on Mosley Common Colliery by the Area General Manager: Mechanisation: Technical Considerations 21 February 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 280: 1961 March: Appreciation of Current Position and Future Prospects of Mosley Common Colliery: Divisional Report: Complicating Features: Colliery Management. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 220: Report by an Industrial Relations trainee.

¹⁴⁶ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: East Lancashire Area General Manager: Report on Mosley Common Colliery by the Area General Manager: Labour Relations 21 February 1961.

¹⁴⁷ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 8: Part III: Morale: Mosley Common.

¹⁴⁸ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 8: Part III: Morale: Mosley Common.

¹⁴⁹ Catalogue No CP/LOC/NW/3/3: 1942: Lancashire and Cheshire News: The Newsletter of the Lancashire and Cheshire Division, CPGB 26 December 1942: article 'The Battle for Coal: Review of the Position in the Lancashire Coalfield', Catalogue No CP/LOC/NW/3/7: 1946: Lancashire and Cheshire News: 18 May 1946: lead article: 'Affiliation: All for the Campaign: Miners and Working

Class Unity' including references to organisational work inside Mosley Common colliery, Catalogue No CP/LOC/NW/3/13: 1952: The Bulletin; The Newsletter of the Lancashire and Cheshire Division, CPGB 27 September 1952: Report on organisation in the Lancashire coalfield and call for mass rally of mineworkers. National Museum of Labour History, Archive, Manchester.

¹⁵⁰ Mick Weaver: Nomination for the National School, CPGB, Education Department by Bolton Branch of the Lancashire and Cheshire Division, Report and Instructions from National School to Lancashire and Cheshire Division Committee: Mick Weaver following attendance at National School 28 October to 3 November 1950, Uncatalogued Papers, National Museum of Labour History, Archive, Manchester.

¹⁵¹ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 208: NCBNWD: Mining Department: Mosley Common: 1961-1967: Area General Manager to Area Production Manager re: Mosley Common Colliery 8 August 1963.

¹⁵² LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 246: 1954 Jan -1961 Feb: Mosley Common Colliery Miscellaneous Reports: Area No 1 (Manchester) General Manager: This huge file contains the routine industrial relations record of the colliery including management negotiations with both Boothstown and Mosley Common NUM branches.

¹⁵³ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 246: Report of Deputations 13 May 1960, 15 July 1960.

¹⁵⁴ NUMLA, ECM, 16 May 1960: Ballot for vice-president, May 1960: Of the ten candidates Weaver progressed to the fourth and final stage of election coming third of the four finalists along way behind the winner Sam Foster - the choice of the NUMLA leadership - and behind the second-placed candidate Joe Clarke of Sandhole colliery, the leading standard bearer of the left in the election. On the first vote Weaver obtained 75 per cent at Mosley Common but only 35 per cent at Boothstown, only one per cent more than Sam Foster, the right-wing choice of the 'county'. Over half of Weaver's votes came from Atherton, Mosley Common, Boothstown and Tyldesley branches on the first vote and since his vote did not appreciably grow by the fourth and final vote it would be safe to assume that the bulk of Weaver's support was garnered from these three branches. His showing elsewhere, aside from a handful of branches, was indifferent. Tyldesley and Mosley Common branches had two of the largest memberships in the NUMLA.

¹⁵⁵ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 246: 1954-1961 Feb: Mosley Common Miscellaneous Reports: Area No 1 (Manchester) General Manager.

¹⁵⁶ PRO, Files 34/LAB/62-34/LAB/76,34/LAB/83-34/LAB/90: Ministry of Labour: 1947-1968: Trade Disputes: Coal Industry: Lancashire/North-Western Division. LRO, No 7950 No 280: Disputes and Stoppages: Mosley Common Colliery: Stoppages and Restrictions since 1947: Analysis of Causes of Disputes 1957-1961. Management indicated Mosley Common had a dispute record which was twice the average for the Lancashire coalfield since vesting date. These figures were based on the Coal Board's preferred method of measuring strike-proneness through 'wastage'- the tonnage of coal lost through disputes. However, Ministry of Labour records over the same period show that Mosley Common was just one of a number of more disputatious collieries in the coalfield. Ministry of Labour records provide a measure of the dispute frequency and a qualitative account of each dispute. Each method is compiled in a different way and both are prone, in their respective ways, to deficiencies and limitations. However, one point is clear from both measurements - Mosley Common was a colliery beset by a plethora of relatively minor stoppages.

¹⁵⁷ Grayling C, The Bridgewater Heritage: The Story of the Bridgewater Estates, 1983, Bridgewater Estates plc, Worsley, Lancashire, *passim*. Colliery Guardian Notes from the Coalfields: Lancashire and Cheshire 1918-1923 *passim*: Weekly Feature, including references to the Earl of Ellesmere's Pits. LCMF, Monthly Statement of Accounts January 1918-December 1933, Half-Yearly Balance Sheets (June and December) June 1918-December 1933, Executive Committee Reports. (Usually Fortnightly) January 1918-December 1933. LCMF Strike Pay Accounts for the period 1918 to 1933 show that Mosley Common was not in the top 20 most strike-prone collieries in the Lancashire and Cheshire coalfield. The colliery only began to accumulate an industrial disputes 'record' from the late 1920s after it had passed into the control of a business consortium known as Bridgewater Estates Ltd which later became part of Manchester Collieries Ltd. The colliery was virtually dispute free when controlled by the Earl of Ellesmere.

¹⁵⁸ Farnworth and Worsley Journal 15 February 1968: Reports of interviews with miners following closure of Mosley Common colliery.

¹⁵⁹ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 280: Divisional Report: Industrial Relations.

¹⁶⁰ Manchester Guardian 28 April 1948. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 220: 1959: Production Dept: NCBNWD: Memorandum: Production Director to NCBNWD Chairman and Board with Report on Mosley Common Workings and Development 19 June 1959. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: Recent Investigations 21 February 1961, Report on Mining Conditions at Mosley Common Colliery 26 February 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 280: Industrial Relations.

¹⁶¹ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 220: NCBNWD Director to NCBNWD Board: re: Industrial Relations at Mosley Common Colliery: Double-Shift Working and Power Loading. Manchester Guardian 13 June 1957: Report on trouble at Mosley Common over shift work and travelling times.

¹⁶² LRO No NC.acc.7950 No 208: 1961-1967:East Lancashire Area: Mosley Common JIC: Report of the Sub-Committee 3 November 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: Mechanisation, Prospects for Power Loading 21 February 1961, Report on Mining Conditions: Mosley Common Colliery 26 February 1961.

¹⁶³ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 280: Mosley Common Colliery: Stoppages and Restrictions since 1947: Analysis of the Causes of Disputes 1957-1961. Once common feature of Ministry of Labour and NCB dispute records at Mosley Common is not only the occurrence of frequent small-scale disputes but of disputes of a certain type. On the NCB's measure of disputes between 1957 and 1961 50 per cent were in the 'miscellaneous' category - not directly concerned with wages, bonuses, or allowances. Within this category the largest group of disputes - some 18 per cent of all disputes during the period - were directly concerned with the deployment or re-deployment of labour. Of the rest, the main reason for disputes concerned shortages of materials, problems with machinery and 'conditions' of work. Therefore, a substantial proportion of minor disputes arose directly from the re-construction work. Also, it should be noted that 50 per cent of disputes in the 'remuneration' category arose over the re-negotiation of terms arising from re-deployment. The period 1957-1961 coincided with the main phase of re-construction work.

¹⁶⁴ The trend of dispute frequency either side of the 1955-1961 period is remarkable for its consistency. Between 1945 and 1954 Mosley Common averaged 2 disputes per year of over 100 working days lost and 5 under 100 working days lost. During 1962-1966 the comparative figures were 3 and 5 (excluding the last 14 months of the colliery's life when it was in closure mode). Between 1955 and 1961 the comparable figures were 3 and 12 with the minor stoppages running at 2 and half times the average for the other two periods.

¹⁶⁵ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 208: NCB East Lancashire Area: Mosley Common JIC: Report of Sub-Committee 3 November 1961: Craftsmen's grievances heard. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 209: 1961-67: Mosley Common JIC 3 November 1961: Craftsman and other skilled workers' grievances heard. PRO, File No LAB/34/85: Ministry of Labour: Trade Disputes: Coal Mining: North Western Region: 1961: Entry for disputes of colliery craftsman: electricians and

mechanics 21 June-23 June 1961: During the late 1950s and 1960s the craftsmen were involved in a number of serious disputes at Mosley Common.

¹⁶⁶ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 220: Report by an Industrial Relations trainee on his observations at the colliery.

¹⁶⁷ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 209: Minutes of Mosley Common JIC 2 February 1967.

¹⁶⁸ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 220: Report by an Industrial Relations trainee on his observations at the colliery.

¹⁶⁹ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: NCBNWD No 1 (Manchester) Area: Mosley Common Colliery: Estimated Profitability Statement with Report for the period July 1961-June 1962.

¹⁷⁰ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: NCBNWD No 1 (Manchester) Area: Mosley Common Colliery: Estimated Profitability Statement with Report for the period July 1961-June 1962.

¹⁷¹ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: NCBNWD No 1 (Manchester) Area: Mosley Common Colliery: Estimated Profitability Statement with Report for the period July 1961-June 1962. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 208: NCBNWD: Minutes of the Mosley Common JIC, 3 November 1961, 11 December 1961. Colliery Guardian 23 June 1960: Profile of Humphrey-Browne CBE, 10 March 1967: Profile of Humphrey-Browne on his retirement. Farnworth and Worsley Journal 27 April 1967: an article at closure dealt with the history of the colliery.

¹⁷² NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 208: NCBNWD: Minutes of the Mosley Common JIC, 3 November 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 279: NCBNWD: East Lancashire Area: Mosley Common JIC: Report of Sub-Committee 3 November 1961.

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¹⁷⁵ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 208: Mosley Common JIC Minutes, 3 November 1961, 8 January 1962. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 209: Mosley Common JIC Minutes 3 November 1961.

¹⁷⁶ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 208: Mosley Common JIC Minutes 3 November 1961, 8 January 1962, Area General Manager: East Lancashire Area: Tom Knowles to NUMLA General Secretary, Joe Gormley, 15 August 1963 with reply 29 August 1963, Area General Manager to Gormley 26 August 1964. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 209: Mosley Common JIC Minutes 3 November 1961. NUMLA, ACM, 10 August 1957: A Report from the NUMNEC by Joe Gormley. One of the most celebrated clashes between Mick Weaver and Joe Gormley occurred over the NUMLA position on the Provincial bus strike affecting collieries in the coalfield including Mosley Common. National level NUM instructions were for branches to co-operate with colliery managers in keeping pits open. Weaver saw this as "dangerously near supporting 'black-leg' drivers" being used on the buses. An heated debate about the nature of trade unionism caused Gormley to lose his temper with Weaver leading to a withering attack on Weaver, his record at Mosley Common, his lack of co-operation with management, the conduct of disputes at the colliery, absenteeism and the colliery's appalling performance.

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Commission of Enquiry re: Minimum Wages and Hours, 1919, Presentation Copy, Cardiff, Table 8A. Colliery Yearbook and Coal Trades Directory 1947, 1948, Louis Cassier Co Ltd: British coalfield shiftwork statistics. In 1919 78 per cent of Lancashire miners worked a single shift. By 1948 this figure had only fallen to 74 per cent. In 1947 only the South Derbyshire area had a higher percentage working a single shift and South Staffordshire (Cannock coalfield) had a similar value to Lancashire. The British average in 1947 was 58 per cent working a single shift. Nationalisation and modernisation saw these figures fall as more miners worked double and treble shifts.

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¹⁹¹ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 208: NCB Deputy Secretary's letter to NCBNWD 5 May 1966 released to Mosley Common JIC, Mosley Common JIC Memorandum 19 September 1966 and special meeting of JIC.

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CHAPTER FIVE

REACTION AND RESPONSE TO INDUSTRIAL CHANGE IN THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD: MODERNISATION AND RATIONALISATION TO 1965

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers reaction and response to industrial change through an examination of the position adopted by the NUMLA leadership; how the NUMLA leadership together with the Labour Party successfully managed opposition to industrial change and through an assessment of the response of the 'rank-and-file'. The previous chapter established that the leadership accepted the priorities for industrial change. It remains to consider the characteristics of the leadership's response to colliery closures and its involvement with the fuel policy debate. This chapter assesses how the NUMLA leadership successfully managed opposition to industrial change. Here, it will be shown how the relationship between the NUMLA and the Labour Party was influential in managing opposition. This relationship was decisive in pressing the case for industrial change by encouraging a policy of industrial diversification while mutual dependency between the NUMLA and Labour allowed the NUMLA to use industrial change to promote Labour's ambitions. In doing so it raised expectations about what Labour would do for the coal industry and coalfield in government.

This chapter will also examine the nature of opposition to industrial change. It will reveal that there was a broad level of agreement within the NUMLA in favour of modernisation. However, there was criticism of industrial change from 'militant activists' within the NUMLA and through a growing sense of 'rank-and-file' frustration and resentment over specific outcomes of industrial change. Both the divisional board and the NUMLA leadership ignored these sentiments. It will be proposed in this chapter that the resentment felt by the 'rank-and-file' did not translate into increased protest because industrial change tended toward division rather than solidarity among the 'rank-and-file'. This suited the

NUMLA leadership. However, the growing sense of grievance over the outcomes of industrial change was never fully extinguished. The NUMLA leadership was thus saddled with taking the union into the late 1960s with a combination of resentment together with high expectation of a Labour government.

5.2 THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS LANCASHIRE AREA LEADERSHIP'S RESPONSE TO INDUSTRIAL CHANGE

Although the NUMLA leadership accepted the priorities of industrial change it appeared to offer a series of 'challenges' to the divisional board over a number of issues. The NUMLA leadership tackled the divisional board over the manner of industrial change, particularly the mode of colliery closures. Gormley and Hammond criticised the board over the reasons it gave for closure and over lack of consultation. For example, in 1958 they questioned the divisional board's handling of the Garswood Hall closure. Hammond was "incensed" that the board had closed the pit "with a phone call". Both claimed they had intended to fight the board's "sudden decision to close the colliery".¹ There was certainly a lack of consultation. However, there was never any intention to oppose closure. Because the NUMLA leadership had not objected to previous closures under similar circumstances it had effectively given the 'green light' to the divisional board to proceed with more closures.² Objections had not been raised to closures during the 1950s because the NUMLA saw these as essential to meet the manpower requirements of the new and re-constructed collieries. What Gormley and Hammond found objectionable about Garswood Hall was the insufficient time they had to 'prepare' the workforce for shutdown because of a premature closure announcement. They would have preferred closure under the 1959 Revised Plan so they could promise the workforce a transfer to the new Parkside colliery, then under development.³ They questioned the board over the manner and timing of closure only in as much as it impinged on their ability to 'manage' the 'rank-and-file'.

Again, in 1959, Hammond reproached the divisional board over the "impromptu" closure of Welch Whittle colliery. Hammond had no intention of opposing closure. Instead, he produced a timely display of histrionics because closure was proving problematic for manpower transfers.⁴ He had known Welch Whittle was likely to close since the crucial

discussions over Maypole in December 1958.⁵ Likewise, Hammond warned the divisional board not to fabricate excuses for closure under pressure to reduce excess capacity quickly.⁶ This was another empty threat because throughout rationalisation the board bandied reasons for closure such as “exhaustion” or “uneconomic” in an interchangeable and indeterminate way, on a routine basis. “Exhaustion” or “geological problems” were often cited instead of poor financial results or performance, while the term “uneconomic” was a catch-all for under performance or lack of future potential. The abandon by which the divisional board did this without challenge was remarkable. It was a clear case of Hammond high on rhetoric and low on action.

One of the few instances where a ‘challenge’ was mounted was obviously a pretence. In 1962 the Cleworth Hall closure came at a time of rising tension over the ‘Review of the Revised Plan’ following the Sandhole closure. The outcome at Cleworth Hall was similar to the Sandhole climbdown only it was a volte-face. Gormley threatened Anderton with industrial action over Cleworth Hall in the absence of an inquiry into closure. He questioned the divisional board’s decision to close the pit because of “exhaustion” believing the board wanted to close a ‘long-life’ colliery prematurely as a result of pressure to reduce excess capacity under the ‘Review of the Revised Plan’ using current under performance as an excuse.⁷ Shortly afterwards, Gormley accepted closure without reservation. The reason for this dramatic change was the board’s promise that the Cleworth Hall miners would receive better pay and conditions if they transferred to another colliery.⁸ Anderton knew that Gormley would accept this titbit. Like Sandhole, Gormley saw advantages in improved pay and conditions that would accrue from re-deployment to modernised pits. It provided Gormley with the opportunity to show he had wrung major concessions from the board as a condition for agreeing closure. As it transpired, only a small proportion of the Cleworth Hall men were able to enjoy transfer to Agecroft where it had been inferred they would go. The majority were scattered around the Manchester district to collieries with an uncertain future with many immediately forced to accept reduced status and pay to keep a job in mining.⁹ The Cleworth Hall closure demonstrated that any ‘challenge’ the leadership mounted was not worth the paper it was written on; in this case it was a cruel illusion.

The leadership taking a principled stand to give the impression it was taking action over industrial change was amply illustrated over the open cast mining question. In this case the NUMLA and Labour used union opposition to mobilise mineworkers against the Conservative Government's fuel policy and to garner support for Labour's national fuel policy. Open cast mining was an emotive issue during rationalisation. For mineworkers to face closures in deep mining while open cast developments proceeded gave vent to strong feelings. Open cast was a physically proximate and highly visible bogey for miners. It involved private contractors using high volume extraction techniques reinforcing the perception that miners' traditional skills were redundant. Having originated during the exigencies of the Second World War, both the Coal Board and post-war governments had become lukewarm about open cast. However, low operational costs and exceptional profitability offered advantages over high cost low profit deep mining in coalfields such as Lancashire while it offered a baulk against vagaries of production, price fluctuation and industrial action in deep mining. Miners were aware of their disadvantaged position in relation to open cast. The Coal Board's hollow claim that open cast provided job amelioration in areas of decline in deep mining only added to strength of feeling. Finally, there were inchoate environmental concerns over open cast expressed through local authority pressure for reductions to the 'disamenity' it created.¹⁰ As a result, open cast was a significant political issue for mineworkers by the late 1950s.

In Lancashire opposition to open cast appeared to be a leadership priority as colliery closures loomed. Two of the largest open cast sites in Lancashire had a combined production equal to the output of the coalfield's most productive collieries¹¹ In addition, there were plans by the Ministry of Fuel and Power to develop new sites in Lancashire.¹² The NUMLA made it clear to the divisional board that these developments were misguided while collieries were closing. The NUMLA appeared to challenge the priorities for industrial change. Hammond emerged as a leading critic of open cast opining the NUMLA should oppose closures in the absence of the abandonment of all open cast sites and an embargo on new developments. Hammond's assertion held widespread support. As one union delegate noted, open cast "would be a fight to the bitter end".¹³ Open cast was one issue on which the NUMLA leadership had considerable 'rank-and-file' support to take industrial action had it chosen to do so. For example, Cronton colliery voted in favour of taking strike action against the Conservative Government with the support of St. Helens

panel and several important colliery branches in other districts of the coalfield.¹⁴ Calls for industrial action were precipitated by closure announcements during the late 1950s particularly at Maypole.¹⁵ As the primary cause of injustice it was open cast which galvanised support for action rather than pit closures.

Yet the NUMLA leadership rejected calls for industrial action. Strike action was rejected because it might damage relations with the NCB.¹⁶ Hammond stressed the need for negotiations with the Coal Board rather than strike action but only after he had whipped up a whirlwind of excitement that his trenchant stand might signal his endorsement of strike action.¹⁷ Certain factors justified leadership rejection of industrial action. The teeth of protest over open cast had been drawn by agreements to halt the opening of new sites and cutback production both in legislation and through negotiations with the NUM at the national level.¹⁸ The Government and the Coal Board saw these measures as necessary to obtain NUM agreement to colliery closures. The open cast issue was thus one of decreasing importance from the late 1950s. There was also a complication with taking direct action since the TGWU had organised 12,000 workers in the open cast industry.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the leadership failed to reflect the strength of 'rank-and-file' feeling. Its position was one of creating the impression it was in sympathy with the 'rank and file' while avoiding confrontation with the Coal Board.

The NUMLA leadership skilfully took possession of protests over open cast. It channelled anger into a campaign against the Conservative's perceived deficiencies on fuel while reinforcing support for Labour's fuel policy. Initially however, Hammond, in positioning himself at the forefront of the open cast debate created the intriguing prospect of schism within the NUMLA leadership. A split between Hammond and both Gormley and Hall was avoided as Hammond quickly fell into line. He recognised the predominant leadership view that there was more advantage in manipulating open cast for its political value than in a risky adventure with direct action. Hammond thus became like the grand old Duke of York marching his troops to the top of the hill only to have to march them down again.²⁰ In any case, Hammond was guilty of hyperbole on open cast because the leadership calculated that the threat posed by open cast was of marginal consequence seen against the scale of contraction in deep mining being considered.²¹

The significance of the open cast debate was the way it gave the union an opportunity to demonstrate its congruity on an issue of symbolic importance to mineworkers. At the same time, the leadership used open cast as a means of deflecting attention from its acceptance of colliery closures. This helped maintain its credibility and integrity during a difficult period. The acceptance of closures needed to be sold to the 'rank and file' by stressing its more positive aspects. The national agreement to reduce open cast production was used by the NUMLA leadership to respond to criticism of its acceptance of closures in Lancashire. The leadership claimed that it had forced major concessions on open cast. It linked the national agreement on reduced open cast output to possible cutbacks at Lancashire sites. It carried the open cast 'victory' like a major trophy. It was a sham.²² There was absolutely no linkage between the national and regional positions. As the divisional board indicated, it did not exercise direct control over open cast site designation or operations since this was the responsibility of the Ministry of Fuel and Power and the Coal Board. In any event, the initial agreement on reduced open cast production was negligible. The main 'concession' was the embargo on future site development, enacted in legislation. This did most to reduce output because the 'health' of the open cast industry depended on the steady development of new sites as existing sites reached exhaustion.²³

The open cast debate presented other opportunities for the NUMLA leadership to exploit. In this the Labour Party joined the NUMLA. Both wished to encourage the notion that the pariah of open cast was not the creation of the Coal Board but was part of the bankrupt fuel policy of a Tory government bent on destroying deep mining. NUMLA branch delegates leading the call for industrial action over open cast believed the continuance of open cast in the face of deep mining closures constituted an attack by the Tories on miners as part of a wider assault on the labour movement. The belief that open cast should be the *casus belli* for war with the Tory Government was music to the ears of the leadership.²⁴ Not that it was about to join battle. Rather, such assertions were an opportunity to bash the Tories over fuel and support a national fuel policy under a future Labour government.²⁵ Taking the attack directly to the Conservative government was popular with both the NUMLA leadership and Labour. Both were consistently alert to opportunities to divert 'rank-and-file' criticism from the Coal Board to the Government throughout the period of rationalisation. They did this in order to maintain partnership with the Coal Board over industrial change and to support the idea that the NCB would be more effectively managed

under Labour. Gormley and Hall exploited these opportunities during the run-up to the 1959 general election.²⁶

There were clear political advantages for Labour in the appropriation of the bandwagon of protest accompanying open cast. For example, Alan Fitch, the newly elected NUMLA-sponsored Wigan MP, headed a high-profile campaign against the development of new open cast sites in Lancashire in which he energetically enlisted the support of Labour controlled local authorities with mining connections. Fitch exploited concerns over open cast during his by-election campaign in Wigan in 1958. Like the union leadership, Fitch readily claimed victories when proposed developments were rejected. Again, such claims were humbug, this time from Labour because new site developments were halted as both the Government and the Coal Board were in the throes of a general retreat on open cast as part of wider policy considerations.²⁷

The open cast debate of the late 1950s was of major importance to industrial change in the coalfield provoking strength of feeling like no other issue. However, the NUMLA leadership and Labour blatantly manipulated it to divert attention from their acceptance of colliery closures. Moreover, the open cast issue was used to service Labour's future policy formulations and electoral ambitions. In these respects, it came to typify the reaction of the NUMLA leadership and Labour toward industrial change.

Following on from the open cast debate the NUMLA leadership was involved in 'challenging' industrial change through the position it adopted on fuel policy as it entered the more general fuel debate. It was involved with coal industry issues such as efficiency, marketing, production and coal utilisation which became elements of Labour's national fuel policy. Linked to this the NUMLA leadership participated in more specific debates over coal-to-oil conversions. As the open cast question receded into the distance its place was taken by the 'fuel debate' as a priority for the leadership particularly as the scale of coal contraction became apparent. The NUMLA leadership used the debate to highlight the Tories reluctance to assist coal in favour of oil.²⁸ There was a perception that the terms of clean air legislation had been loaded against coal to favour oil conversion.²⁹ It was further argued that the Tories were responsible for the biggest challenge to coal by attempting to

“procure a pro-oil policy”.³⁰ Hammond twinned the threats posed by open cast and coal-to-oil conversion.³¹

The union leadership directed frustration over coal contraction at the Tory Government to divert attention from its acceptance of closures. Like open cast, it allowed it to attack the Tories on fuel while maximising support for Labour’s fuel policy. Gormley’s involvement on the NUM executive was an important conduit in developing Labour’s policy ambitions within the NUMLA.³² This involved the union in the wider debate over the modernisation of coal together with the leading role it played in campaigning for coal fuelling in the public and local authority sector in the North West. Faced with the broader issues confronting coal the leadership supported modernisation to make coal fit to compete with oil. It attempted to persuade government that a modernised coal industry could compete with oil in power generation.³³ Additionally, the NUMLA leadership tried to persuade the Coal Board and Government to offer more support for research into smokeless products.³⁴ In this the NUMLA leadership was strident in its criticism of Coal Board failure to update scientific research to make coal more attractive.³⁵

These involvements shaped leadership attitudes toward industrial change. As calls for a more vigorous response to the closure programme grew so leadership attitudes hardened. Gormley led union rejection of calls for industrial action over closures, arguing it was pointless calling for strike action if the industry was unable to compete. According to Gormley’s philosophy of industrial change, stemming the destruction of coal in Lancashire required a response which would make coal “an efficient and competitive industry in the field of fuel”.³⁶ Leading NUMLA officials shared Gormley’s assertions that the industry had to “prove itself” as a commercial entity. On the one hand this meant increasing the commercial potential for coal. On the other, it meant continuing to support the divisional board over industrial change by improving the performance of the Lancashire coal industry. Thus, industrial change for the leadership was about successfully piloting a business through a testing period of transition. The union leadership never wavered on this general proposition. This was an important reason why it avoided confrontation with the divisional board over closures believing industrial action would upset the partnership it sought with the board to improve coal’s ability ‘to compete’.

A direct result of the union's involvement in 'making the industry fit to compete' was its participation in the campaign to persuade the public sector and local authorities in the region to retain coal fuelling or to re-convert to coal from oil. Like the open cast issue, the conversion debate was used by the union leadership to divert attention from its attitude toward industrial change. The NUMLA leadership embraced the campaign because, like open cast, oil conversion was an emotive issue for the 'rank-and-file'. Equally, oil conversion was of utmost importance to the NUM at the national level which needed to be reflected in the coalfields. There was also the matter of the 'Tory press' making hay out of Labour controlled councils and institutions with mining connections converting buildings to oil feedstock.³⁷ Clearly, there was a need for a response from the NUMLA.³⁸

Notwithstanding the need to respond, the leadership exploited the oil conversion issue in a similar way to open cast. One aspect was the inordinate attention it devoted to oil conversion. The NUMLA leadership was involved in detailed and long running debates over individual conversion cases such as the conversion of Wigan public baths. The debate surrounding this conversion and other public buildings in Wigan became a *cause celebre* involving the union, local authorities, MPs, the public, and representatives of *ad hoc* colliery branch committees. It was used as a platform on which to focus attention to the oil conversion practices of local authorities throughout the coalfield. Hammond in particular became actively involved in the protests. While there were strong feelings amongst mineworkers, the involvement of the NUMLA leadership reached farcical levels at a time when the coal industry in Lancashire was melting away.³⁹

In claiming that the battle for every ton of coal was a battle for every job in Lancashire coal, the union leadership recorded some notable successes in reversing the trend toward oil conversion using its influence with Labour authorities through NUMLA connections.⁴⁰ The union had more success than the divisional board.⁴¹ However, like open cast, oil conversion involved coal production at the margins.⁴² Demand from this sector was of no consequence in determining closure outcomes because the proportion was so small: three per cent of Lancashire coal was supplied to the sector, eight per cent if coking coal is included.⁴³ Colliery coal sales to the sector, including those of closure cases, rarely topped seven per cent and were more typically much less.⁴⁴ There was thus no correlation between

the threat posed by decline in demand for coal in this sector and the extent to which the campaign was propelled by the union leadership.

Why did the union leadership accord this storm in a teacup the priority it did while neglecting colliery closures? This was one sector of the coal market the union could directly influence through its connections with Labour controlled authorities. It allowed the leadership to become adept at pursuing the issue to divert attention from its role in industrial change. The leadership set up Labour controlled authorities like fairground Aunt Sallys; to criticise them as a means of deflecting frustration over coal contraction. Labour controlled authorities were the perfect foil because challenging them ran only a minimal risk of resistance. By the late 1950s and early 1960s the NUMLA was still influential on Labour controlled authorities in the coalfield while the mining vote could not be ignored. Local councils were unlikely to cause the NUMLA leadership concern.

There was some resistance and resentment from councillors without mining connections to the way in which the NUMLA threw its weight around on this issue. However, the largely supine response to NUMLA cavilling was a good indication of who was still perceived as having the power in the coalfield.⁴⁵ Similarly, the torpidity of coalfield local authorities in effecting smokeless zoning was more evidence of the influence the NUMLA still wielded through its connections on local councils. The fact that Lancashire coal was largely unsuitable for conversion to smokeless products was a factor which increased this pressure.⁴⁶ The union leadership found it could let these ceaselessly absurd conversion arguments proceed while they occasionally stirred the pot with an attack on the local authority concerned. At the same time, the union leadership avoided its more onerous responsibilities on closures.

The issue also helped the union leadership block attempts by Labour controlled authorities to intervene in closures. During the Maypole closure, Hall, in rejecting local authority involvement, issued the barbed challenge to Abram Council that it would be more help saving the pit if it burned coal than interfering in an issue that was none of its business.⁴⁷ The NUMLA leadership was thus able to dissuade local authority involvement in pit closures because of the challenge they faced over oil conversion. Furthermore, like the open cast issue, the leadership saw the opportunity of symbolic gesturing on an issue of

importance to the 'rank-and-file'. After all, although the NUMLA claimed vindication for involvement in this campaign through the successes it brought, the responsibility for marketing coal rested with the NCBNWD not the NUMLA. It was an issue of negligible effect on coal contraction. The NUMLA leadership had little justification for its close involvement. It did so only because of the tactical advantages which accrued.

The NUMLA leadership was involved in any venture as long as it did not have to tackle the Coal Board over its priorities for industrial change. The specific criticisms levelled at the NCB were of no importance because the NUMLA had already accepted the thrust of Coal Board strategy as the price of retaining a viable modernised industry in Lancashire. 'Challenges' arose because of leadership sensitivity over the scale of closures. These 'challenges' were merely diversionary exercises intended to give the appearance that the leadership was taking up a particular cause on behalf of the 'rank-and-file'. Additionally, the leadership appropriated and exploited these issues to fulfil Labour's aspirations. Finally, the 'challenges' the leadership made over fuel policy constituted nothing more than intervention in the debate over the efficient management of the industry including its modernisation and rationalisation.

5.3 THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS LANCASHIRE AREA, THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE MANAGEMENT OF INDUSTRIAL CHANGE

One important feature of rationalisation was the ability of the NUMLA leadership to respond to successive waves of criticism and protest over industrial change. It did this by learning to improve the effectiveness and presentation of the case for industrial change. Furthermore, this was achieved by developing its relationship with Labour through a mutual interest in promoting Labour's fuel policy and in the modernisation of the coalfield through industrial diversification. Both were used to powerful effect in pursuing Labour's electoral ambitions during the late 1950s and early 1960s. It is possible to understand these developments by examining a number of situations which arose under rationalisation. The first concerns three specific events: those surrounding parliamentary elections in Wigan; the response to protests over colliery closures; and specific happenings at Bradford colliery. The success of improvements to presentation can be seen in the case of the

threatened closure of Ellerbeck colliery and the way in which new forms of debate were utilised. Finally, leadership promotion of Labour's ideas on industrial diversification utilised the union's relationship with Labour to pursue the case for the modernisation of the coalfield.

The first situation was the 1958 Wigan parliamentary by-election and 1959 general election campaigns⁴⁸ The result of the two elections were never in doubt in a seat in which mining interests still predominated. Wigan had delivered increasingly healthy majorities for Labour candidates sponsored by the NUMLA for almost half a century. For Alan Fitch, the NUMLA's candidate, there was little effective opposition from the Tories or Liberals.⁴⁹ The importance of the two election campaigns lay in the intervention of the Communist Party candidate, Mick Weaver. In two otherwise lacklustre campaigns the pre-eminent issue became a vituperative conflict between the two candidates over the future of the coal industry in Lancashire. During the 1958 campaign Weaver accused Labour of collaborating with the Tory Government to destroy Lancashire coal.⁵⁰ The ferocity of Weaver's attacks intensified during the 1959 campaign into angry exchanges with Fitch on the hustings. The closing stages of the 1959 campaign were ignited by Weaver's accusations of Fitch having lied to Wigan miners in 1958 over the extent of coal contraction and of complacency over the issue during his first year in the Commons.⁵¹ Weaver widened his attack to include the NUMLA leadership. He accused it of having known of the scale of closure, of concealing it from miners and of collaboration with the divisional board in effecting closures.⁵²

As Fitch insisted, these attacks were part of a strategy of political capitalisation by a no-hope candidate.⁵³ Certainly, the issue was less prominent during the 1964 and 1966 general elections.⁵⁴ By then, Weaver realised there was less political mileage in closures because industrial change had all but run its course, in the Wigan area at least. By the mid-1960s the debate had moved on to the ramifications of closures while Weaver was a less challenging figure as a result of his co-option in attempts to solve the Mosley Common conundrum. The climate during the 1964 general election was thus described as "fair with occasional outbreaks of thunder". The NUMLA leadership still made its ritualistic condemnation of Weaver for having opposed the "miners' choice" at the polls.⁵⁵ By 1966 Weaver's challenge was an irrelevance as both the question of industrial change in the

Wigan area as well as Weaver's own personal political star were fading fast. However, the significance of Weaver's interventions in Wigan was the way it provoked reaction from the NUMLA and Labour together with its influence on the direction of the debate over industrial change.

The NUMLA objected to Weaver's candidature because Fitch was the 'official' miners' candidate sponsored by the union. This produced vitriolic condemnation and censure of Weaver from the majority of the NUMLA executive, the union leadership, and the victorious Fitch.⁵⁶ However, it was not the transgression of the union rulebook which was the source of outrage. It was Weaver's persistent public accusations of collaboration by Labour and the NUMLA in closures. The intensity and range of attacks levelled at Weaver were disproportionate to the threat he posed to the union leadership and Labour's electoral ambitions in Wigan. The fact that the whole panoply of the NUMLA and Labour Party was brought crashing down on him was indicative of sensitivity to the accusation. Weaver had effectively touched the raw nerve of the NUMLA and Labour through his interventions. Similarly, he had brought out the agenda of both the NUMLA and Labour for industrial change. Weaver forced Fitch to concede that the coal industry was all but dead in the Wigan area and admit that the future of coal lay in a modernised industry elsewhere in Lancashire.⁵⁷

The problem for Weaver in forcing out this admission was that it allowed Fitch to expound Labour's vision for the future in a coherent and highly effective way. Fitch was able to offer mineworkers the prospect that industrial change would be overseen competently and humanely by the Coal Board together with a policy of industrial diversification delivered by a future Labour administration.⁵⁸ Fitch's appeal to miners to embrace modernity and place their faith in a smaller modernised coal industry together with new industrial growth was not unattractive to a majority of mineworkers. Fitch offered what appeared to be a credible, sustainable, and viable future beyond large-scale mining. This was in contrast to the continued lack of clarity on industrial change offered by the Communists, further obscured by Weaver's dire prognostications of an industry laid waste in Lancashire.⁵⁹

Added to the strength of this appeal was the ability of the NUMLA leadership and Labour to exploit the hegemony they enjoyed in the Wigan area to propagate this message through

NUM branches. The galvanisation of support for Labour's view of industrial change helped reinforce its huge electoral advantage.⁶⁰ Fitch believed he had cemented his relationship with the Wigan miners through this time-honoured network.⁶¹ Mineworkers were convinced that despite the scale of contraction the Coal Board's effective management of industrial change together with Labour's industrial diversification policies assured their future.

Fitch's message connected well with prevailing sentiments in two different ways. For an older generation of miners, modernisation of both the coal industry and the coalfield was about righting the wrongs of the past. Labour's promise to tackle the legacy of private capitalism was one which struck a cord because extinguishing the iniquities of the past was an assertion of the 'triumph of Labour'. Furthermore, Fitch successfully presented modernisation as a continuation of the coalfield's Labour tradition of moderate reformism and progressive improvement. He skilfully invoked the past in service of the present to justify industrial change. The intention was to re-assure this section of his constituency. For a younger generation Fitch's vision accorded well. The onset of large-scale closures produced a crisis in the recruitment and retention of younger mineworkers. Fitch's promise of a modern and viable industry together with better opportunities outside of coal was applauded.⁶² These messages delivered to two different sections of the mining community demanding different outcomes proved to be incredibly attractive in combination.

The intervention of opposition in Wigan allowed the union leadership and Labour to reinforce acceptance of industrial change. Nevertheless, as the events described above indicated, they had become increasingly sensitive over closures. This was again demonstrated during the late 1950s and early 1960s over 'rank-and-file' attempts to undermine the authority of the NUMLA leadership on the issue. As it became obvious that the NUMLA would not be opposing closures, small but active 'rank-and-file' groupings made links to elements in other coalfields intent on opposing closures while opposing the official line in Lancashire. The most prominent included Bradford, Mosley Common and Sandhole collieries.

Two related events involving 'rank-and-file' activity are notable. The first involved Bradford and Sandhole participating in a mass lobby in London on 8th January 1959 in

protest against the closures announced under the 'Special Review' of collieries. The protest was taken to Westminster, the Coal Board and NUM headquarters. Left-wing delegates from Scotland, South Wales and Kent led the protest. It was fundamentally a left-wing 'rank-and-file' show opposing closures and NUM policy while acting as a rallying point in an attempt to mobilise the whole labour movement. This was the start of a campaign mainly waged from Scotland and South Wales against closures.⁶³ Joe Clarke and members of the Sandhole branch committee led the Lancashire group. They were joined by members of Bradford branch committee and 'rank-and-file' 'activists' against the wishes of the Bradford branch president.⁶⁴

On their return they were pilloried by a leadership triumvirate: Hall, Hammond and Gormley. They were charged with participating in an unofficial demonstration backed by groups without sanction from the NUMLA which had brought the union into disrepute. The NUMLA executive had asked for a boycott in favour of Lancashire's participation in an official lobby organised for 29th January. Clarke, as the most senior figure involved with a seat on the executive, was the obvious scapegoat. Unlike the others, Clarke, was particularly vulnerable since he remained inside the Labour Party rather than outside it. Hall, in sinister 'Stalinesque' fashion, 'outed' Clarke at a full delegate conference complete with press photographs of him standing in front of the NUM's London building holding up a banner proclaiming 'Lancashire Miners Demonstrate Outside their National Headquarters'.⁶⁵

The second event concerned developments at Bradford branch. A Trotskyite faction had participated in the 8th January action against the wishes of their branch leadership. The faction had also issued a paper attacking the policy of the branch leadership and by inference the NUMLA. By 1960 Bradford branch was in turmoil with the branch leadership facing a revolt through attempts by this faction to usurp them. In addition, both Sandhole and Bradford offered platforms to left-wing officials from other coalfields to espouse their views on closures. At the same time, the Bradford faction attached its name to the publication of the left-wing 'rank-and-file' newspaper *The Miner* and contributed articles attacking NUM and NUMLA policy.⁶⁶ The NUMLA leadership responded in characteristic fashion by moving to censure Sandhole branch and suspending Bradford branch for six months pending the withdrawal of its name from *The Miner* - a decision

initially upheld by delegates. The inference was that suspension would be permanent if that undertaking were not implemented resulting in the re-constitution of the branch overseen by the NUMLA executive.⁶⁷

The significance of these events was two-fold. Firstly, the leadership was acutely sensitive about closures. Hall, Hammond and Gormley were unsettled by the thought of the Coal Board and NUM in London believing the NUMLA was unable to exert maximum control over its branches on industrial change even though the branches involved constituted a maverick minority. The fact that these protests put the NUMLA in the media spotlight added to leadership embarrassment. Secondly, and of greater significance, the NUMLA leadership was surprised by reaction to these events across the coalfield. While there was little support for the protests - even less for a Trotskyite faction who organised a *coup* within its own branch - they provoked a call for more extensive and open debate on industrial change. Sympathy for those caught in the January 8th protest inquisition was not restricted to the 'militant' branches of Manchester district but included branches in St. Helens district, most notably Cronton and Sutton Manor. They offered support believing that to crush protest of this kind was to "stifle rank and file democracy" within the union. This view attracted widespread support.⁶⁸ Similar voices had been raised by delegates over reaction to Weaver's interventions in Wigan.⁶⁹ Likewise, the suspension of Bradford branch caused disquiet amongst delegates. Suspension was seen as an action of the last resort.⁷⁰ There was abhorrence at events within Bradford branch but the debate it initiated over industrial change was seen as a welcome development.

NUMLA leadership over-reaction was the key element in promoting a mood of acquiescence toward such protests among delegates. In turn, this mood saw calls for dialogue with Bradford rather than confrontation. While there was some evidence of collusion between the militant groupings in the three Manchester branches - something the leadership exaggerated - there is no evidence of a concerted and co-ordinated 'rank-and-file' revolt over closures. Delegates recognised that these groups were a small and disparate minority. It was felt that the leadership was looking for an excuse to crush the Bradford faction.⁷¹

The diffident attitude of delegates toward tackling opposition to industrial change within the NUMLA was not lost on the leadership who were forced to revoke its suspension of Bradford branch by a delegate vote after Bradford successfully argued it had withdrawn its association from *The Miner*. Paradoxically, this decision assisted the re-assertion of stability at Bradford because it prevented the showdown the Bradford faction was inviting and the leadership was seeking, although the result was a branch committee irrevocably altered in favour of the left.⁷² These events did not affect the attitude of the union leadership toward industrial change but the mixed reaction of branches was noted. The union leadership had substantially induced this mood because sensitivity over closures made it over-react to 'rank-and-file' criticism.

The outcome of these episodes had much to do with a tradition of autonomy, factionalism and 'rank-and-file' tendencies within the union given a more contemporaneous edge by calls for greater democracy within the NUMLA. This came in reaction to the overweening authority exerted by the Bolton headquarters of the union. The conferences in which Lancashire miners transacted business were hardly festivals of full and frank debate. Although enlivened by the occasional challenge to the leadership they were more frequently highly structured demonstrations of deferential loyalty by delegates to the leadership based on the patronage they enjoyed or hoped to secure. The domination by the political 'right' under the iron fist of the few successive secretaries and their coteries ensured compliance.⁷³ The minority of delegates who challenged the 'county' line, such as Clarke, found out the hard way. Weaver was on extended licence because of his role at Mosley Common. The character of NUMLA authority was questioned throughout these events but protest was shaped by the way industrial change was being handled by the leadership. The leadership interpreted these murmurings of dissatisfaction as a need to improve the presentation of the case for industrial change rather than opening up a substantive debate over policy. Senior officials such as Gormley and Hammond displayed some sagacity in recognising that the NUMLA leadership had to examine more effective methods of presentation and re-double its efforts at explaining the necessity for industrial change. In this, there was an added urgency during the early 1960s as the scale of closures produced increased tension. The size of the closure programme outside the Wigan district, where most closures were expected, came as shock for many in the coalfield bringing accusations of complacency by the leadership.⁷⁴

In another sense, the accession of Gormley to the post of secretary in 1961 brought a new style of leadership. Hall rarely felt obliged to explain himself to the 'rank-and-file' beyond the stultifying confines of delegate conferences whereas Gormley evinced a prodigious talent for more direct appeals to mineworkers. Similarly, although Hammond's abilities lay more in setting the broader agenda, delivering the big set piece speeches to conferences, or as a skilful negotiator picking through complex minutia with management, he too demonstrated an ability to make popular appeals. The outcome witnessed both Gormley and Hammond at large in the coalfield addressing miners on the pit bank, in welfare clubs and in 'black face' meetings in a reflection of the leadership style of Lord Robens - the new broom at the Coal Board. This 'populist' shift in tactics bore fruit for a leadership facing an increasingly challenging time during the early 1960s.

An example of how this change of style proved beneficial came in 1962 when the union was faced with protest in the Chorley area. A protest had been organised jointly between members of Chorley Labour Party and Ellerbeck Miners Association over redundancies in the staple industries.⁷⁵ It had been provoked by rumours that Ellerbeck colliery might close. Tensions were heightened by a number of factors. The closure of Welch Whittle in the same area in 1960 had resulted in manpower transfer problems.⁷⁶ Moreover, in an area on the extremities of the South Lancashire coalfield transfers required a 30-mile daily round trip to retain a job in coal. However, the main source of anger was rising unemployment, exacerbated by the 1962 recession. Concerns were expressed that the closure of Ellerbeck would leave only Chisnall Hall colliery in an area heavily dependent on coal and cotton. Finally, it was felt that Ellerbeck was a profitable colliery with good potential and an excellent industrial relations record.⁷⁷

For the NUMLA the protest carried with it worrying aspects. Foremost, it was about the ramifications of closure rather than about a specific closure issue - an altogether tougher nettle for the union leadership to grasp. Secondly, it involved the Labour Party in Chorley, outside the tight control of the Party in the Wigan area. Thirdly, it was in an area of the coalfield which had a reputation for taking an autonomous line on many organisational and substantive issues in union politics.⁷⁸ Protest was not usually expected from this area but when it did occur it was taken very seriously indeed.

For these reasons it received the combined attention of the NUMLA leadership and Labour in Lancashire. Both Fitch, as a leading mining and regional MP, and Gormley were dispatched to help the local MP, Clifford Kenyon, explain policy on industrial change. This was the sort of Daniel in the lion's den role that Gormley relished. To a packed audience of hundreds of miners, Gormley, as the keynote speaker, positively gorged himself on the feast provided by this hostile audience. This was Gormley giving one of his most effective performances as he juggled from the rostrum. His response to attacks on Coal Board and NUM policy from branch officials and 'rank-and-file' miners was a combination of deflection, ruse and promise. Attacks on the Coal Board were parried toward the Tory Government as Gormley defended Lord Roben's "humanitarian" and "socialistic" handling of rationalisation.⁷⁹

Gormley had the innate knack of touching the most basic instincts in his audiences as well as utilising more guileful aspects of his character. He recognised that although there were wider issues of local de-industrialisation which had been expressed by Chorley Labour Party, Ellerbeck miners were primarily interested in the future of their colliery. Gormley pitched his responses accordingly, detaching and isolating the Ellerbeck case from the wider issues which he left to Fitch to handle. Gormley emphasised the performance and potentialities of the colliery, indicating that he would be seeking co-operation with the divisional board to develop new reserves in the area giving a strong hint the colliery would have a future backed by his personal authority. This played well with the audience because it gave them hope, but it was an illusion. It was another example of Gormley claiming the credit for an initiative, but this time for one that never existed. No such undertakings were ever entered into to develop Ellerbeck.⁸⁰ Finally, Gormley joined with Fitch in promising an economic renaissance in which a future Labour government would bring new industry to the area. It was a convincing double act worked to cunning perfection to steal the show. Ellerbeck was closed within three years of Gormley's guarantee followed by neighbouring Chisnall Hall in 1967 thereby ending a long mining tradition in this corner of the coalfield

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Although miners left the meeting still harbouring reservations about the future, Gormley's performance in the thick of hostility, with Fitch in support, had at least piloted the

leadership around a potentially awkward obstacle. A strong defence of the Coal Board's handling of industrial change, guarantees on the colliery's future, and the promise of industrial diversification delivered personally from two leading figures in the NUMLA and the Labour Party appeared convincing. The events at Chorley typified the energetic manner by which Gormley managed protests over industrial change in engagements with the 'rank-and-file'. Although many did not agree with everything Gormley said, or necessarily believed him, there was admiration for the way he launched himself on these occasions; for his gusto and not infrequently his *chutzpah*. In each engagement ruse and promises were varied to suit the situation. Gormley was brilliant at offering just the right incentive at the right moment even if it did not contain a grain of truth. It enabled him to successfully deal with challenges or questioning of industrial change. He was equally at home offering miners incentives to accept industrial change through better wages and conditions in the modernised pits as he was in offering guarantees and promises to those under threat of closure.

In seeking to improve the presentation of its case the NUMLA discovered the value of special and weekend conferences to discuss particular aspects of industrial change and the wider issues involved.⁸² It was Hammond's idea to call a weekend conference for the first time in Lancashire in December 1963. This was in the style of a 'jolly' at a top Blackpool hotel where the focus was on social contact much in the same way as annual conferences in Blackpool and other resorts. There was a deliberate attempt to keep the format as informal as possible. The inauguration of these meetings in Lancashire had nothing to do with attempts to improve democracy within the union. It was about Hammond "educating" the 'rank-and-file'.⁸³ They were a leadership device to propagate the necessity for industrial change. This was achieved by reaching a wider range of mineworkers either through direct 'rank-and-file' participation or through the chance to spread the word more effectively. The "educating" process perceived by Hammond involved persuading participants of the need for industrial change by presenting the facts facing the industry from a range of speakers from both sides of the industry and from Labour. Hammond indicated that they were not intended to be "pep talks" though this is precisely what they were.⁸⁴

The December 1963 conference arose from a specific challenge from Ted Woolley, now installed as branch secretary at Brackley colliery with a seat on the union executive. The

issue was the imminent closure of Brackley which Hammond used as the occasion to call the first weekend conference. They were Hammond's forte. He was able to display his guest speakers - on this occasion Wil Paynter and James Anderton - to reinforce his assertions. Importantly, it was an opportunity too for Hammond to cajole participants, including a few old comrades, as he engaged them in the issues facing the industry. In this, Hammond demonstrated a gift for emollience. Gormley played a secondary role at this gathering because applying balm was an essential element of proceedings rather than the inflammation that Gormley's prominence would have produced for the left.⁸⁵

At the conference, Hammond gave a favourable assessment of industrial change to-date. This was the cue for Paynter to provide a vindication of industrial change in which he developed another important theme of the conference - the possibility of a change of government. He established what he expected from Labour. This included a national fuel policy with a leading role for coal together with socialist economic and social planning. Anderton and Gormley called for continuing performance improvement and union co-operation hinting that the industry was on the threshold of a period of consolidation and stability. Participants were so impressed with this interpretation of industrial change that they pledged themselves to continued co-operation in modernisation and rationalisation. Similarly, they were captivated by the thought that the process of change was nearly completed and a change of government might be imminent. Participants were implored to put the recent period of rationalisation behind them and prepare for the future under Labour.⁸⁶

The conference was notable for its assemblage of leading 'militant' sceptics. Clarke and Woolley - both at Brackley - and Weaver were joined by Trotskyite, Joe Ryan of Bradford colliery, and the Communist, Jimmy Dowd - a rising figure on the left from Gormley's 'home' colliery of Bold. Both Hammond and Paynter asked this plurality of left wing opinion what they wanted for the future of the coal industry. They were asked to consider what it was that united rather than divided them. Was it not, as Paynter argued, a socialist vision? Did this universal objective not transcend all their trivial differences? Was this not the vision of a modernised coal industry playing its part within a national fuel policy which they most desired? Within this introspection the 'militants' were asked to consider their reaction to "pit closures that inevitably arise" from this process. For both Hammond and

Paynter modernisation could only be delivered at a price. Closures were a sacrifice which was necessary to ensure the achievement of socialist objectives.⁸⁷ Hammond was an advocate of socialist unity on the political left on questions of industrial change. His belief in the need for 'left unity' had increased rather than diminished throughout industrial change. Hammond further interpreted his call as the need for modernisation to proceed under a socialist government.⁸⁸

The 'militants' were left floundering in the slipstream of being faced with the reality of their own political philosophy. Their response was a re-affirmation of a commitment to a socialist vision. There was more to this moment of truth than Paynter administering a socialist re-baptism on the shores of the Irish Sea. Primarily, though these individuals had consistently argued against the specific outcomes of industrial change they were forced to admit that as socialists they were as committed to the modernisation of coal under socialism as were Hammond and Paynter. They were persuaded it was hopeless fighting against what they fundamentally believed in. Moreover, they all agreed with Paynter's invocation of the experience of the industry's past in order to justify its current metamorphosis. As Paynter put it, their "forefathers" had demanded a modernised industry under socialism.⁸⁹

The dilemma facing the 'militants' was compounded by the fact that throughout rationalisation they had failed to produce a constructively coherent alternative to one of modernising the coal industry together with the industrial diversification of the coalfield. They found it as difficult articulating a response at this conference as Weaver did when Fitch bolstered his massive electoral advantage through a punishing and persuasive counter attack in Wigan in 1959. Their weakness resulted from more than just translucence on the issues. It also arose from the diversity of positions they represented on the political left. Their lack of clarity combined with their disparity to undermine their ability to produce a credible alternative. They never came remotely close to producing a common platform which could challenge the leadership on industrial change with the transparency on the issues or the unity of purpose required. These were among the reasons why they singularly failed to pose a serious threat to the NUMLA leadership.

This fragmentation was underlined when, after declaring unanimity on socialist objectives, Woolley voiced the only discordant note. He departed from the others by sticking rigidly to Trotskyite principles that the industry should be placed under workers' control free from capitalist domination to ensure that industrial change was overseen by those whose interests it directly affected. This was far cry indeed from his colleague, Joe Clarke, and Dowd and Weaver who expressed views concurrent with those of Hammond and Paynter through a discussion of industrial change under state control. Weaver in particular was most responsive on this occasion as he reacted positively to Paynter - a fellow Communist - and Hammond - a former comrade. In another way, this reflected a more pliant Weaver who had emerged from the events at Mosley Common; all the more significant given that he would once again be fighting Labour at the ballot box within the year.⁹⁰

For Hammond and Paynter the exercise was wholly intentional and quite clever. The bait was the possibility of a Labour government working for coal under socialism. Nevertheless, for the 'militants' their commitment to industrial change was more profound than the more momentary expectation of Labour delivering socialist objectives in government. Hammond and Paynter proved convincing with their dazzling description of life under Labour but it was by reminding the 'militants' of their shared commitment to a socialist vision which proved so effective.

In no way did this conference - important though it was - permanently silence the dissenting voices. This was demonstrated in March 1965 when Hammond and Ryan clashed over an unofficial dispute at Bradford colliery. Hammond attacked Ryan and his supporters for "politicising" a routine wages dispute in order to provide the arena for a challenge to the leadership's stewardship of changes to work practices. Hammond conceded that his desire for 'left unity' on industrial change remained a distant dream which was being destroyed by "the phials of hatred amongst members of the left".⁹¹ The difficulty for the leadership was that although the 1963 'fireside chat' at Blackpool helped assuage the challenge from the left on the immediate issue of closures it was a risky strategy. It raised the stakes because there was already a great deal of expectation riding on a Labour victory. Holding out the prospect of what Labour 'might' do in office helped placate the sceptics within the NUMLA but risked heightening expectations still further.⁹² Moreover, Hammond and Paynter's *tour de force* only increased the frustration felt by the

'militants'. They had to accept the hopelessness of questioning industrial change while carrying the burden of reconciling their socialism with industrial change knowing this meant contraction in Lancashire. Finally, as the eruption at Bradford colliery in 1965 indicated, the issues arising from modernisation of work practices continued to produce an insidious erosion of goodwill toward industrial change on the left.

Another way the NUMLA leadership sought to manage industrial change was over the question of industrial diversification in the coalfield.⁹³ Again, this was an objective about which there was a great deal of expectation from a future Labour government. The significance of industrial diversification was the enthusiastic way it was proposed and supported by the NUMLA. Industrial diversification, together with a modernised coal industry, became the twin pillars upon which the union's propinquity with Labour was founded. It was an agenda which meshed well with Labour's modernisation plans. The impetus for this policy came from the NUMLA leadership. During the debate over Weaver's intervention in Wigan in 1959, Hall explained the union's position on closures by drawing attention to Lancashire's more recent economic history. He argued that even during the 1930s the situation was not exclusively one of industrial decline. It was also about new industrial growth based on industries such as "paint and plastics". Hall suggested a parallel with the current situation but this time with a Labour government promoting new industrial growth.⁹⁴ Hall was clearly an advanced student of modern economic history: it was an admission that coal would cease to be a major employer and that it was necessary to help ex- mineworkers by supporting new industrial growth.

In another sense, Hall's assertion of his "paint and plastics" philosophy was less generous. His support was primarily about the requirement to provide the NUMLA leadership with a defence against criticism of its role in closures. Hall's successor, Joe Gormley, also recognised that industrial diversification provided the union with an indemnity to underwrite its acceptance of industrial change. At the 1965 NUM annual conference he famously quoted Arthur Horner, remarking that:

“I don’t wish to represent pitmen just for the sake of keeping them in the pits. If they can be found more congenial jobs outside the pits, we had better stand and deliver and what the hell have we to fight for them for?”.⁹⁵

The only difference between Hall and Gormley on industrial diversification was Gormley’s insistence that maintaining the pace of modernisation through adequate manpower recruitment and retention was more important than supporting miners into new industries. This occasionally conflicted with his endorsement of industrial diversification⁹⁶.

However, for both, industrial diversification was an insurance policy which provided first class cover for the leadership. It was a long-term commitment which pushed into the distance the day when some explanation of the outcome might be required. Against a background of relative economic buoyancy industrial diversification would provide the new jobs to take up those lost in coal. It was inconceivable that industrial change could proceed without a commitment to industrial diversification. It promised a golden scenario because it suited everyone. The Coal Board was happy because new industrial growth minimised the social costs involved in industrial change. The NUMLA knew it would play well with mineworkers because it made closures more acceptable. Finally, there was a bonus for both the NUMLA and Labour because it helped promote them as forward looking institutions with a modern image particularly as a younger generation of miners were increasingly turned away from both by their rather staid image.

While industrial diversification had unqualified support within the union it was Labour in the coalfield who supported its implementation. This revealed much about the priorities of Labour in industrial change. The main figure involved was Alan Fitch because he was a NUMLA-sponsored MP; he was prominent on the Lancashire and Cheshire Regional Council of Labour and represented a district of the coalfield most acutely affected by closures. As chairman of the Mining Group of MPs at Westminster, Fitch’s interests in industrial diversification extended beyond the Lancashire coalfield.⁹⁷ The other interested coalfield MP was Tom Brown, the NUMLA-sponsored MP at Ince: a constituency adjacent to Wigan in which many closures had taken place. Brown, like Fitch, never questioned closures in his constituency. Closures were only debated in terms of their ramifications, including the need to attract new industry to the coalfield.⁹⁸ The remaining

coalfield Labour MPs had individual interests determined by their various trade union links or previous occupations. However, they too concerned themselves solely with the implications of industrial change rather than its priorities.⁹⁹

Industrial diversification became an issue of widespread interest throughout the coalfield. The late 1950s and early 1960s period was important not just because of the end of large-scale mining; it was also a time when the coalfield decisively declared for change. One highly symbolic event was the opening, in May 1959, of H.J. Heinz's huge modern food processing and canning plant at Kitt Green near Wigan. The event saw a gathering of leading coalfield figures. In this gleaming temple of modernity senior NUMLA and Labour leaders toured in wonderment. Fitch and Brown announced that the opening of the factory marked the "beginning of new industry in the area". Fitch bristled with excitement at this development.¹⁰⁰ The fact that the NUMLA and Labour went to such lengths to welcome new industry, in contrast to their lack of response to colliery closures, was a good measure of their commitment to modernisation.

This commitment was affirmed throughout the early 1960s as Labour-dominated local authorities with mining connections announced that both coal and cotton were in irrevocable decline and the future belonged to new industrial growth. Labour, through its domination of coalfield local authorities, saw industrial diversification as the only issue worth discussing, and rarely became involved in attempts to save collieries from closure.¹⁰¹ Support for modernisation saw encouragement of mineworkers to believe their future lay outside the industry. Local authorities vied for new industry while industrialists were encouraged to secure personnel from within mining communities.¹⁰² For example, Metal Box Ltd opened two plants for the manufacture of food cans during the late 1950s and early 1960s. These projects were the most important after the Heinz development. The company offered free transport to workers in the coalfield to visit one of the factories under the banner: "For the men of today (and tomorrow): Automation in Action", a clear inference these developments represented the economic future of the area.¹⁰³ Coalfield local authorities together with the Government and private sector actively encouraged a discourse of modernity in which coal and cotton were seen as outmoded and dying industries with the future belonging to new industry and infrastructure.¹⁰⁴ There was thus a

widely held belief that a new Lancashire was suddenly about to rise phoenix like from the ashes of the old.

This mood was reflected at Westminster where both Fitch and Brown failed to raise the question of colliery closures. Their involvement was exclusively with the implications of coal contraction in order to cause maximum embarrassment to the Tories and promote Labour's alternatives.¹⁰⁵ In any event, new industrial growth was taking place in spite of initiatives by the union and Labour not necessarily because of it. Industrial diversification in the coalfield is explored in more detail in the final chapter. Suffice to say, the debate was an attempt by the NUMLA and Labour to use the issue as a shop window for Labour's policies rather than to seek tangible solutions.

For the 'rank-and-file' industrial diversification was of increasing importance during the early 1960s, as the impact of closures became apparent and the election clock ticked toward a change of government. The situation in the Chorley area has been mentioned. There were similar concerns elsewhere in the coalfield. For example, Bold colliery called for action by the NUMLA and coalfield MPs to forestall growing unemployment in areas of the coalfield affected by closures. Localised unemployment was of increasing political importance. In the Leigh and Westhoughton constituencies it was a prominent issue during the 1964 general election. Such concerns were not addressed directly by the NUMLA leadership and Labour. Instead they appropriated expressions of concern to highlight the effectiveness of Labour's industrial and regional policies and to focus on Government deficiencies. During the 1964 general election both Tom Price and Harold Boardman, in defending their respective Westhoughton and Leigh seats, took full advantage of these concerns. Typically, Boardman accused the Tories of using "hansom cab solutions for the jet age". He promised nothing short of "space age solutions" from Labour for the 1960s.¹⁰⁶

Industrial diversification was popular because it reflected a desire for modernisation in the coalfield in the wake of rationalisation. It afforded a high degree of mutuality between the NUMLA leadership, Labour and the 'rank-and-file'. However, the strategy of relying on industrial diversification carried with it a number of dangers, more so given the way it was pursued as a promotional device to advance Labour's ambitions. The problem with exclusively promoting industrial diversification while accepting colliery closures was the

mismatch it created between the rhetoric and reality of modernisation. There was no guarantee new industrial growth would occur to the level required to match contraction of coal. Industrial diversification was pursued in anticipation of what Labour might deliver in power. Given these circumstances it raises the question of how serious the NUMLA and Labour were over industrial diversification beyond the twin objectives of providing a safeguard for the union leadership and an electoral enticement for Labour? This question is particularly relevant given the dreadful experience of the coalfield since the 1960s which has led to questioning of the probity of those involved in supporting such a policy.¹⁰⁷

While there was a high degree of political self-interest there was also genuine support for notions of modernity at the time. Timing was significant. Leading elements in the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield were swept up in the modernisation agenda of a re-invigorated Labour Party emerging from the internal debates of the early 1960s following the 1959 general election defeat. Gaitskell, and later Wilson, marched to the drumbeat of modernisation. They had many followers in the coalfield. Fitch, as a leading party loyalist, was in the vanguard of support for Labour's modernisation plans. He believed this vision was achievable, credible and relevant to the needs of a contracting coalfield however narrowly he chose to apply it during the early 1960s. Leading figures in the coalfield thus held forth a vision of modernity which they wished to share with coalfield communities.¹⁰⁸

Fitch had been on the dole during the 1930s. During the Second World War he had worked in troubled Lancashire pits. His early mining career as an 'outsider' to the coalfield and the industry had greatly influenced his 'political' education. He had witnessed an industry "strained to the limits" and "starved of resources" about which he noted: "There can be no more creative crucible of political ideals". Personal experience of unemployment and work in a clapped out industry had shaped both the man and the politician.¹⁰⁹ His experiences led him to conclude that change should be achieved through the modernisation of the industry and the coalfield. These experiences were not unique. They were the common currency of a generation of NUMLA officials and Labour politicians overseeing industrial change. As Joe Gormley asserted, it was not the business of socialism whether or not miners remained inside the industry or left to work elsewhere. The objective was obtaining a "better standard of living" through modernisation.¹¹⁰ The collective experience of the past informed current sentiments in most profound way. There was a genuine desire for

modernisation of both the coal industry and the coalfield even though these desires appeared to be expressed through political self-interest.

Was support for industrial diversification by the NUMLA leadership and Labour in the coalfield fully justified? At worst, too to great an emphasis on industrial diversification while avoiding challenging the contraction of coal was a grossly reckless act which shamelessly gambled with the future of the coalfield. At best, a fairer and more accurate judgement was that the policy arose from the limited space the NUMLA and Labour had created for themselves. They had accepted and colluded in industrial change out of conviction. Given the scale of closures which resulted they had no option other than to support industrial diversification through conviction tinged with expediency.

The NUMLA leadership was able successfully to manage opposition to industrial change by improving the presentation of its arguments. It withstood successive waves of criticism and protest over its role in industrial change. The union's links with Labour were an important ingredient in ensuring success. This relationship fortified the leadership's case through the rising expectations which accompanied Labour's preparations for power. However, it was also the NUMLA leadership's ability to placate critics of industrial change which was important in ensuring success. Critics were persuaded that they were equally committed partners in the quest for industrial change. This revelation was twinned with the inability of those critics to establish a coherent, effective and united stand against NUMLA-Labour Party hegemony on industrial change.

5.4 THE REACTION OF THE 'RANK-AND-FILE' TO INDUSTRIAL CHANGE

In this section attention focuses on the reaction to industrial change by mineworkers. A distinction must be made between general acceptance of industrial change by a majority of mineworkers with reaction to specific outcomes of the process. There was a high degree of acceptance of modernisation by the 'rank-and-file'. However, the 'rank-and-and-file' faced a dilemma when confronted with the negative outcomes of industrial change. Rationalisation gave rise to 'rank-and-file' grievances resulting in frustration and resentment. The culpable relegation of these concerns by a NUMLA leadership, whose

priorities lay elsewhere, fuelled resentment. However, it was how the 'rank-and-file' chose to interpret these grievances which determined the outcome of industrial change during the early 1960s.

It could be argued that rationalisation was a relatively straightforward process because modernisation had been a longstanding objective for mineworkers. Equally, new economic and social perspectives within coalfield communities meant there were new opportunities for mineworkers outside of coal. Likewise, industrial change came on the back of a long period of economic and social change within in mining communities which helped facilitate acceptance of modernisation. In this way, proponents of modernisation were pushing at a half open door in convincing the 'rank-and-file' of the need for industrial change.

An important indicator of this trend was the declining attraction of coal as a career which created a chronic manpower crisis. There is evidence to support the view of a rejection of the industry as a career for younger men, developing from the inter-war period.¹¹¹ The Coal Board faced a two-fold problem. Firstly, there was a general manpower recruitment and retention crisis after the Second World War. Secondly, the crisis was worse in the recruitment of juveniles and youths. The scale of the crisis at a time when coal production was a priority contributed to the fuel crises of the immediate post-war period as workers found jobs in new peacetime industries.¹¹² It had hardly abated during the mid-1950s when the Government considered placing restrictions on new industrial development in coalfields to stem the drift away from the industry.¹¹³ There were some successes in attracting and retaining younger men through measures aimed at improving prospects for young recruits because modernisation stressed the need to attract young miners with managerial and technical competencies. Some success in this area, combined with an improvement in the general manpower position during the early 1950s, helped stabilise the situation.¹¹⁴ Still, for post-war governments and the NCB the manpower situation was one of near permanent crisis throughout the immediate post-war period.

The conventional wisdom on the 'manpower crisis' suggests a collapse in confidence in the industry caused by social rejection of coal as a result of inter-war experience and the attractions of new opportunities in the coalfields. This is at best a general picture. The main

problem facing both post-war governments and the NCB was not a 'manpower crisis'. It was an inability to attract and retain what they termed "virile labour". As both admitted, the 'manpower crisis' was not about 'manpower drift' across all ages and grades but about a failure to attract and retain younger miners who were needed to maintain high production levels and from whose ranks future managers and technicians would come in the push for modernisation.¹¹⁵ As a result, both government and the NCB frenetically poured over every piece of evidence which suggested youth had turned its back on mining as a career. The 'manpower crisis' was more about faltering priorities for government and the NCB than about 'manpower drift'.

Furthermore, 'manpower drift' was not a uniform phenomenon throughout the coalfields. The decision to begin inter-divisional manpower transfers in 1954 was an acknowledgement of this reality. Inter-divisional transfers were intended to ensure that production in the expanding coalfields of Yorkshire and the Midlands did not stall from a lack of trained manpower. Policy was less concerned with the needs of the transferees made redundant by early rationalisation in the declining coalfields of central Scotland and West Durham.¹¹⁶ It was thus about the maintenance of priorities for the industry. The Government and NCB conceded this point in 1956. They noted that only three of the eleven British coalfields had a "manpower deficiency". Significantly, two were expanding coalfields in which production was a priority. Even in Lancashire, which was believed to have a serious manpower problem, the situation was only described as "borderline".¹¹⁷

The 'manpower crisis' was not even a uniform problem within coalfields, as Baldwin indicated in his study of the Cannock Chase and Warwickshire coalfields during the early 1950s. The relative attraction of new industry and rejection of coal as mining career was dependant on a host of local factors such as the availability of new employment opportunities, public transport and the costs and distances involved in travelling to work.¹¹⁸ This was also the case in Lancashire. The intensity of 'manpower drift' varied across the coalfield. The Manchester district suffered the greatest 'manpower drift' because of better employment opportunities. On the other hand, the manpower situation was less critical in central areas of the South Lancashire coalfield particularly in Wigan district where occupational concentrations in mining were much greater while there were fewer opportunities outside of coal.¹¹⁹ As a Youth Employment Service report in Wigan in 1956

showed, interest in a career in coal among boys leaving school was as healthy as ever. If there was a problem it was in finding enough placements in the pits.¹²⁰

These trends reinforced existing intra-regional employment patterns which had developed since the inter-war period.¹²¹ They did not indicate widespread rejection of coal as a career. At least until the late 1950s patterns of employment, manpower, and occupational mobility remained broadly unchanged. The main development in 'manpower drift' was the huge upsurge from the late 1950s as coal demand fell and the closure programme was announced.¹²² In Lancashire those who could - particularly younger men - left mining in much greater numbers for work in other sectors because of uncertainty and insecurity while prospective recruits were dissuaded from entry. This was the key development in manpower in Lancashire, as it was in other declining coalfields. The idea that economic and social change within mining communities produced an amenable atmosphere in which industrial change was more attractive to the 'rank-and-file' is not supported by reference to the 'manpower crisis'. The 'crisis' arose from political and industrial concerns over the maintenance of production priorities. There was certainly a manpower problem from the late 1950s because of the impact of rationalisation. This was the most significant development in influencing manpower trends not the experience of longer-term economic and social change.

Another way of assessing whether the 'rank-and-file' was amenable to industrial change as a result of longer-term economic and social trends is by measuring the 'morale' of the coalfield community by reference to the 'health' of its cultural and social infrastructure. There is nothing in the experience of the coalfield during the late 1940s and most of the 1950s to suggest rejection of traditional allegiances and ties to coal. Contemporary descriptions of coalfield life from the early 1950s could well have been from half a century before. The Haydock Gala of 1952 continued to be the well attended combination of mining and rustic tradition it had always been complete with its complement of colliery bands, floats, may and rose queens and morris dancers. It even continued to boast a parade of pit brow lasses.¹²³ During the mid-1950s confidence in attachments to the industry remained so high that the NUMLA initiated an annual Lancashire miners' gala for the first time in the history of the coalfield. These became well-patronised affirmations of the robustness of the coalfield's cultural and social life. The NUMLA saw no disintegration of

membership during the early 1950s. Its confidence was such that it switched its annual conference from its Bolton headquarters to an annual jamboree at Blackpool. Similarly, there was no reduction in demand from aspiring mining engineers and managers to train in Lancashire pits for a professional career in the industry. During the late 1940s Wigan College of Mining and Technology boasted a record number of mining pre-diplomates and undergraduates on placements in Lancashire collieries.¹²⁴

These instances confirm that if there were a process of economic and social change taking place within Lancashire mining communities it had not eroded traditional allegiances and ties to the industry. After all, these were relatively good times to be part of Lancashire coal, probably among the more propitious in the history of the Lancashire industry. There was a pervading mood of optimism. The advent of public ownership, together with a buoyant demand for coal that seemed to stretch into infinity underpinned this confidence. Miners saw improvements to life on many fronts: in pay, conditions and welfare. In Lancashire, they could see visible reminders of an industry undergoing renewal as new collieries and re-constructions sprouted in their midst. There were closures, concentrations and re-deployment to face during the ten years following vesting date, but collieries and underground workings had always had a finite life. This time though, the closures were seen as a necessary step toward the desired objective of the modernisation. Lancashire miners witnessed a coalfield which had been in decline since the end of the First World War bouncing back to life under a new regime.

The major change which grievously shattered this mood of optimism was the fall in coal consumption and the closure programme from the late 1950s. This marked the beginning of the fragmentation of the industry and with it the destruction of the cultural and social life of the coalfield. This was the main factor undermining confidence in the future of the industry rather than a longer-term process of economic and social change. Rationalisation created conditions of malaise, uncertainty and insecurity within Lancashire mining society. Contraction, combined with the rush to leave hastened the process of fragmentation because it reduced the size of the mining community and gave out negative signals about the future of the industry. This produced a collapse in 'morale' from the late 1950s. One indication came in 1961 from a NUMLA branch official in the Atherton and Westhoughton area. He reported a lack of interest in activities connected with the industry

and fall in attendance at major social events such as the annual Pretoria Day commemoration march and he mused that there were not even enough musicians for the colliery bands.¹²⁵ The welfare and social clubs, which had been important foci of mining culture, were being bulldozed along with the collieries which sustained them. Many had only been built or were re-constructed in more optimistic times only a few years previous.¹²⁶ By the mid-1960s Lancashire miners' gala - only inaugurated a decade before - saw attendance sustained only through participation from groups and families with recent mining connections but whose collieries had closed.¹²⁷ Wigan Mining and Technical College reported a plummeting demand for its mining courses to an extent that this undermined its chances of attaining polytechnic status.¹²⁸ Rationalisation created an image of an industry without a future in spite of the modernisation rhetoric of the NUMLA leadership and Labour; it destroyed the cultural and social life of the coalfield and encouraged 'manpower drift'.

Having established that 'rank-and-file' attitudes remained fundamentally unchanged until the late 1950s, why did a majority of the 'rank-and-file' greet industrial change with such resignation, even insouciance. An important factor in inducing 'rank-and-file' acquiescence was the absence of large-scale redundancies. As the divisional board noted, the avoidance of a "catastrophic impact on social welfare" was a crucial part of its strategy intended to pacify miners' concerns over industrial change.¹²⁹ As a result, the 'rank-and-file' was prepared to accept the assurances given by the NUMLA leadership underwritten by commitments made by Labour for future government. For the majority of the 'rank-and-file' there was never any question of opposing industrial change. Similarly, pitmen were under no illusions about the predicament facing coal from the late 1950s. This degree of pragmatism was reflected in an un sentimental assessment that an era of deep mining was coming to an end in many parts of the coalfield. As one miner, who served as a Labour councillor noted, as he retired from the industry after the Garswood Hall closure: they were witnessing the "end of that particular industry in the town" (Ashton-in-Makerfield). He noted the future would be determined by an ability to attract new industry.¹³⁰

However, this level of agreement did not mean the 'rank-and-file' were willing to accept every aspect of industrial change ordained by the NCB or NUM. Far from it. Where the 'rank-and-file' faced the rub was when they were confronted with the injustices of the

process or its negative outcomes. These included the open cast and oil conversion issues already mentioned. Moreover, the increased tensions of the early 1960s were a response to negative outcomes seen through the rising toll of closures.

What was also clear under rationalisation was that industrial change produced groups of 'winners' and 'losers' among mineworkers, though the lines of distinction were often blurred. There were many positive attractions for mineworkers in industrial change which persuaded them to remain inside the modernised industry. The new collieries and re-constructions offered the potential for higher earnings. However, the attraction of a job at one of these pits was not just about fatter pay packets. There were more fundamental attractions. As one Lancashire miner, given a tour of the new Parkside colliery before retirement, remarked: "this is a collar and tie job now". As this veteran of the Lancashire pits noted, the new pits and re-constructions were attractive places to work compared with the hell holes in which Lancashire miners had for generations toiled and died. It is too easy for outsiders to dismiss such basic aspects of improvement to life underground as walking upright in well-lit tunnels and the reduction of "back breaking work". These were positive developments for mineworkers.¹³¹ There were "teething problems" at the two new collieries of Agecroft and Parkside.¹³² Similarly, the situation inside many of the re-constructions was less than benign, while the problems suffered by Mosley Common clearly demonstrated that the modernised collieries offered no elixir. However, the early years at both Agecroft and Parkside were ones largely characterised by a highly motivated and contented workforce.

Naturally, the divisional board and the NUMLA were keen to promote a positive image of miners in the two new collieries telling their mates what a splendid time they were having.¹³³ Still, this was one occasion when image and reality did match. It was not NCB or NUM propaganda because the excellent industrial relations record of Agecroft and Parkside indicates that 'morale' was exceptionally high during the early 1960s.¹³⁴ One reason was the way the divisional board tried to keep groups of transferees, from the same pit, together as much as possible. An example was the closure of Newtown and Wheatsheaf collieries in Pendlebury which enabled mineworkers to stay together when they transferred to Agecroft. Another was the closure of Lyme colliery where a majority of miners were transferred *en mass* to nearby Parkside. The aim was to maintain familial and

social networks as much as possible.¹³⁵ This plan quickly unravelled from the early 1960s as closures mounted, receiving places dried up, and the geographical distances between closing and receiving pits widened.

Other board strategies were aimed at sustaining 'rank-and-file' cohesion and 'morale'. Although the divisional board wished to maintain the relentless pace of modernisation in which a modern 'pit culture' developed, it accepted that it was good practice not to be too pedantic in ending traditional customs and practices brought from various collieries to the new and re-constructed pits. The board was anxious to engender a seamless transition between "pick and shovel" pit traditions and those of the "push-button age".¹³⁶

The Board further attempted to maintain 'morale' by reducing the potential for trouble in the new collieries. For example, at one juncture during the Sandhole closure it was suggested that Brackley be closed earlier than anticipated as a substitute for Sandhole in order that the pristine pit at Agecroft was not exposed to the incubus of Sandhole.¹³⁷ It was felt that Brackley miners would be more pliable within the new environment. This practice extended to groups of activists, who were often split up on transfer. The events at Clock Face, described in the previous chapter, suggest NUMLA leadership collusion in these practices.¹³⁸

The divisional board thus attempted to infuse a sense among transferees that they were pioneers in a new beginning for Lancashire coal. The *leitmotiv* was one of re-birth as a new industry emerged out of the old. To underline this sense of modernity, Bold colliery hosted a publicity stunt by Lord Robens in 1965. He operated underground coal-cutting machinery from a cinema 170 miles away in Cambridge where he addressed businessmen, scientists and technocrats on the theme of the new coal industry. The audience was treated to a light and sound extravaganza in which live television pictures were transmitted of underground operations with the slogan "Go-Ahead Bold Colliery". Underground, colliery officials and mineworkers glowed with pride as the remote controlled system 'ELSIE' swung into operation controlling state of the art cutting machinery to make light work of the Wigan 6 feet seam. They had reached the promised land of the new coal industry.¹³⁹ The transferees in the modernised pits were seen as the 'winners' of industrial change. However, they were a minority. For the rest, the outcome of industrial change was more

problematic. Importantly, for both 'winners' and 'losers' there was a price to pay as they confronted the negative effects of industrial change.

For the majority of mineworkers under rationalisation their experience was one haunted by the twin fears of insecurity and uncertainty. These fears were greater amongst certain categories than others. Even individual pit closures revealed groups of 'winners' and 'losers'. This differentiation was most marked across the age spectrum because industrial change had distinctive impacts on the generations. Take the example of the closure of Deane colliery, near Bolton, in 1960. The colliery was about as traditional a Lancashire colliery as one could find.¹⁴⁰ Age group determined reaction to closure. For the younger men and pit lads there was no feeling of regret. They were confident about the future. They looked forward to working at a new colliery. Most were destined for Agecroft, where, as the earliest entrants, they were eager to use the latest equipment after the physical exertions of Deane. A new modern colliery with better pay and conditions and a bright future awaited them. Others had made plans to leave the industry. A second group was older miners, at or nearing retirement. A number had worked at Deane since the First World War. For these older 'lads' there was a feeling of sadness and nostalgia at the passing of the pit. It was like a bereavement for them. Still, they accepted closure with stoicism. They did not feel they belonged in the new industry. Their concerns were over insecurity in retirement. The third and most disconsolate group was 'middle-career' miners, most with families. It was this group who expressed most anger at being uprooted and forced to accept a job at another colliery with lengthy travelling, re-training and the uncertainty that pay and status would be maintained at the receiving pits. Their only consolation was still having a job in coal.¹⁴¹

It was the younger miners who were more amenable to change and most likely to benefit, both within the industry and from new industrial growth. The younger men were most in demand from new industries, while new economic opportunities were an attraction for younger miners seen against the contraction of coal. There was a certain 'glamour' associated with work in a new or expanding industry.¹⁴² Once having left the industry this group was difficult to tempt back.¹⁴³ This was evident by the divisional board's vain attempts to recruit younger re-entrants in its desperation to maintain a supply of 'virile' labour.¹⁴⁴

For the remainder of the men at Deane colliery, and other closures, there were numerous problems to confront in the aftermath of closure. For the 'middle-career' miners and older miners insecurity and uncertainty were writ large. Industrial change also had an inordinate impact on certain grades of mineworker. This tended to obscure distinctions between the 'winners' and 'losers' of industrial change. Ostensibly, the group best able to enjoy the benefits of the new industry were the highest grade experienced 'face' workers because they were in demand in the modernised pits. Higher rates of pay made them more willing to travel further to work or move to retain a job in mining. On the other hand, other underground workers, and more particularly surface workers, were less in demand and had less incentive, resources or inclination to stay in the industry. They tended to be either younger workers or older men nearing retirement who had come off the 'face'. They were more likely to seek opportunities outside the industry or take retirement.

However, there was a downside for 'face' workers. 'Face' workers were not just being culled through colliery closures but also by new underground technology. Furthermore, prospects for 'face' workers were equally as problematic if they stayed in coal or left. Remaining inside the industry meant competing for the best transfer placements. Failure meant reduced pay and status, travelling further to receiving pits and having to re-train with new equipment and methods including the new pit culture of multi-shift working. Outside of coal, 'face' workers were less 'attractive' to new employers because they were usually more mature men with 'specialist' skills in coal and therefore less readily 'transferable' or 're-trainable' in the new sectors than less skilled younger underground or surface labouring grades. In any case, 'face' workers who transferred within the industry endured the additional uncertainty of not knowing whether they had a long-term future at receiving pits. In these circumstances, the 'victory' of retaining a job in coal was often pyrrhic.¹⁴⁵

A sharper contrast between the 'winners' and 'losers' of industrial change was seen through the dichotomy within craft grades. This group was in relatively high demand and could offer 'transferable skills' outside of coal. However, there was a distinction between those workers with 'modern' in demand craft skills such as electricians who emerged as the 'winners' of modernisation and those with 'dying' pit skills such as the hundreds of

carpenters employed on timbering work.¹⁴⁶ Rationalisation produced two definite groups of 'losers': 'disabled' and older mineworkers. The consequence of industrial change for these groups is considered in the final chapter.

Negative outcomes for the 'rank-and-file' were a complex of problems rather than a single issue. For those transferred to the two new collieries at Agecroft and Parkside satisfaction levels remained relatively high. For the rest, including those transferred to the reconstructed collieries, it was a case of "last come, worst served".¹⁴⁷ The transferees were often forced to accept a lower grade job on less pay. The practice of 'downgrading' was the single greatest cause of dissatisfaction amongst British miners during the 1960s. A third of British miners were 'downgraders' within the 20-40 age group.¹⁴⁸ In coalfields such as Lancashire, with large numbers of closures and transferees, this figure was higher. Crucially the 'downgraders' included large numbers of 'middle-career' miners who were most likely to remain in the industry. This group carried resentment with them into the 'modernised' industry. Added to this was the uncertainty of knowing whether receiving pits would stay open. Transferees were shunted around the coalfield from pit-to-pit throughout the 1960s before final redundancy. The 'industrial gypsies' had to endure insecurity in tandem with uncertainty in a most cruel manner.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the process of transfer was seldom a tidy affair as evidenced by the case studies in the previous chapter. The scope for managerial or union interference was enormous. Selectivity based on personal or work records or industrial and political activity was inevitable. NCBNWD acquiescence with NUMLA involvement in transfer arrangements did not lead to fairer treatment.

Resentment over 'downgrading' was compounded because transferees had to travel further to retain a job in mining. Significant numbers of Lancashire miners had traditionally travelled some distance to work. This trend increased as a result of inter-war depression and rationalisation.¹⁵⁰ After 1945 the numbers travelling increased while the distances involved became greater as industrial change reinforced inter-war trends. By the 1960s, with rationalisation in full swing, a majority of miners were forced to travel considerable distances to keep a job in mining.¹⁵¹ Travelling long distances to work was only part of the problem. Indifferent public or private transport made life a misery for transferees. Bus services had not been improved to an adequate level to cater for the growing numbers of

commuting miners as the tramway system and railways were closed. Buses were inflexible, irregular, and unreliable while the transport provided by the NCB was often restricted by timetable, route and shift. The problem of an adequate bus service to take miners from the Wigan to the Manchester district was a major source of concern to the divisional board in 'manning up' Agecroft.¹⁵² Likewise, one of the chief gripes at Mosley Common was inadequate surface transport. There were not uncommon cases of miners having to use two public buses to get to a central pick-up point to catch a NCB bus to the pit. This was followed by time spent preparing to go underground and travelling to the face only to repeat the process in reverse at the end of each shift. Many miners spent more time travelling to and from the 'face' than on the 'face'. This situation was made more difficult by having to plan these journeys around newly introduced shift patterns. Miners complained they had no domestic or social life.¹⁵³ No wonder it was the introduction of multi-shift which did so much to close Mosley Common.

Growing resentment over travelling was compounded by the extra costs involved. During the late 1940s travel-to-work costs were not excessive. By the early 1960s excessive costs had become an added source of discontent. Between 1947 and 1960 commuting costs in British coalfields had trebled but in Lancashire they increased twelve-fold. Miners in no other British coalfield had to bear anything near this level of increase. While the Coal Board subsidised some of the cost, miners were left substantially worse off through travel-to-work following transfer. Lancashire miners paid at least three times the cost paid by the Coal Board.¹⁵⁴ Although car ownership and sharing amongst miners increased throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s it was the problem of costly, difficult and lengthy travel to work which forced many miners into car purchases they would not otherwise have made just to retain a job in coal.¹⁵⁵

Within this complex of problems confronting those remaining in the modernised industry the most contentious was the introduction of double-shift and multi-shift work. Multi-shift was an integral part of the modernisation process necessary to facilitate technological change. As a major change in mining culture in Lancashire, it amplified all other grievances. The NUMLA leadership had agonised over this thorny problem realising it was the key to unlocking modernisation of the pits. They were also aware it was the buckle that fastened together a belt of grievances. In moving toward general acceptance of multi-shift

from the mid-1960s the NUMLA leadership failed to recognise the mounting difficulties it was creating. Likewise, the NUMLA leadership did not acknowledge other difficulties facing mineworkers resulting from industrial change. It saw issues like downgrading, travel-to-work and multi-shift as part of the inevitable landscape of the modern industry. Moreover, the NUMLA leadership failed to take account of the speed of change on pit life. Changes occurred in a few years which would normally have taken a generation.¹⁵⁶

The outcome of these challenges for the 'rank-and-file' was an increase in the rush to leave coal. A growing catalogue of problems for miners in the re-constructed collieries meant resentment over unresolved grievances was translated into increasing levels of dissatisfaction which forced them to leave. There were high levels of manpower 'wastage' from the re-constructed collieries in Lancashire during the early 1960s. 'Wastage' was not only at high levels among younger men and those nearing retirement. It was also high among 'middle career' miners. Those leaving expressed dissatisfaction with the new arrangements. A substantial proportion of those who left did so because of unspecified 'dissatisfaction' while travel-to-work and shiftwork rated highly as mono-causal reasons.¹⁵⁷

It is clear that there were growing problems over specific aspects of industrial change during the early 1960s. What is also clear is that the divisional board and the NUMLA did not adequately address these issues. Gormley recognised that 'downgrading' constituted "hidden redundancy".¹⁵⁸ However, diagnosing the problem was one thing but doing something about it was quite another. In one sense the travel-to-work problem grew because of a desire by the divisional board and the NUMLA to avoid large-scale redundancies. This was combined with the residential circumstances of miners and the peculiarities and patterns of labour mobility in the coalfield. Transferees had a disincentive to move house because of low cost private rented accommodation and low council house rents.¹⁵⁹

Nevertheless, this did not excuse the relegation of issues such as travel-to-work simply because they had become embarrassing obstacles to the achievement of modernisation. The divisional board and the NUMLA loftily argued that there was an adequate framework of measures in place to cater for intra-coalfield job re-location. Inter-divisional transferees

suffered tremendous dislocation and privations. The Coal Board regarded inter-divisional transfers as a priority. This hardly said much for the quality of intra-divisional transfers. Both the divisional board and the NUMLA leadership used the avoidance of large-scale redundancies as an excuse to avoid tackling the grievances of transferees. Both argued that miners should celebrate the avoidance of mass redundancies made possible by a humane modern industry. The problems faced by transferees were compared favourably with the experience of closures under private ownership as a way of reinforcing this point. It only became an issue for the NUMLA leadership when its indifference to the grievances of a majority of transferees was compared with its dominant interest in the needs of a minority of 'winners' of industrial change in the two new collieries and the few 'successful' reconstructions.

The question arising from these grievances was how the 'rank-and-file' interpreted them. It did not translate into growing solidarity or collective action. Quite the opposite. It led to divisiveness in the face of grievances set in train by closure and transfer. For example, when Ellerbeck colliery finally closed in 1965 anger was directed as much against fellow workers as it was against the divisional board or the NUMLA leadership. Ellerbeck miners believed their attempts to save a relatively productive and profitable pit had been jeopardised by the poor performance of miners in the modernised collieries. They argued that they had fought to save the pit only to be offered second best in the transfer stakes to workers already enjoying the fruits of work within the modernised industry.¹⁶⁰ The reaction at Ellerbeck was not untypical. Consider the response to events following closure of Clock Face colliery described in the previous chapter. There was no clearer case where mineworkers had been unjustly treated at closure. Yet, there was an absence of solidarity from all but a handful of NUMLA branches. Under rationalisation Lancashire miners fought for the survival of their own individual colliery and jealously guarded transfer arrangements.

This was an attitude the NUMLA leadership did not discourage because it made industrial change easier; indeed, it encouraged divisiveness. Competitive pit survival instincts were allowed to predominate over feelings of collective solidarity in the face of closure and transfer. These were fundamental and powerful instincts in a primary industry like mining where 'survivability' was tied to individual and team effort combined with pit level

loyalties. ¹⁶¹ At Ellerbeck, Gormley used these sentiments to assuage protests over the closure threat in 1962. He became skilled at manipulating an individual pit survivalist mentality amongst the 'rank-and-file'. When approached by miners facing closure he repeated his credo that they should save their own pit by co-operating with management, implement new technology and techniques and work to improve output and productivity.¹⁶² This tactic, combined with the divisional board's strategies on closure announcements, undermined the occasion for collective solidarity in the face of closures. These approaches tempered growing frustration over industrial change, as did the opportunity to leave the industry by sections of the workforce. This did not mean 'rank-and-file' grievances were extinguished. While these grievances did not translate into protest they nevertheless continued to hang increasingly heavily throughout the early 1960s over the specific outcomes of industrial change.

5.5 CONCLUSION

It is evident from the preceding examination of reaction and response to industrial change that the NUMLA leadership sought to give the appearance of leading a challenge over industrial change. At worst, these challenges were subterfuges to escape censure on acceptance of closures. At best, they were an intrusion into the more general debate on the efficiency and future of the industry. The weakness and delusive nature of these challenges only served to reinforce acceptance of the priorities for industrial change. At the same time, the NUMLA leadership used these as a device to bolster Labour's fuel policy and electoral ambitions. This was evident too in the way in which the NUMLA leadership used its relationship with Labour to manage opposition to industrial change. The NUMLA leadership also demonstrated it was capable of responding to criticism of industrial change through a metamorphosis of the style and presentation of its case.

As this chapter has indicated the task of managing opposition was made easier by the ineffectual opposition of 'militant activists' at a number of collieries. These diverse and disparate minority groupings were destined to fail in their opposition to NUMLA-Labour Party hegemony. That they failed so miserably resulted from their inability to provide cohesive opposition. Weakness was fatally compounded by the hamstrung position they

adopted on industrial change. They heaped criticism on the NUMLA leadership over industrial change. Yet, they were all 'modernisers' by virtue of their socialism whatever position on the political left they occupied. They were like an exotic specie which camouflaged its true identity until one day it discovered that it too wore the bright plumage of modernisation.

It has been shown that the NUMLA leadership's ace card in managing opposition to industrial change was expectation of a Labour government. Supporting coalfield modernisation through industrial diversification utilised a concept of multi-faceted value. One of those facets was the way industrial diversification was linked to Labour's developing agenda for government through its industrial and regional policies. Again, it allowed the NUMLA to use this aspect of industrial change in aid of Labour's ambitions.

It has been argued that for the majority of the 'rank-and-file' in Lancashire there was no uprising against industrial change. Complex economic and social changes had been taking place in the coalfield since before the Second World War. However, it was the specific character of industrial change which was more influential in affecting 'rank-and file' attitudes toward the industry. Modernisation was seen as a positive development which had been an objective for years. The defining moment for the 'rank-and-file' only came when they experienced the negative effects of change. Industrial change brought tangible advantages to only a minority of mineworkers. Perceived groups of 'winners' and 'losers' emerged. In reality, there were few outright 'winners'. For the rest there was a plethora of problems to confront, while the divisional board and the NUMLA leadership remained oblivious to the grievances which arose. The NUMLA leadership was too engrossed in pursuing partnership with the divisional board over industrial change, or sketching in the fine detail of the 'modernised' industry, to worry about negative repercussions.

Finally, as evidenced by the findings in this chapter, the character of industrial change and of 'rank-and-file' responses was important in preventing grievances and resentment from becoming a more potent threat. There was no growth of solidarity or collective action. Rather, the result tended toward division among the 'rank-and-file'. In this way, industrial change up to 1965 was a success for divisional board strategies and NUMLA co-operation. In another sense, industrial change was not without potential threats to the NUMLA

leadership. Its unwillingness to allay genuine 'rank-and-file' fears produced a huge reservoir of resentment behind the dyke of optimism which the proclaimed 'success' of industrial change represented. It was the NUMLA leadership who held a finger in the dyke supported by Labour. Not only was the reservoir full of resentment, it was also full of anticipation. The NUMLA leadership created a build-up of expectation of Labour in power. Lancashire miners were expecting much from Labour when it was returned to office in 1964. The list was headed by a national fuel policy which placed the coal industry at its centre. They were expecting the end of large-scale closures together with positive improvements for those remaining in the industry. They expected nothing less than the promised rejuvenation of the coalfield complete with modern industries, infrastructure, and social improvements to arrest the contraction of coal and to match the much heralded rhetoric of the "Speed up Sixties".¹⁶³ The NUMLA leadership and Labour had concocted a heady brew. They faced a tall order for the remainder of the 1960s.

¹ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1958. St.Helens and District Reporter 10 May 1958.

² NUMLA, ACM, 14 June 1958.

³ NUMLA, ACM, 14 June 1958. St.Helens and District Reporter 10 May 1958.

⁴ Chorley Guardian 8 January 1960.

⁵ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958. LRO, Deposit No NC.acc.7950 No 46: Deputy Chairman's Office 1958 Dec-1959 Jan: Closure of Maypole Colliery: Minutes of meeting between NCBNWD and NUMLA Executive Committee, Grand Hotel, Manchester, 19 December 1958.

⁶ LRO No NC.acc.7950 No 46: Minutes of meeting between NCBNWD and NUMLA Executive, Grand Hotel, Manchester, 19 December 1958.

⁷ LRO No NC.acc.7950 No 203: Letter: Joe Gormley to James Anderton re: Cleworth Hall closure 8 October 1962.

⁸ LRO, No NC. acc.7950 No 281: 1962 Oct: Area General Manager: East Lancashire Area: Report on Cleworth Hall Colliery with plans: Area General Manager East Lancashire Area to Joe Gormley 26 October 1962 following joint meeting of union representatives with area management.

⁹ PRO, File POWE 52/4: 1962-1963 Colliery Closures: NCB Papers: NCB Return for meeting with Minister of Power 27 January 1964: Colliery Closures 1963: NCBNWD: Cleworth Hall Colliery. NUMLA, ECM, 5 November 1962: North Western Division Colliery Closures 1963. Only a small proportion of Cleworth Hall miners went to Agecroft because it was close to its maximum manpower complement as it entered full production. The majority went to Nook, closed in 1965, with the rest spread between Astley Green and Mosley Common, closed in 1968 and 1970 respectively.

¹⁰ Ashworth, W, The History of the British Coal Industry: Vol 5: The Nationalised Industry, 1986, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 447-473. Reid, G.L., Allen, K, and Harris, D.J., The Nationalised Fuel Industries, 1973, Heineman Educational Books, p.80. Grimshaw, P.N., The Sunshine Miners: Opencast Coalmining in Britain, 1942-1992, 1992, British Coal Opencast, Mansfield, Notts, p. 24.

¹¹ Grimshaw, P.N., The Sunshine Miners, 1992, p.17.

¹² NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958: One of the proposed new sites was a huge development at Tan Pits in Wigan district.

¹³ NUMLA Annual Conference Report, 1958: Park Lane branch delegate.

¹⁴ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

¹⁵ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

¹⁶ NUMLA, ACM, 7 November 1958, 27 December 1958.

¹⁷ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

¹⁸ 1958 Coal Mines (Open Cast) Act, The Public General Acts 1958, 1959, Chapter 69, pp.895-1021, HMSO. Grimshaw, P.N., The Sunshine Miners, pp.17, 24. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 46: NCBNWD Deputy Chairman's Office 1958 Dec -1959 Jan: Closure of Maypole Colliery: NCB Output Plans for 1959: Consultation with Unions: NCB Press Office to Deputy Chairman 3 December 1958 following meeting between NCB and NUM. The 1958 Act was a development from the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 aimed at preventing the 'disamenity' created by open cast mining. It allowed the NCB to undertake open cast extraction only up to a limit of 25,000

tons at each site. Larger operations had to be licensed by the Minister of Power. A ministerial announcement in 1959 halted all open cast development above this limit. Although the legislation was primarily concerned with environmental issues, discussion between government, the NCB and NUM indicate that open cast restriction was an important bargaining chip in obtaining NUM acceptance of colliery closures.

¹⁹ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

²⁰ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1958.

²¹ Grimshaw, P.N., The Sunshine Miners, 1992,p.17. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 46: NCB Press Office to Deputy Chairman: NCB Output Plans for 1959: Consultation with Unions 3 December 1959. Open cast production accounted for 6 per cent of national coal output during the late 1950s. For the period 1957-1962 the percentage figure was higher in Lancashire where a number of new larger sites were operational or beginning production.

²² NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

²³ LRO, No NC. acc.7950 No 46: Report of joint meeting between the NCBNWD Board and NUMLA Executive Committee, Grand Hotel, Manchester, 22 December 1958: verbal and written reply of Bolton to Hall. NUMLA, ECM, 23 November 1959: Report of NUMNEC 19 November 1959: Report of NUM Special Conference 20 November 1959: Report on NUM Policy in the Present Situation. Grimshaw, P, The Sunshine Miners, 1992,p.17.The national agreement was for an initial cutback of 3 million tons from the total open cast output of 13-14 million tons annually. Open Cast operations were ended in Lancashire by 1962.

²⁴ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

²⁵ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958. NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1959.

²⁶ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1959.

²⁷ Wigan Observer 16 May 1958, 3 June 1958,18 July 1958,7 November 1958. NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

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- ²⁸ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1959. NUMLA, ACM, 5 December 1959.
- ²⁹ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1959.
- ³⁰ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1958.
- ³¹ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1958.
- ³² NUMLA, ACM, 7 November 1959: Report by Joe Gormley of NUMNEC Meeting 5 November 1959.
- ³³ NUMLA, ECM, 23 November 1959.
- ³⁴ NUMLA, ACM, 5 December 1959. NUMLA, Special Conference Report: 'Coal and the Clean Air Act', 4 February 1960. NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1960: Presidential Address by Leo Crossley.
- ³⁵ NUMLA, ACM, 5 December 1959.
- ³⁶ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.
- ³⁷ NUMLA, ECM, 3 February 1960.
- ³⁸ NUMLA, ACM, 26 March 1960.
- ³⁹ NUMLA, ACM, 5 December 1959.
- ⁴⁰ NUMLA, ACM, 26 March 1960. Denver, D.T., and Hands, H.T.G., 'Politics 1929-74' The History of Lancashire County Council 1889-1974, 1977, J.D.Marshall (ed), Martin Robertson, pp. 225-229.
- ⁴¹ PRO, File COAL 31/6: Chairman's Dept: Relations with Members of Parliament 1961 August - 1965 December: Brief prepared by NCB Deputy Chairman Derek Ezra to Lord Robens for meeting with Mining Group of MPs: Subject: Oil Competition: Eleven cases of national, local authority and industrial consumers: Two in North West: ROF Chorley and Lancaster University 1 March 1965.

⁴² PRO File POWE 37/555: Ministry of Fuel and Power: Report of the Departmental Working Group on Dual Fuelling 7 August 1959. NUMNWA, Week-End Conference Report, 7-8, December 1963: Address by Mr. James Anderton NCBNWD: Regional Marketing Statistics. The markets for Lancashire coal in 1962 were: Power Generation 35 per cent; General Industrial Use 27 per cent; Domestic Use 17 per cent; Gas Production 10 per cent; Coking 5 per cent; Miscellaneous (Public sector and Local Authority, Concessionary Coal and coal for collieries own use) 3 per cent; Railways 2.5 per cent; Northern Ireland and bunker coal 0.5 per cent.

⁴³ NUMNWA, Week - End Conference Report, 7-8 December 1963: Address by James Anderton, NCBNWD Chairman.

⁴⁴ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 254: 1958 Feb: Special Report: Improving Colliery Results: Unprofitable Collieries: Bedford, Maypole, Howe Bridge. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 264: Area 3 (St.Helens) Area General Manager: 1958 Feb: Report on the results of the following collieries: Clock Face, Cronton, Garswood Hall, Lea Green.

⁴⁵ NUMLA, ACM, 5 December 1959, 3 February 1960, 26 March 1960.

⁴⁶ Ogden, B.P., ' The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry: South Lancashire 1931 to 1971', Unpublished MA thesis, University of Keele, 1971, pp.57-58, 69: The three local authorities were Ashton-in-Makerfield, Newton-le-Willows, and Tyldesley.

⁴⁷ Wigan Observer 12 December 1959.

⁴⁸ Lancashire Evening Post 18 March 1958. The by-election at Wigan was caused by the death of the sitting MP Ronald Watkins Williams who died as a result of barbiturate poisoning due to taking sleeping tablets aggravated by alcohol. The Coroner rejected a suicide verdict but stated that the MP had been under strain due to parliamentary work pressures and looking after his 'disabled' wife.

⁴⁹ Wigan Observer 3 June 1958

⁵⁰ Wigan Observer 3 June 1958,

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- ⁵¹ NUMLA, ACM, 12 September 1959, 10 October 1959. Wigan Observer 25 September 1959, 2 October 1959.
- ⁵² Wigan Observer 25 September 1959, 2 October 1959.
- ⁵³ Wigan Observer 25 September 1959, 2 October 1959.
- ⁵⁴ Evening Post and Chronicle 5 October 1964, 6 October 1964, 25 March 1966.
- ⁵⁵ Evening Post and Chronicle 19 October 1964.
- ⁵⁶ Wigan Observer 9 October 1959. NUMLA, ACM, 14 June 1958, 25 September 1959, 10 October 1959. NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1959: Presidential Address: Leo Crossley.
- ⁵⁷ Wigan Observer 3 June 1958, 18 July 1958, 5 May 1959, 28 September 1959, 2 October 1959.
- ⁵⁸ Wigan Observer 3 June 1958, 18 July 1958, 5 May 1959, 28 September 1959, 2 October 1959.
- ⁵⁹ Pollitt, H, Plan for Coal, Pamphlet, CPGB, July 1947. Pollitt, H, The Miners' Next Step, Pamphlet, CPGB, September 1948. Pollitt, H, What Do Miners' Need, Pamphlet, CPGB, 1953. Kane, J, Spotlight on Coal, Pamphlet, CPGB, 1960. Taylor, S, Britain Needs Coal, Pamphlet CPGB, 1962. Manchester Guardian 20 February 1948. Wigan Observer 10 May 1955, 2 October 1959. Brown, D, 'The Labour Movement in Wigan 1874-1967', Unpublished MA thesis, University of Liverpool, 1969: Appendix. Arnold, J, A History of Britain's Parliamentary Constitution: Metropolitan Borough of Wigan, 1999, Published Typescript, Patricia Arnold, West Malling, Kent.

While the Communist Party offered a critique of fuel and coal industry policy its position on industrial change and its ramifications continued to prove contradictory and problematic as a result of the variety of positions it adopted. Pollitt had advocated modernisation but found dealing with its consequences more difficult. His writings of 1947, 1948 and 1953 reveal contradictions on how to deal with the outcomes of the modernisation of the industry. These contradictions were amplified as industrial change began in earnest from the late 1950s not helped by the party's climacteric during the mid-1950s. Party policy statements from the early 1960s show that these fundamental contradictions remained. For example, it called for mass mobilisation of coalfield communities against colliery closures yet also endorsed a policy of co-operation in industrial diversification

including re-training mineworkers in new skills. On the other hand, while Weaver supported mass mobilisation of the labour movement to oppose pit closures his solution to the consequences of contraction was the “state direction of industry to coalfield areas”- a re-iteration of Pollitt’s 1948 position. The party’s difficulties in formulating a coherent policy on industrial change were hindered by the highly secretive and ascetic character of its Industrial Section. This was chaired by Tom Rowlandson an engineering draughtsman from Wigan who had left the ILP for the CPGB to become party chairman in the Wigan area. Rowlandson contested the Wigan seat for the Communists at the 1948 by-election and again at the 1950,1951 and 1955 general elections.

⁶⁰ Craig, J., British Parliamentary Election Results 1885-1983 (3 vols), 1974 Macmillan, 1971 and 1983,Parliamentary Research Series. Arnold, J, A History of British Parliamentary Constitution: Metropolitan Borough of Wigan, 1999. Fitch substantially increased his predecessor’s majority from 32 per cent at the 1955 General Election to 44.5 per cent in the June 1958 by-election. This was Labour’s largest majority in Wigan to-date and only topped by Fitch’s 1966 general election majority of over 47 per cent.

⁶¹ NUMLA, ACM, 14 June 1958, 10 October 1959.

⁶² Wigan Observer 5 May 1959,28 September 1959,2 October 1959.

⁶³ Craig, J. B., ‘We Fight Pit Closures’, Labour Monthly June 1959. The Times 1 January 1959, 28 January 1959,4 February 1959, 6 February 1959,20 January 1962,22 January 1962, 29 January 1962. Francis, H, and Smith, D, The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century, 1980,Lawrence and Wishart, pp.451-452. During the early announcements of closures there was a good deal of protest, token industrial action, and demonstrations in the South Wales and Scottish coalfields. These events received widespread media coverage. However, in these traditionally ‘militant’ areas such episodes did not constituted anything like the mass mobilisation the left demanded. These instances were sporadic, restricted, and ephemeral. They often appeared more like emotional outpourings over the contraction of the industry. The South Wales NUM had vetoed active opposition to closures. The official national lobby, including the South Wales NUM, and led by Wil Paynter, met the Minister of Fuel and Power three weeks after the unofficial protest. It was a much more restrained affair than the January 8th demonstration.

⁶⁴ NUMLA, ACM, 24 January 1959.

⁶⁵ NUMLA, ACM, 24 January 1959.

⁶⁶ NUMLA, ACM, 24 January 1959, 27 February 1960, 26 March 1960.

⁶⁷ NUML A, ACM, 24 January 1959, 27 February 1960. NUMLA, ECM, 28 December 1959.

⁶⁸ NUMLA, ACM, 24 January 1959.

⁶⁹ NUMLA, ACM, 10 October 1959.

⁷⁰ LCMF, Annual Conference Report, 1928. NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1945. The only two instances of suspension or threat of suspension were in 1928 and 1945. In 1928 the limited inroads of 'Spencerism' in the Lancashire coalfield provoked a suspension threat against a number of branches. The expulsion of leading branch officials crushed the 'Spencerist' 'plot'. This action was seen as an unprecedented step even in these challenging circumstances. In 1945, Coppull branch was suspended and re-constituted because of its unilateral insistence on implementing a new system of wages payment against NUM and NUMLA resolutions.

⁷¹ NUMLA, ACM, 27 February 1960, 26 March 1960.

⁷² NUMLA, ACM, 27 February 1960, 26 March 1960.

⁷³ The challenges to the leadership came from a regular group of dissonant delegates with sporadic support from others. Such interventions at Annual and Area conferences were unwelcome. The conferences were intended to be highly structured events in which a pre-agreed set of resolutions was debated. Debarred resolutions, 'out of order' rulings and the threat of censure curtailed debate and maintained discipline among delegates.

⁷⁴ NUMLA, ACM, 9 July 1960.

⁷⁵ Chorley Guardian 23 November 1962: Lead article and editorial 'Time to Face Crisis'. Historical Directory of Trade Unions Vol 2, 1984, A. Marsh and W. Ryan (eds), Gower Publishing, Aldershot: Coal Mining, p. 210. The concerns were over job losses in cotton, coal, and railway engineering. There had been over 700 job losses announced in the area. Though members of Chorley Labour Party led the protest the local MP Clifford Kenyon was not involved. Ellerbeck

Miners' Association was the district association of miners in the Chorley area having superseded Coppull Miners' Association.

⁷⁶ Chorley Guardian 8 January 1960. Lancashire and Cheshire Colliery Tradesmen and Kindred Workers (National Union of Mineworkers Lancashire Tradesmen), Printed Minutes, Reports and Accounts: Executive Committee Minutes 1960: Minutes 15 March 1960: Brook Chambers, Leigh, Lancashire: Discussion of transfer problems at certain collieries including Welch Whittle, Bolton Metropolitan Archives and Local Studies, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton, Call No FT/11/23.

⁷⁷ Chorley Guardian 23 November 1962.

⁷⁸ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1945. NUMLA, ECM, 20 January 1945, 24 February 1945. NUMLA, Monthly Conference Report, 3 March 1945. NUMLA, Circular from Peter Pemberton General Secretary to all workpeople at Chisnall Hall and Welch Whittle Collieries February 1945. NUMNEC, Minutes, 8 March 1945. Colliery Guardian 26 January 1945, 9 February 1945. PRO, File 34/LAB/60: Ministry of Labour: Trade Disputes all Industries 1945: Coal Mining: Lancashire. Historical Directory of Trade Unions Vol 2, 1984, p. 210. Hill, J, 'Working Class Politics in Lancashire 1885-1906: A Regional Study in the Origins of the Labour Party', Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Keele, 1971' p.72.

⁷⁹ Chorley Guardian 23 November 1962: Report of demonstration by mineworkers in the Chorley area led by members of Chorley Labour Party and Ellerbeck Miners' Association. Address to mass rally by Alan Fitch and Joe Gormley, Chorley Ambulance Hall.

⁸⁰ Chorley Guardian 23 November 1962: Report of demonstration by mineworkers in the Chorley area led by members of Chorley Labour Party and Ellerbeck Miners' Association. Address to mass rally by Alan Fitch and Joe Gormley, Chorley Ambulance Hall. Chorley Guardian 2 September 1965. LRO, NC.acc.7950 No 221: Five and Ten Year Forward Planning Estimates: Individual Collieries: Proposals 30 March 1962, 1963 Jan: National Plan: Sept 1963 Review. Although Ellerbeck colliery had not been scheduled for closure in 1959 it was a 'borderline' case. It was first considered in 1962 under the 'Review of the Revised Plan' with a limited life to 1966 when proven reserves would have been exhausted. The pit was on a 'short-life' because according to the divisional board's estimations both proven and unproven reserves suffered from geological problems and water ingress. There was therefore never any question of the NUMLA negotiating with the divisional board over new reserves at Ellerbeck as Gormley suggested. The key figure in arguing for an extension of the colliery's life, and winning a three year

reprieve, was Arthur Bond the NCBNWD Assistant General Manager West Lancashire (Wigan Sub-Area) not Joe Gormley. Arguments about the colliery's relatively better performance were more compelling in winning a reprieve than those based on exploitation of new reserves.

⁸¹ Chorley Guardian 23 November 1962, 2 September 1965, 31 March 1967. Ellerbeck colliery was closed in August 1965 under the ACP though it was more accurately a closure under the 'Review of the Revised Plan' which received a long reprieve. Chisnall Hall colliery closed in March 1967 under the ACP.

⁸² There were four Special Conferences during the early 1960s. The first three concerned 'special' themes: 'Coal and the Clean Air Act' 4 February 1960; 'Special Conference of Craftsmen's Representatives' 18 March 1961; 'Special Conference on Work Assessment' 17 March 1962. Although the general weekend conferences had been used in other NUM areas this type of forum was not used in Lancashire until 1963. The conference format was typically one in which a guest speaker(s) made an address, followed by a question and answer session and an open forum. Speakers were typically from the Coal Board, divisional board, NUM, the Labour Party and occasionally from academia and the scientific community.

⁸³ NUMNWA, Report of Week-End Conference, 7-8 December 1963: Opening Statement by Conference Chairman Jim Hammond.

⁸⁴ NUMNWA, Report of Week-End Conference, 7-8 December 1963: Statement by Jim Hammond.

⁸⁵ NUMNWA, Report of Week-End Conference, 7-8 December 1963.

⁸⁶ NUMNWA, Report of Week-End Conference, 7-8 December 1963: Addresses by Wil Paynter, James Anderton and Joe Gormley: Questions and Answers: Open Session;

⁸⁷ NUMNWA, Report of Week-End Conference, 7-8 December 1963: Address by Wil Paynter: Questions and Answers: Open Discussion.

⁸⁸ NUMLA, ACM, 27 December 1958.

⁸⁹ NUMNWA, Report of Week-End Conference, 7-8 December 1963.

⁹⁰ NUMNWA, Report of Week-End Conference, 7-8 December 1963: Address by Wil Paynter: Questions and Answers: Open Discussion.

⁹¹ NUMNWA, ACM, 24 April 1965. PRO, File LAB 345/87: Trade Disputes: Coal Mining: North West Region: Entry Bradford Colliery 8 March 1965-12 March 1965: The dispute at Bradford colliery affected half the workforce over four days.

⁹² NUMNWA, Report of Week-End Conference, 7-8 December 1963: Address by Wil Paynter: Questions and Answers: Open Discussion. One of the more intriguing aspects of this conference was both Hammond and Paynter hinting that there might be further colliery closures under a Labour government. This was not taken up in subsequent debate. It is not clear from where Paynter obtained this information though he was clearly attempting to appraise opinion. If there was some advanced knowledge then it either came from sources inside the Labour Party or more likely from Lord Robens who was engaged in persuading the Conservative government not to proceed with an acceleration of the closure programme at this time.

⁹³ The term 'industrial diversification' is preferred here rather than 'industrial regeneration'. Although the term 'regeneration' was beginning to enter the lexicon of debate during the 1960s, 'diversification' is more appropriate to the historical period involved. The notion of 'diversification' arose directly from the desire of policy makers from as far back as the 1930s to break the cycle of dependency of industrial specialisation in the 'depressed' or 'development' areas. The emphasis of policy during the 1950s and 1960s was still very much within this framework. The term regeneration has a more recent chronological connotation associated with the needs of such areas after long periods of economic contraction. Again, the word 'industrial' is preferred because, although the growth of the tertiary or service sector was increasingly part of policy estimations, the focus was still on attracting manufacturing industry.

⁹⁴ NUMLA, ACM, 12 September 1959.

⁹⁵ NUM, Annual Conference Report, 1965: Joe Gormley speaking on behalf of the NUMNEC.

⁹⁶ NUMNWA, ACM, 15 August 1964: During one of the debates on multi-shift Gormley indicated that his 'home' Bold colliery was haemorrhaging some of its best mineworkers to the new jobs outside of coal. According to Gormley they were leaving for less money elsewhere rather than work for double payment on shiftwork at Bold. Gormley's point was two-fold. Firstly, the more general one that the progress of modernisation was being impeded by workers leaving for more attractive employment outside the industry. Secondly, multi-shift payments would have to be more attractive to retain them.

⁹⁷ Muller W.D. The 'Kept Men'? The First Century of Trade Union Representation in the British House of Commons 1874-1975 , 1977, Harvester Press Ltd, Sussex, pp.43-44,111. Lancashire Evening Post 13 November 1970. Prior to Alan Fitch holding the chairmanship of the Mining Group of Labour MPs, Tom Brown at Ince, held the post. His predecessor, Gordon McDonald, had held the chairmanship during the 1930s.

⁹⁸ Wigan Observer 7 November 1958: Report on Tom Brown's participation in the Queen's Speech Debate and interview regarding industrial change in the 'Wigan coalfield'. Tom Brown announced during the early 1960s that he would be standing down at the next General Election.

⁹⁹ For example, Earnest Thornton, MP for Farnworth had primary interests in the textile industry; Les Spriggs, MP for St.Helens, in railways and transport; and Harold Boardman, MP for Leigh, in retailing and distribution though the decline of textiles in his constituency was a concern for him too.

¹⁰⁰ Wigan Observer 10 April 1959, 22 May 1959. H.J.Heinz: Factory Opening Literature: List of Guests and Table Numbers: Opening of Kitt Green Factory: 21 May 1959, Brochure: 'Heinz: Kitt Green: The Largest Food Factory in the Commonwealth', Wigan Heritage Services, The History Shop, Wigan, File No WHD 9005 H4. The factory was the largest food processing plant in the Commonwealth and Europe at the time. At peak production it was expected to employ over 3,000 workers - the largest industrial single development in the coalfield during the post-war period. The 400 guests at the opening by the Lord Chancellor included the two NUMLA-sponsored MPs: Brown and Fitch, scores of NUMLA branch officials and figures from all the Labour controlled local authorities in the coalfield, many with NUMLA connections.

¹⁰¹ LRO, No 7950 No 5: NCBNWD: Production Department: Revision of National Plan 1959: Area and Divisional Appreciations: Appendix 4. LRO, No 7950 No 203: Town Clerk Burnley to Production Manager NCBNWD No 4 (Burnley) Area following correspondence with Colonel Bolton during 1960, 5 September 1963 and reply 6 September 1963. Aside from the attempted intervention by Abram UDC during the Maypole closure, referred to in the previous chapter, the only significant interventions by local authorities were by Oldham and Burnley Councils. During the 1950s the closures of collieries in the Manchester district at Oak, Moston and Wood Park involved representations from Oldham council, Oldham Trades Council, the local Labour Party and the Labour MP for Oldham. During the late 1950s and early 1960s Burnley Council became

involved in making similar representations over closures and potential closures in North East Lancashire fearing the end of the industry in that part of Lancashire.

¹⁰² Wigan Observer 17 April 1959: One typical example was concern expressed by Ashton-in-Makerfield UDC over its association with 'dying industries' like coal and cotton. It looked to the future by making sites available for new industrial development in conjunction with Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association (LAMIDA).

¹⁰³ Wigan Observer 17 October 1958: Metal Box Ltd initially opened a factory at Westhoughton. Later, a second factory was built at Hindley. The plants supplied cans for the Heinz processing plant. The Metal Box facilities represented the most advanced can-making factories in Europe at the time.

¹⁰⁴ Swinton and Pendlebury Journal 12 December 1962, 19 December 1962.

¹⁰⁵ Hansard Vol 612 1959-60 House of Commons: Oral Answer to questions 2 November 1959: Fitch to Edward Heath, Minister of Labour re: unemployment in Wigan and subsequent debate between Fitch and Lee for Labour and Heath and Nabarro for the Conservatives. Hansard Vol 629: House of Commons: Oral answers to questions 10 November 1960 Tom Brown to Reginald Maudling, President of the Board of Trade re: Aston-in-Makerfield, Ince-in-Makerfield and Abram closure of deep mining, unemployment and future employment prospects. Hansard Vol 673: 1962-63 House of Commons Oral answer to questions 13 March 1963 Fitch to William Whitelaw, Minister of Labour re: unemployment in the Wigan area. Hansard Vol 677: 1962-63 House of Commons Oral answer to questions 16 May 1963 Fitch to President of Board of Trade re: bringing new industries to the Wigan area. Hansard 1963-64 Col 1310: House of Commons Oral answers to questions 6 February 1964 Fitch to Edward Heath, Secretary of State for Industry, Trade and Regional Development re: development of industry and economic and planning problems in the North West.

¹⁰⁶ NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1963: Resolution 38: Bold branch: The Situation in the Lancashire Area. Bold's resolution was also linked to growing calls for development status for the coalfield. Evening Post and Chronicle 23 September 1964: Tom Price, MP for Westhoughton: Unemployment in the Hindley Area, 26 September 1964: Harold Boardman, MP for Leigh: election address.

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- ¹⁰⁷ Wigan Observer 6 February 1970, 25 November 1982. Evening Post and Chronicle 13 May 1983.
- ¹⁰⁸ Evening Post and Chronicle 7 October 1964.
- ¹⁰⁹ Wigan Observer 25 October 1985: Report of Memorial Service: Addresses following the death of Alan Fitch: Address by Reverend Malcolm Forrest Rector of Wigan.
- ¹¹⁰ NUM, Annual Conference Report, 1965: Address by Joe Gormley on behalf of the NUMNEC.
- ¹¹¹ Baldwin, G.B., Beyond Nationalisation: The Labor Problems of British Coal, 1955, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, pp.188-191, 202: Surveys by G. Thomas 'Men and Mining', The Social Survey, Central Office of Information, N.S. 113, August 1948 and 'The Recruitment of Boys to the Mining': An enquiry carried out in six coalfields for the Directorate of Recruitment', Ministry of Fuel and Power and NCB, August-October 1946, The Social Survey, N.S. 77/2/3, April 1947. Lofthouse, N., Goals Galore, 1954, Stanley Paul and Co Ltd, p.23.
- ¹¹² Robertson, A.J., The Bleak Midwinter 1947, 1987, Manchester University Press, Manchester, *passim*. Fishman, N., 'Coal; Owned and Managed on Behalf of the People' in Labour's High Noon: The Government and the Economy, 1945-1951, 1993, Jim Fyrth (ed), Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 61-63, 64-66.
- ¹¹³ PRO, File POWE 37/435: 1955-1962: Demands for labour from other industries in areas with shortages of miners: Ministry of Fuel and Power to Board of Trade 12 September 1955, Board of Trade Report: Development and Unemployment Areas to which preference should be shown in the placing of contracts: 68 localities within the Lancashire coalfield with preferences for government contracts, Ministry of Fuel and Power to Ministry of Supply 9 November, Notes of discussions between Ministry of Fuel and Power, Ministry of Supply, Ministry of Labour and Board of Trade 31 October 1955: Restrictions on Industrial Development Certificates, Board of Trade Note: Liaison with Ministry of Fuel and Power 5 March 1956.
- ¹¹⁴ PRO, Files POWE 37/239 and 240: Quarterly Reports on Manpower Recruitment and Wastage by Age Groups 1955-1962: NCB: General Statements of Manpower, Recruitment and Wastage by Age Group 1953-1961. File POWE 37/241: NCB: Manpower: Juveniles 1950-1961: Report: Publicity on need to recruit boys 8 December 1950, National Consultative Committee: Manpower

Committee: Report to the Council 6 December 1950, Ministry of Fuel and Power: Report: Recruitment of Boys for the Mines 17 January 1951, Ministry of Fuel and Power: Report: Measures to Increase the Recruitment of Juveniles 31 January 1951, Press Cuttings File Ministry of Fuel and Power 1952. File POWE 37/436: 1955-1956 Manpower: Long-term Estimates: NCB to Ministry of Fuel and Power 9 November 1955, Ministry of Labour and National Service to Ministry of Fuel and Power: Manpower Projections for NCBNWD 15 December 1955, Ministry of Fuel and Power: Report: Revision of National Plan: Manpower Availability 13 January 1956. The so-called ladder plan established during the early 1950s gave pit lads the opportunity to study and train for a professional career in the coal industry in which they followed a clear career progression.

¹¹⁵ PRO, Files POWE 37/239 and 240: Ministry of Fuel and Power: Analysis and Report on Figures for the Period 1949-1955 17 December 1954.

¹¹⁶ Smith, C.S., 'Planned Transfer of Labour: with Special Reference to the Coal Industry', Unpublished PhD thesis, Bedford College, University of London, 1960, pp.30-32, 71,78-79,90-91,96-103,109-113,121-127,131-139: Smith's survey of working and social life for transferees during the 1950s in the North Staffordshire coalfield makes for disconcerting reading. The bulk of the 9,000 Inter-Divisional Transferees to Yorkshire and the Midlands came from central Scotland and west Durham. Wignall, E.H., 'The Migrant Miners' New Society 29 July 1963. Bugler, J, 'The Geordies come to Yorkshire' New Society 29 July 1963.

¹¹⁷ PRO, File 37/436: Ministry of Fuel and Power: Report: Revision of National Plan: Manpower Availability 13 January 1956: Note on coalfield's manpower situation following advice from the Ministry of Labour and National Service. Of the eleven coalfields examined five were officially designated areas of "no-deficiency" for manpower while three, including Lancashire, were designated 'borderline'. "Deficiency" areas including both expanding coalfields: Yorkshire and the West Midlands and a 'declining' coalfield: South Wales.

¹¹⁸ Baldwin, G.B., Beyond Nationalisation, 1955, pp.199-207.

¹¹⁹ PRO, Files POWE 37/239 and 240: NCB: Recruitment and Wastage by areas for the years ending 1953-1961: NCBNWD. Census of England and Wales, 1961, HMSO.

¹²⁰ Wigan Observer 21 January 1956.

¹²¹ Winterbottom, A, 'Employment of Juveniles in Lancashire', The Manchester School, Vol III, No 1, 1932, pp. 42-43: Joint survey report by Lancashire County Council and Manchester University detailing chronic employment problems and unemployment among school leavers in specific locations in the central coalfield areas of South Lancashire. Humphries, J.M. 'Economic Change and Its Effect in Wigan and District', Chapter 111 Appendix 2: Unemployment, Unpublished MA dissertation Manchester Polytechnic, 1986. Ministry of Labour Gazette, Monthly Unemployment Figures 1923-1931, Wigan Employment Exchange. Census of England and Wales, 1921. Ministry of Fuel and Power; Regional Survey Report: North West, 1945, HMSO: Recruitment Table, p.57. Ogden B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry', 1971, abstract, pp. 101-104, Table 7-1.

¹²² PRO, Files POWE 37/239 and 240: Recruitment and Wastage by Areas 1953-1961: NCBNWD.

¹²³ Wisewell Papers: Chronological History of Haydock: Old Newspapers and News: Haydock Gala 29 August 1952: Catalogue No M/W/93: St. Helens Metropolitan Archives and Local Studies, Gamble Institute, Victoria Square, St. Helens. John, A.V., By the Sweat of their Brow: Woman Workers at Victorian Coal Mines, 1980, Croom Helm Ltd, p.229. The pit brow lasses were a particular feature of the Lancashire coalfield. They were women and girls who worked on the surface cleaning, sorting and grading coal. Modernisation saw mechanisation of these tasks such that by the 1960s the pit brow lasses had all but disappeared.

¹²⁴ Manchester Evening Chronicle 7 March 1949.

¹²⁵ Bolton Evening News 20 December 1961: The Pretoria colliery disaster was the third worst in British coal mining history and the worst in the history of the Lancashire coalfield. 346 men and boys died in an explosion at the colliery in Westhoughton in 1911. It was an event etched on the folk memory of the coalfield.

¹²⁶ Wigan Observer 17 August 1959: For example, Platt Bridge Miners' Welfare Institute was only opened as a new facility for miners in the Summer of 1956 to replace existing inadequate facilities at Mains, Ince Moss and Maypole collieries. The new institute was closed only three years later and demolished shortly afterwards.

¹²⁷ Ashton and Haydock Reporter 13 June 1964. NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1964. The attendance in 1964 was estimated at 5,000 with 12 colliery bands. This gives some

measure of the importance of the industry in Lancashire even by the mid-1960s. However, it should be noted that this attendance represented 50 collieries in Lancashire. There was therefore a heavy presence from families and groups representing collieries which had closed but retained some attachment to the industry. The crowds were also swelled in election year by the appearance of leading figures in the labour movement and coal industry: Harold Wilson, Lord Robens and Wil Paynter were all guests of honour in 1964.

¹²⁸ "A Sort of University": The Story of Wigan College of Technology, 1983, Pamphlet, Wigantech Publications, Wigan, pp.10-13.

¹²⁹ Bolton Evening News 16 November 1959.

¹³⁰ St.Helens and District Reporter 31 May 1958.

¹³¹ Ashton and Haydock Reporter 4 April 1964.

¹³² Manchester Evening News 25 November 1965: The situation inside the new £14 million showpiece Parkside colliery was described as "chaotic" as a result of inadequate surface and distribution facilities, shortages of supplies and poor coal quality holding back production to 60 per cent of expected capacity. PRO, Files LAB/ 34/84-34/87,34/89-90,34/92,94,96,98,99: Ministry of Labour: Labour Disputes: Coal Mining: NCBNWD: Agecroft Colliery: 1962-1972 inclusive: Agecroft had its share of problems with power loading teams, though its industrial relations record was exemplary.

¹³³ Coal News: North Western Edition and Pit Prop October 1961, January 1962, February 1962, and June 1962.

¹³⁴ PRO, Files LAB/34/84-34/87,34/89-90,34/92,94,96,98,99: Ministry of Labour: Labour Disputes: Coal Mining: NCBNWD: Agecroft Colliery: 1962-1972:During this period Agecroft experienced only 3 disputes of more than 100 working days lost with 8 more under 100 working days lost. Parkside suffered only 4 disputes of more than 100 working days lost with no disputes of less than 100 working day lost.

¹³⁵ Coal News: North Western Edition and Pit Prop June 1962. Ashton and Haydock Reporter 28 March 1964.

¹³⁶ Ashton and Haydock Reporter 28 March 1964.

¹³⁷ LRO, No 7950 No 8: Report: Individual Collieries: Sandhole: January 1961.

¹³⁸ The Sandhole grouping was broken up. Some went to the dead end that was Brackley, due for imminent closure, including Ted Woolley who briefly held the post of branch secretary and NUMLA executive representative before moving to Mosley Common when Brackley closed in 1964. Others, including Joe Clarke, were transferred to Mosley Common after a short spell at Brackley. Clarke spent the remainder of his career in the industry until 1968 when Mosley Common was closed. He remained 'active' but had been greatly weakened by the Sandhole affair and was largely sidelined by events at Mosley Common.

¹³⁹ Coal News: North Western Edition October 1965. NCB Annual Report and Accounts, 1965, 1966, HMSO.

¹⁴⁰ Bolton Evening News 16 November 1959, 18 October 1960. PRO File COAL 30/84: NCBNWD to NCB HQ 14 November 1958: List 1: Deane Colliery. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 47: Reply to NCBHQ Secretary's circular by NCBNWD Secretary's Department: Deane Colliery 14 November 1959.

¹⁴¹ Bolton Evening News 16 November 1959, 18 October 1960. PRO, File COAL 30/84: NCBNWD to NCBHQ 14 November 1958: List 1: Deane Colliery. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 47: Reply to NCBHQ Secretary's circular by NCBNWD Secretary's Department: Deane Colliery 14 November 1959. Closure was announced a year ahead of the pit ceasing production. Because of this the workforce had ample time in which to make alternative arrangements including leaving the industry. The NCB took all those men who wanted to transfer on tours of likely receiving pits though this did not imply that they had a free choice in deciding their placement.

¹⁴² Salt, J, 'A Consideration of Some Post-War Unemployment Problems in the Merseyside and Manchester Conurbations', Unpublished PhD, University of Liverpool, 1967, p. 284.

¹⁴³ Swinton and Pendlebury Journal 8 November 1961.

¹⁴⁴ Advertisements were carried on a regular basis for adult re-entrants to the Lancashire coal industry in the coalfield press throughout the 1960s. The divisional board's slogan of the early

1960s: "A Real Man's Job for Lancashire Men" did not quite have the right appeal for the new decade. It was quickly replaced by more suitably modern and relevant slogans for a changing industry: "Top Training-Top Pay in Mining Today" or later: "A Skilled Job in Mining" were typical.

¹⁴⁵ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 240: 1964: NCBNWD Staff Dept: Manpower: Residential Analysis of Mineworkers: NCB Manpower Branch: NCBNWD: Comments on Analysis 7 April 1964. Wynn, H.W., A Plan for the Miners, Pamphlet, Joint Discussion and Study Group between a group of academics and Derbyshire NUM, 20 March 1964, Chesterfield, W.C.E.Gregory/Socialist Collection, Lancaster University Library, Catalogue No 9 UDJeaQ, p.3. Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry', 1971,pp. 57-58.

¹⁴⁶ Lancashire and Cheshire Colliery Tradesmen and Kindred Workers (NUM Lancashire Tradesmen): Annual Conference Minutes and Proceedings, 1960, Kimberley Hotel, New South Promenade Blackpool: Presidential Address: Colliery Closures 6-7 May 1960. Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry', p.57-58. The industry was rapidly moving away from the use of timber roof supports to use steel joists particularly in the new and re-constructed collieries, ending the need for carpentry skills.

¹⁴⁷ Smith, C.S., 'Planned Transfer of Labour: with Special Reference to the Coal Industry', 1960,p. 99.

¹⁴⁸ Wynn, H.W., A Plan for the Miners, 1964,p.9.

¹⁴⁹ A Century of Struggle: Britain's Miners in Pictures 1889-1989, 1989, NUM, Sheffield, p. 84.

¹⁵⁰ Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry', 1971,Abstract and pp. 19, 39. Benson, J, British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History, 1989,Longman,pp.82-85,114,190. Gilbert, D, 'Imagined Communities and Mining Communities', Labour History Review, Vol 60 Part 2,1995,p.52. Barrow, W.T., 'Wigan: Industrial Development', Unpublished BA (Hons) dissertation, University of Liverpool, 1935,p. 101. Colliery Guardian 25 July 1919,18 June 1921, 15 July 1921. Coal Industry Commission, Vol II Reports and Minutes of Evidence on the Second Stage of the Inquiry, May 1919,Command Paper 360, Minutes of Evidence, Mrs M.E.Hart, wife of a Wigan miner and social worker, Col 24, 333, 1919,HMSO. Although no accurate figures are available from before the

Second World War it has been estimated that over 30 per cent of Lancashire miners travelled more than a couple of miles to the pit. The majority travelled from the major towns of the coalfield into the districts. One of the biggest daily exoduses took place out of Wigan into the surrounding 'Wigan coalfield' and increasingly from the declining Wigan district to the expanding St.Helens district and to a much lesser extent to the Manchester district. Certainly, the 'commuting miner' was not unique to the Lancashire coalfield with both Staffordshire and South Yorkshire experiencing this phenomenon. As Gilbert notes, the 'commuting miner' has been one of the neglected areas of coal industry historiography.

¹⁵¹ Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry', 1971,pp.39,44-48,101,Figure 17.

¹⁵² Stretch, E.K., The South Lancashire Tramways Company Ltd. 1900-1958, 1972, Manchester Transport Museum Society,Rochdale,pp.121-122. Colliery Guardian 19 September 1919. Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry', 1971',pp.39,55. Wigan Observer 16 January 1959,3 February 1959, 29 May 1959. The tramway system in South Lancashire provided the 'commuting' miner with the most reliable and comprehensive network for travelling to the pit during the early twentieth century. The tramway's development was partly propelled by the needs of the industry in South Lancashire. It was dismantled during the 1950s. The railway system in the coalfield was dismantled post-Beeching. However, it never provided the intricate network offered by the tramway system.

¹⁵³ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 208: NCBNWD Mining Department: 1961-1967: Mosley Common JIC: Report: Mining Sub-Committee 22 November 1961,29 November 1961, 16 December 1961. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 220:1959: Review of Mosley Common Colliery: Report by Industrial Relations Trainee 1 March 1960. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 280: 1961: Appreciation of current position and future prospects of Mosley Common Colliery: Divisional Report: Section II: Mosley Common Industrial Relations March 1961.

¹⁵⁴ Griffiths, I.L., 'Commuting in the Coalfields', Town and Country Planning, June 1962,pp.247-250.

¹⁵⁵ Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry', p. 55.

¹⁵⁶ Wynn, H.W., A Plan for the Miners, 1964,p.3: One of the most significant changes to the labour process was the introduction of power loading, which *inter alia* “transformed the content of the job”, “disrupted the traditional job cycle” and “altered the proportion of labour in the different grades”. For many, power loading meant higher earnings, for others, including a large proportion of older experienced miners, it was like multi-shift - a change too far.

¹⁵⁷ Ogden, B.P., ‘The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry’, Tables 4-4 and 4-6: Ogden’s study of ‘wastage’ by age analysed the NCB statistics of seven Lancashire collieries covering 1,500 mineworkers. The highest level of ‘wastage’ was in the 61-65 and over 65 age group. Of the rest, the age groups with the highest ‘wastage’ levels were, in equal measure, in the 21-25,31-35 and 41-45 age groups. Ogden’s study also analysed “reason for leaving” at five Lancashire collieries: covering 811 mineworkers between July 1962 and July 1963. Of these 265 left for reasons other than the following: incapacity retirement, ill-health, emigration, domestic reasons, leaving district, joining HM forces, transfer to another colliery, retired, deceased or dismissed. Of the 265 nearly 50 per cent gave unspecified reasons for leaving such as dissatisfied, unsettled, cannot manage work, want change, dislike mining. Of the remainder, 16 per cent stated that they had left for a job in another industry and 12 per cent as having obtained a better position. The remaining 22 per cent gave the leading mono-causal reasons as travel: 6 per cent, wages too low: 6 per cent, shiftwork: 3 per cent, poor prospects: 3 per cent and poor conditions: 3 per cent. One of the traditional explanations of ‘wastage’ by ‘middle-career’ miners has been that as they get older their earning capacity falls and as a result they come off the ‘face’. This study suggests there were more complex sources of dissatisfaction emanating from the process of industrial change. Ogden found relatively low levels of ‘wastage’ at the two new collieries of Agecroft and Parkside but high levels of ‘dissatisfaction’ at the re-constructed collieries which had received transferees. Only one of the collieries analysed was not a new colliery or a major re-construction.

¹⁵⁸ Manchester Guardian 12 November 1962.

¹⁵⁹ Ogden, B.P., ‘The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry’, p.101.

¹⁶⁰ Chorley Guardian 2 September 1965.

¹⁶¹ MFGB, Special Conference Meeting Report, 28 December 1933: National Meeting for the Regulation of Wages. LRO, No NCLc 2/4: Lancashire and Cheshire Coal Association, various correspondence with colliery companies and trade unions: letters to the Association from Peter

Pemberton, LCMF, General Secretary 22 December 1930 regarding hours of work at certain collieries. Jones, J.A., 'The Coal Industry: Part 1', The Accountant, Vol LXXVIII, 24 April 1928. This reaction was not unique to this particular period or to the Lancashire coalfield. 'Survivability' was a feature present during earlier periods of rationalisation. For example, during severe rationalisation in Lancashire in the inter-war period this reaction was most noticeable. Differences between miners and colliery owners were quickly put aside when a pit was in trouble. Under private ownership 'survivability' was also related to the economics of mining. There was no abandonment value in a private coal mine so it was in everybody's interests to ensure it survived.

¹⁶² Denton Times 30 January 1968: Joe Gormley issued this as clear advice to workers at Bradford colliery when they sought his assistance over a closure threat. Gormley often repeated this advice, mantra like, at other collieries facing a critical future, such as Mosley Common.

¹⁶³ Evening Post and Chronicle 15 September 1964: These 'catchy' phrases and slogans were in common use by Labour in the coalfield during the 1964 General Election. "Speed up Sixties" was a phrase used by Fred Lee at Newton-in-Makerfield to capture the spirit of modernisation both in the coal industry in Lancashire and in new scientific and technological based industrial development he believed would transform older industrial areas like Lancashire.

CHAPTER SIX

REACTION AND RESPONSE TO INDUSTRIAL CHANGE IN THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD: THE ACCELERATED COLLIERY CLOSURE PROGRAMME 1965-1972

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the second half of the 1960s which marked a complete change in the character of debate over industrial change in the Lancashire coalfield. Prior to 1965 coal industry rationalisation was seen as part of the long awaited modernisation of the industry. Post-1965 was different. Suddenly and dramatically the industry was faced with a new Labour Government with explicit ideas on the future of fuel and coal. Labour initiated a fuel policy for the first time linked to national economic planning. This brought two realisations for coal. Firstly, although rationalisation had produced some stabilisation for the industry, its financial situation was a source of concern to Government. Secondly, Labour in opposition had formulated its plans for economic modernisation in which it was believed the UK had fallen behind its competitors in economic performance. The outcome was a relegation of coal in favour of the new fuels. This brought a more rigorous programme of colliery closures including a number of closures not scheduled at the time of the original ACP announcement in 1965. Moreover, the ACP reached into areas of the coalfield previously largely unaffected by rationalisation up to 1965. This chapter will assess the reaction of the NUMNWA to these developments given its high expectations of a Labour Government.

6.2 'NEW REALISM': LABOUR'S FUEL POLICY AND FURTHER COAL CONTRACTION IN THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD

The announcement of further contraction in November 1965 following the Fuel White Paper was greeted in Lancashire with the gravest of concern. The NUMNWA called a weekend conference as an emergency response.¹ The profile of those invited to speak indicated the level of concern. Two Labour cabinet ministers: Lee, at Power, and Brown, at Economic Affairs, attended as keynote speakers. Both had been closely involved with the new moves on fuel and the ACP. In addition, Lord Robens, Sid Ford, and two NUMNWA-sponsored MPs, Fitch and McGuire (the new MP for Ince), completed the panjandrum. Lee indicated that his main concern was the financial state of the industry. He re-iterated that there was no possibility of a subsidy. He asked participants to be "realistic" about coal's prospects in a 'multi-fuel' economy. Lee raised anxieties still further amongst Lancashire miners when he told them that every colliery in Lancashire was expected to achieve profitability. Failure to do so would result in closure. This put the spotlight directly on many re-constructed collieries where it had been assumed there would be a long-term future.²

George Brown concentrated on the other aspect of Labour's strategy for coal: the modernisation of the economy and national planning. Brown told them:

"We are falling behind in a highly competitive world because we have been failing to modernise or change as fast as we should, and each industry must be required to examine the consequences of a fast moving world for itself".³

Brown extolled the benefits of the 'new' fuels and national planning, showing how coal fitted within the framework of the national plan. Both men pledged to implement measures to prevent social hardship resulting from further contraction. Participants thus found themselves battered by a double assault of economic realism and modernity.⁴

The weekend conferences were devised to 'educate' the 'rank-and-file' in an informal setting. In practice they became arenas for expressions of dissent. Joe Ryan caused uproar by insulting Brown. He called Brown "a desiccated calculating machine" followed by a

clash during debate.⁵ He argued that under the baldly chilling figures that Brown spouted were miner's lives and those of their families and communities. Ryan believed the Government should support the coal industry both morally and financially rather than helping the "capitalist-backed oil industry". The Brown-Ryan clash upstaged the conference and set the scene for debate over further contraction during the late 1960s.⁶

Ryan's assertions enjoyed a wide measure of support not exclusively from the regular band of 'militants'. The 1965 announcement caused panic throughout the coalfield. Even the Parkside participant at the 1965 conference noted he would not find it easy to "pacify the men" with the Government's proposals. Others questioned the Government's commitment to the industry because it rejected a subsidy for coal but subsidised other sectors of the economy. This heightened suspicions that coal was being 'dumped'. Furthermore, participants were stung by Brown's assertion that miners had an "intuitive resistance to change". Participants argued that 'change' was fine for those implementing it, but it was quite a different matter for those on the receiving end. As Weaver pointedly told Brown, while Lancashire had absorbed a great deal of modernisation over a long period, the new fuel policy and ACP under Labour was a separate issue. It amounted to the substitution of oil for coal. He argued that no mineworker would readily accept this because it meant pits which had not been "previously scheduled" would now close. With the full backing of participants he asked the Government to re-consider its policy. Many could not accept that this was Labour policy, believing instead that the Government had been influenced by skewed advice.⁷

Both Government ministers rejected these interventions. Lee in particular was adamant the Government would stand firm in the face of opposition. He demanded participants "get away from sloganising and face reality". According to Lee there was no question of coal being 'dumped' by the Government or of having "sold out" to the oil companies. It was a case of having to deal with the "realities facing the coal industry as Labour had found them in office".⁸ Early reaction to Labour's policy was one of universal condemnation from branch officials and 'rank-and-file', uniting a variety of opinion and political affiliation. The Government had explained its policy directly to Lancashire miners. It indicated that it would be pressing ahead regardless. The missing element from these early discussions was the attitude of the NUMNWA leadership and Labour in the coalfield.

There was no substantive reaction from the NUMNWA leadership or Labour in the coalfield until 1966. One reason was the intrusion of the general election in February 1966 when minds were concentrated on securing a Labour victory with an increased majority. One indication of leadership opinion came in early 1966 just before the election. Gormley rejected a request by a number of NUMNWA branches - including many not usually associated with militant action - to send a delegation to an unofficial national lobby against Government policy in London on the grounds that it represented a "challenge to the Government". This was a strong hint that the leadership would be standing by Labour on fuel.⁹ Thereafter, the reaction of the NUMNWA leadership and Labour in the coalfield was to offer a limited critique of policy combined with a view that although Labour was wrong, it was preferable to the Tories. It was argued that the NUMNWA should 'fight for coal' within the new framework. To reinforce what amounted to tacit acceptance of fuel policy and further contraction it was felt that alleviation of economic and social hardship was better overseen by a Labour Government.¹⁰

The first indication of this view came in May 1966 when Hammond, as president, delivered the leadership's verdict. Hammond attacked Labour's fuel and further contraction policy. He singled out Labour's "pragmatism", broken promises and sell-out to capitalist oil interests. He noted that the Tories "would not have dared to introduce such a policy that had outraged even moderate opinion in Lancashire". So much for the rhetoric. Hammond nevertheless signalled it would be business as usual from the NUMNWA leadership. While he noted that Government was stretching Lancashire miners' loyalty to breaking point there was absolutely no danger of this loyalty breaking. Rather, as Hammond noted, they would be "fighting for our industry" by working with the Government to ensure it was represented in new fuel policy. Moreover, Hammond predicted that coal would remain "very sizeable" within the new regime thus confirming the leadership had accepted the prescribed place of coal within the new arrangements.¹¹

If there was any doubt that Labour's new initiative would provoke opposition from the NUMNWA then Hammond put paid to it. Whatever the leadership said it had accepted Labour's prescriptions on fuel and further contraction. Once again it was the familiar tale of going through the motions of opposition while accepting the thrust of policy. If there was any argument it would again be over the detail of fuel policy and coal contraction. The

remainder of the 1960s would be very much a case of old wine in new bottles for the NUMNWA leadership.

Acceptance of Government policy was also apparent from Labour in the coalfield. There was no chance of loyal NUMNWA- sponsored MPs making a nuisance of themselves over fuel. Alan Fitch indicated he would use his influence as chair of the Mining Group of MPs to persuade the Government to amend its policy in favour of coal while working with the Government to bring economic and social amelioration to the coalfield.¹² What Fitch failed to point out was that the Mining Group was a weakened force at Westminster because of the decline of coal and its relegation in fuel policy. The Mining Group received a polite hearing from the Government in which they were offered promises on the alleviation of social hardship. Yet, this once powerful lobby was sidelined under Labour. Meetings with Government, including those with Harold Wilson, during Labour's first administration, revealed the fruitlessness of its position. Wilson told them that oil competition was likely to intensify, adding that Labour had no intention of interfering in the free market for fuel. According to Wilson, coal had to ensure it was more competitive. This meant building on the success of "vigorous modernisation and rationalisation plans" already completed, but with more fervour. The Mining Group was paralysed. They had to accept what was on offer while making the best for coal within fuel policy. It only remained for them to pressure Government on its ameliorative promises.¹³

One of the clearest indications it would be business as usual at the top in Lancashire came from Michael McGuire, the new NUMNWA- sponsored MP for Ince, who had taken over Tom Brown's stronghold at the 1964 general election. Although McGuire was a loyalist on the right who had risen through the St.Helens Labour Party 'machine', he had shown he was unafraid of taking a stand at variance to the NUMNWA leadership when he was NUM branch secretary at Sutton Manor.¹⁴ Any hope that McGuire was about to break the mould was dashed when he declared that he would not be opposing Government policy to the extent of "bringing down the temple of nationalisation". He contended that Labour having "a fair crack at power" after thirteen years in the "wilderness" was more important than any differences over fuel policy. McGuire defended Government policy, noting that together with the NCB it would oversee further contraction in an effective and socially responsible way.¹⁵ He became a vocal representative of the pro-coal lobby within the

Mining Group advancing the case for coal in fuel policy debate.¹⁶ This only served to underline his acceptance of the terms of debate dictated by the Government.

The NUMNWA had decided to sponsor another MP during the early 1960s outside the coalfield. Eric Ogden - a former miner at Bradford colliery - won Liverpool West Derby for Labour in 1964. Ogden's political career saw him become more involved with Merseyside issues than those of the coalfield.¹⁷ However, it was clear that he was staunchly loyal to the Government over its fuel policy. Joe Ryan, who emerged as a leading critic of Labour policy, challenged the three NUMNWA-sponsored MPs to lead a rebellion of the Mining Group over fuel policy to bring down the Government operating with a slim majority. There was no chance of a 'palace *coup*' against the Government but Ryan, by laying down the gauntlet, allowed Ogden to confirm the prevailing view of Government policy. Dismissing Ryan's intervention as "irresponsible" Ogden endorsed Labour policy by attacking the Government's critics in the coalfield, arguing that the survival of coal was not in the hands of the Government but was subject to the free market. Ogden told Lancashire miners that they had to learn the lexicon of the new fuel market to ensure viability rather than trying to scupper the Government's plans.¹⁸

The response of Labour in the coalfield reflected that of the NUMNWA leadership; it would argue coal's case within the fuel debate while accepting the tenets of policy. Both the NUMNWA leadership and Labour made a strong case for accepting the 'realities' of the new fuel market as a defence against criticism of further coal contraction. In this they gave unstinting support to Government policies which they knew were unpopular in the coalfield.

Acceptance of 'new realism' was one aspect. However, there was more reticence on Labour's wider agenda for economic modernisation aside from George Brown's disquisition at the 1965 weekend conference. The wider modernisation agenda was kept in the background because it would have proved unpalatable. The NUMNWA leadership and Labour in the coalfield did not concede that coal was being sacrificed as part of Labour's modernisation agenda, even less that they supported such a policy. That would have been highly problematic. It would have undermined their case and led to a complete collapse in morale. Lancashire miners would have seen absolutely no chance of salvation. Rather, the

NUMNWA leadership and Labour concentrated all efforts on persuading miners to accept 'new realism'. That way they could make a case for arguing for coal within Labour's new framework. As a result, Lancashire miners were induced to work enthusiastically to show that coal could compete with the other fuels in the 'battle for coal'. 'New Realism' provided a common bonding between the NUMNWA leadership, Labour and the 'rank-and-file' in the coalfield; all working together to prove coal could compete in a free market for fuel. It ensured maximum co-operation on pit-level issues to improve performance, while it shaped the character of specific closure outcomes. Finally, it welded the NUMNWA leadership and divisional board ever closer together through common cause aimed at ensuring coal's survival. Early in Labour's second administration all the essential elements of NUMNWA-Labour acceptance of Government policy were in place combined with a strategy to ensure 'rank-and-file' compliance.

NUMNWA leadership and Labour reaction to the new fuel policy and the ACP during the late 1960s never wavered from fundamental acceptance of Government plans. In one sense this is unsurprising because of high levels of unity between the NUMNWA and Labour in the coalfield acting in support of the Government. It would have been an unprecedented act of defiance for them to challenge the Labour Government. Even so, it seems remarkable that there was a continuance of such a high level of acceptance which endured both the 1967 Fuel White Paper and further contraction beyond that envisaged in the initial ACP announcement.

There were two principal ways in which leadership strategy developed from 1967. The first was through pursuing 'new realism'. The second, from 1968 onwards, was a strategy of stabilisation and consolidation for coal. After 1968, industrial change became a 'non-issue'. This policy was prefigured during the closing days of Gormley's tenure as General Secretary and carried forward by Sid Vincent, his successor. There appeared to be an intensification of criticism of Government policy throughout 1967 and early 1968. However, criticism was limited within the boundaries of 'new realism'. There were reasons for the NUMNWA leadership and Labour in the coalfield adopting a more aggressive posture at this time. One was increased tension over the 1967 Fuel White Paper. The other was the persona of Richard Marsh's incumbency as Minister of Power. Above

all, there was a need to be in tune with a growing mood of unrest in the coalfield over Government policy.¹⁹

Even as criticism and protest intensified there was no sign of a schism with the Government over fuel and further coal contraction. What sometimes appeared to be criticism of Government policy was nothing more than feisty defence of coal against the competition, combined with a need to accord with the 'rank-and-file'. For example, during 1967 Mining Group representations to Marsh over the Fuel White Paper included aggressive criticisms of Government policy. But, they had no choice other than to accept the next phase on fuel. As Marsh rightly contended, the Mining Group had already accepted the notion of a free market for fuel and thus further contraction of coal. The only issue for debate, as Marsh asserted, was the rate of contraction and economic and social amelioration required. The Mining Group was only pressing Marsh at this time because of growing 'rank-and file' unrest.²⁰

Marsh's assertions were borne out throughout 1967 as the NUMNWA digested further moves on fuel and coal contraction. These debates resulted in another mauling of Government policy, this time with the *bete noire* of Richard Marsh to act as the focus of the anger. For the NUMNWA leadership, Marsh became a convenient demonic instrument of Government policy. Despite the anger, these debates were conducted within the context of 'new realism'. Moreover, the divisional board and the NUMNWA leadership agreed that the next stage of fuel policy should be met by re-doubling efforts aimed at persuading Government to maintain a viable coal industry by making coal more competitive against alternative fuels, including the new threat posed by natural gas.²¹

The language of debate in 1967 reflected the way Lancashire miners accepted 'new realism'. Debate was significant for interventions by 'militant' activists. Both Clarke and Woolley - spending their last year in the industry at Mosley Common - noted that although they did not accept the terms of the free market for fuel, they were prepared to concede the 'reality' of the situation in which coal found itself. They called for "contraction to be properly phased and planned" highlighting the need for "a systematic building up of new industries with re-training and suitable guarantees of jobs" and the need to "protect older

workers” in a “humane contraction” - in fact, all the buzz phrases of Government policy and ‘new realism’.²²

These interventions marked an important milestone in industrial change under the ACP. The ‘militant’ activists accepted the terms of debate established by Government, along with all levels of opinion within the NUMNWA. They had moved to this position by 1967 because they were forced to accept the ineluctable nature of their position. In the same way as they had accepted the need for modernisation and rationalisation they were forced to accept the thrust of Labour’s policy on fuel and further coal contraction. Furthermore, they concluded it was futile opposing industrial change in circumstances where it was supported by NUM-Labour hegemony. They believed they would be more effective moving the ‘fight’ to tackle the Government on the outcomes of further contraction.

Acceptance of the terms of debate established by Labour influenced the outcome of discussions within the NUMNWA even as the Government came under its most intense period of criticism during 1967-1968. The notion of ‘new realism’ transcended these discussions. During late 1967 increasing anger within the coalfield led to a search for scapegoats as recriminations flew. Anger was directed at the NUMNWA- sponsored MPs because they had direct access to Government. The attacks centred on alleged inertia in the ‘fight for coal’ within fuel policy. Criticism reached a crescendo in November 1967 after the publication of the Fuel White Paper. An assembly of sponsored, coalfield and North West Labour MPs was subjected to a roasting by the NUMNWA leadership and union delegates.²³ It amounted to an exercise in blame shifting because the NUMNWA leadership had, like Labour in the coalfield, already accepted Government policy. As one delegate admitted, the time for fighting the Government over fuel had been two years earlier. It was only now under the full impact of further contraction, with mounting ‘rank-and-file’ pressure, that they were forced to confront the issue.

These were belated, half-hearted and self-illusory attempts to tackle issues which had reached a critical point. Caught between the need for continuing loyalty to the Labour Government and the need to appease a growing mood of ‘rank-and-file’ unrest, the union leadership could do nothing more than channel anger into criticism of the MPs. There was little the MPs could or would do apart from operate within ‘new realism’ in which, as Fitch

declared, they would “work behind the scenes with the Government to improve coal’s prospects”.²⁴ The NUMNWA leadership and Labour in the coalfield thus found it impossible to break the chains that lashed them to ‘new realism’. This was also the course set by the NUM leadership nationally. In 1968, Paynter outlined his continuing support for a strategy of ‘fighting for coal’ within new fuel policy.²⁵

By 1968, the scale of contraction in Lancashire meant the fight for the industry was a rearguard action. There were indications the debate was shifting. The scale of job losses in Lancashire fixed minds less on fuel policy and more on Labour’s commitment to alleviate economic and social hardship. Consequently, while criticism of Government fuel policy continued, it was eclipsed by calls for dialogue with Government over new economic growth. There was a belief that the Government, despite what was widely seen as betrayal on coal, would honour its commitments on economic and social amelioration. This was a good indication that, in spite of the anger generated over fuel, there was still a great deal of faith in Labour in the coalfield.²⁶

By the turn of the decade there was growing belief by the NUMNWA leadership that the industry in Lancashire should draw a line under the turmoil of the recent past to take advantage of the return of some stability for coal. After 1968 closures became less frequent while modernisation had been completed. It was time to move forward with what was left of the industry. Issues of industrial change became relegated to the margins of debate. This tendency was apparent as early as 1968 as the outcomes of industrial change were still being felt. NUMNWA weekend conferences had hitherto been important venues in which industrial change was debated. At a weekend conference in March 1968 the main items on the agenda were production and marketing with only a cursory discussion of the “situation in the industry” in a year when Lancashire coal lost nearly 6,000 jobs. A year later, in early 1969, a similar gathering discussed only one issue: production.²⁷

In one sense this shift of emphasis was inevitable because, with the bulk of closures completed by 1968 the industry could look forward to a period of consolidation. It was also an admission that the NUMNWA wanted to move on, and move on quickly, without looking over its shoulder as the last pits were closed. Why did the leadership want to reduce industrial change to a ‘non - issue’? One reason for the shift of emphasis was the

'changing of the guard' within the NUMNWA leadership. Hammond retired in September 1967. Gormley was in the throes of manoeuvring himself into a winning bid for the national presidency of the NUM in 1971, preceded by an abortive attempt at the post of national General Secretary.²⁸

The coming man of Lancashire mining unionism was Sid Vincent. Vincent was NUMNWA president during 1968-1970 before becoming General Secretary in 1971 following Gormley's accession to the NUM national presidency.²⁹ Vincent came through the 1960s with relatively little blood on his hands. His good sense over the running sore of Mosley Common, in which he worked closely with Weaver - an ideological opponent - right down to last minute bids to save the pit, earned him many plaudits within the union. Vincent's style was what Howell describes as a "less abrasive variant" of Gormley, which combined with his "amiability" with 'the lads', made him ideally suited to a period in which the NUMNWA attempted to re-define its purpose after industrial change. Although Vincent, politically, was very much out of the Gormley mould, he worked assiduously to create some distance between himself and the events of the recent past while at the same time defending Labour's record in Government on fuel.³⁰

One outcome was the re-writing of the recent past by the leadership virtually before industrial change was completed. For example, Vincent perpetuated the myth that Labour's policy on fuel and further contraction had been imposed on it by what he described, in a homespun but highly persuasive way, as the "the back room boys in London".³¹ The idea that dismantling Lancashire coal was the work of faceless civil servants and technocrats rather than the Labour Government was deliberately intended to play well with 'the lads'. Furthermore, Vincent was unapologetic about Labour's record on coal. On the eve of the 1970 general election he pointed only to the 'positive' outcomes of Labour policy: restructuring the Board's finances; maintaining a fuel tax on oil; moves to assist consumption of coal by the power generators; and assistance to alleviate the social consequences of contraction.³² In this respect, Gormley's successor was a most apposite choice at this time. He was both loyal to Labour and saw his chief priority as the consolidation of what was left of the Lancashire industry in which the strategy of co-operation with the Coal Board achieved new levels.

Vincent was a zealous disciple of 'new realism' under whose leadership there developed a strategy to 'fight for coal' and for Lancashire's part in a much-reduced National Production Target. To this end he chaired a NUMNWA body with the uninspiring title of the Production and Statistics Committee. The Committee was 'new realism' taken to its logical conclusion. It was a joint committee of the NUMNWA and NCBLA which oversaw the nine remaining Lancashire pits. Because there were only nine pits left, direct control over routine pit level issues was much easier. The Committee deliberated on issues of production, productivity, and development and acted as a trouble-shooting forum. Undoubtedly, Vincent in utilising the Committee, was influenced by his experience of the relative success of the JIC at Mosley Common, in which he had participated. The Production and Statistics Committee was corporatism in miniature. It was evidence of new levels of dialogue and partnership which 'new realism' had helped foster.³³

Through the Committee, Vincent was, as he noted, able to "to keep an eye" on Lancashire pits. The work of the Committee subsumed democratic debate on pit-level issues. However, it allowed Vincent to exert direct access and control of pit performance through discussion of monthly progress reports. He was thus allowed to exhort each pit to improve its performance, compete with each other, and with other coalfields. In this, Vincent saw 'new realism' as an opportunity for Lancashire miners to unleash their potential to demonstrate coal's ability to compete with other fuels. Vincent encouraged miners to "have a do at each pit" (attempt to achieve performance criteria) to show "that Lancashire lads are as good as any other Area".³⁴

In addition to promoting a competitive spirit in the 'battle for coal', Vincent saw another aspect of strategy in providing rewards for those whom made a success of 'having a do'.³⁵ This was vintage Gormley undertaken in a more deliberate and systematic way. Vincent's strategy was a success because although Lancashire pit performance never matched that of other leading coalfields it raised productivity in the remaining pits to previously unseen levels. These developments took place irrespective of a rising background of industrial militancy in Lancashire and elsewhere over matters of wages and conditions which led to confrontation with the Heath Government in the 1972 national strike.³⁶ A period of relative stability coincided with rising militancy. Vincent's strategy was facilitated by more stable conditions for coal during the early 1970s. Assessments of the Lancashire industry were

consistently more upbeat than at any time since the mid-1950s as fears over coal shortages and supply and price of oil once again put coal back centre stage, albeit as a much reduced entity.³⁷ By the early 1970s it would thus be inaccurate to use the term 'new realism' to characterise the NUMNWA's response to changing perspectives for fuel. It had become the orthodoxy.

6.3 COLLIERY CLOSURES IN THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD UNDER THE ACCELERATED COLLIERY CLOSURE PROGRAMME AND 'RANK-AND-FILE' UNREST

'Rank-and-file' unrest appeared to be a response to Labour's fuel and further coal contraction policy. This was at the root of grievances. However, 'rank-and-file' responses were more expressions of anger over specific outcomes of policy seen through the particular incidence and pattern of closures, twinned with increasing tensions over the circumstances of closure. Not all closures were 'controversial'. Large areas of the coalfield saw no discernible negative response. The closures of the late 1960s can be divided into four distinct groups. Firstly, those announced in November 1965 together with pits which had won reprieves under the 1959 Revised Plan. These were largely uncontroversial closures with the exception of Clock Face,³⁸ secondly, collieries in Manchester district which had been expected to have a long-term future,³⁹ thirdly, closures, partial closures and closure threats in North East Lancashire and St.Helens districts,⁴⁰ fourthly, the closure of Astley Green in 1970 which came as a surprise after the main group of closures had been completed.

Protest was most pronounced in North East Lancashire and St.Helens districts which hitherto had been relatively unaffected by closures. Here, increased militancy over closures was a phenomenon which coincided with growing discontent with Government policy and publication of the 1967 Fuel White Paper. Unrest in the coalfield occurred over a twelve-month period between the autumn of 1967 and 1968. This period saw the most concentrated period of closures during industrial change. Seven collieries were closed with the loss of over 6,000 jobs. Of those seven, five were 'controversial' because they were 'long-life' collieries which had some expectation of remaining open for the foreseeable

future. These closures markedly increased the mood of 'rank-and-file' unrest. They created widespread shock in the coalfield as the reverberations turned a mood of uncertainty and insecurity into one of panic. As one union delegate noted during early 1968, if rumours of closure were spreading around pits like Parkside it was time to panic because it meant the shutdown of the whole coalfield.⁴¹

The situation was so critical that there was a widespread belief that Government policy on coal contraction was without limits. This climate of fear saw the first signs of more potent protest against industrial change. Strength of protest was constrained by the limits imposed by 'new realism'. While reaction to these events was certainly intense it did not represent a united protest against industrial change across the coalfield. Rather, it could be characterised as a strong reaction to the incidence and pattern of closures in specific areas and at specific pits during 1967-68. Reaction was important in the way it was manifested through spontaneous outbursts of 'rank-and-file' action and because it marked the first time during industrial change that a previously united leadership front began to fragment.

The incidence of closures during the late 1960s was influenced by re-structuring of the NCBNWD as much as it was by Government policy. The NCBNWD ceased to exist after the retirement of James Anderton in 1967. The scale of coalfield run-down in Cumberland, Lancashire and North Wales meant the size of the industry remaining did not justify the continued existence of a separate North Western Division. Within a new rationalised structure the Cumberland, Lancashire and North Wales coalfields became 'super sub-regions' within a new Northern Division which included the Yorkshire coalfield headed by a new divisional chairman, John Brass, operating from a Yorkshire headquarters. The new National Coal Board Lancashire Area (NCBLA), headed by James Kimmins, was a glorified area management with a much reduced role and without the autonomy enjoyed by the NCBNWD. Both Brass and Kimmins were Coal Board technocratic management professionals. Kimmins, announced that the policies of his predecessor would continue under the new Lancashire management. Similarly, district and colliery management structures within Lancashire, already rationalised in 1961, were completely re-structured with the loss of many managers who had served since nationalisation or under private ownership.⁴² The complexion of NCBLA management which remained was fully behind the impetus for further contraction. This was bad news for 'borderline' collieries or

collieries previously unaffected by closure threats. It brought individual colliery performance under ever-greater scrutiny.

These changes meant closure decisions were implemented with little input from district or colliery management. Questioning aspects of industrial change had often been more effective from within NCBNWD management than from the NUMLA. It meant too that the Government was given a more pliable structure with which to effect change as it became intent on pushing through an acceleration of contraction. Gradual closures, long reprieves and detailed reviews of closure decisions based on local advice no longer occurred. For Lancashire, this meant particular collieries and sub-regions with some hope of a long-term future in coal were now seen as legitimate targets for rationalisation under the demands of further contraction.

Major closures in Manchester district included those at Astley Green, Bradford, Bedford and Mosley Common. The Astley Green closure is considered separately. The other three collieries were all closed during the twelve months between the autumn of 1967 and 1968. The significance of these closures was the way they increased 'rank-and-file' criticism over further closures under the ACP. Although both the Bradford and Mosley Common closures were not scheduled in 1965, all three closures were not entirely unexpected. The issues at Mosley Common have already been discussed. Bradford colliery had problems with serious subsidence under the city of Manchester, while acute manpower recruitment and retention problems in an area isolated from the rest of the coalfield with a multiplicity of job alternatives dogged the colliery's operational viability for many years. The subsidence issue was the more serious. This was not just Coal Board flimflam. The Board was facing both legal and local political pressures not to extend workings further under the city of Manchester. Furthermore, the colliery faced an increasingly bleak sales outlook. The markets for the colliery had been inexorably tied to two developments: direct supply to the nearby coal-fired Stuart Street Power Station and to wholesale and domestic coal distribution networks in east Manchester. Both these markets had been a source of some optimism for the pit's future during its re-development from the early 1950s. By the 1960s both were looking decidedly shaky.⁴³ Bedford colliery was considered as a closure under the 1959 Revised Plan and again under the 'Review of the Revised Plan' in 1962, but reprieved and subsequently re-developed. This was not enough to forestall its closure,

announced in 1965, under the second phase of the ACP with an anticipated closure date from 1969.⁴⁴

Given these facts, closures at Bradford and Bedford were not controversial in terms of the circumstances of contraction envisaged in the industry. Similarly, the 'rank-and-file' would have been deluding themselves if they had expected these two collieries to remain open in the post-1965 atmosphere. Likewise, Mosley Common had dived with closure for much of the 1960s, aside from a short respite. On the other hand, closure of two large 'showpiece' collieries at Bradford and Mosley Common produced problems with the 'rank-and-file' because of the mood of demoralisation it set in train. The timing of the closures was most inopportune. The final two years at Mosley Common were particularly painful with conflict between, and within, Coal Board and NUM officialdom. As the colliery finally closed in the "acid fumes of acrimony" its passing produced huge problems for the 'rank-and-file'. Closure left a big hole in the middle of the coalfield as nearly 3,000 desperate mineworkers scrambled for available transfers.⁴⁵ The scale of the placement problem was so acute that in 1967, for the first time, the Coal Board resorted to inter-coalfield transfers for Lancashire miners. Even with the mollification of the 'pick-your-pit' inter-divisional transfer scheme, the closure of a colliery of such symbolic importance to the modernisation of the coalfield saw a collapse in morale among the 'rank-and-file'.⁴⁶

The manner of Mosley Common's departure also increased bitterness because of the short reprieve negotiated by Gormley and endorsed in Wilson's pit closure deferments for the winter of 1967-68. Gormley's belief that Mosley Common could survive by "proving itself" within the context of 'new realism' was a source of misplaced expectation at the time of reprieve.⁴⁷ At closure, efforts aimed at trying to save the colliery only increased the mood of anger. It engaged the creative talents of a 'pit poet' in Lancashire who encapsulated the feelings of those involved in frantic last ditch attempts to save a colliery which was fated from the beginning - see Appendix to this chapter. It is difficult to appreciate the feelings of those who fought to save what pitmen referred to as "the Common". As one reporter noted, observing mineworkers leaving Mosley Common for last time: "You can't read a man's emotions through a mask of sweat-stained coal dust".⁴⁸ This simmering anger was a common feature in early 1968 in the coalfield among those involved in closures. It helped inflame a growing mood of anger with the Coal Board,

Government and NUMNWA leadership. It was as much the manner of the colliery's closing which induced this mood as closure itself.

If the closure of Mosley Common left a tide of bitterness in its wake then the closure of Bedford colliery during 1967 produced similar emotions. The state of affairs at Bedford colliery would have been such that closure might have passed without too much trouble. However, the Board decided to close the colliery at least two years before its agreed date. Because it had been twice reprieved a belief developed among the workforce that it could be permanently 'turned around'. The 'rank-and-file' at Bedford felt the colliery could have survived into the 1980s, with Gormley urging them on to produce a sterling effort to stave off closure.⁴⁹ Although the Board had brought forward closure on economic grounds, it argued that the reason for premature closure was subsidence under Leigh town centre; a issue contested by Bedford NUM branch committee. It was Gormley's support for the Board rather than branch committee which provoked conflict. A moderate branch committee was suddenly thrust at loggerheads with the union leadership, the Coal Board and the Government over closure. After nearly a year fighting closure, the branch secretary at Bedford, Tommy Whalley, was unsparing in his criticism. He accused all three of blaming the other for the "crisis". Significantly, he directed his wrath chiefly at Government, opining that it was the not as much the Board who were pushing closures on economic grounds as the Labour Government. As he suggested, it was one thing arguing with the Coal Board over a closure, it was quite another arguing with the Government.⁵⁰

Whalley reflected a growing sense that closures under the ACP resulted from Government policy on further contraction without restriction in which the Coal Board acted under Government pressure to implement closures. The 'rank-and-file' also believed the NUMNWA leadership was willing to co-operate with Government policy as part of the price of making the industry viable under 'new realism'. 'Rank-and-file' anger during 1967-68 over closures, as exemplified at Bedford, was indicative of a growing critique directed at the Labour Government. Again, it was the circumstances of closure which fuelled 'rank-and-file' anger.

The closure of Bradford colliery again demonstrated that it was as much the circumstances of closure which increased tensions as closure itself. The Coal Board had been involved in

a near ten year battle with Manchester City Council and private businesses over subsidence damage to properties in east Manchester as a result of new tunnelling to modernise the colliery.⁵¹ This culminated in a three-week public inquiry in 1966.⁵² At issue was whether or not the Coal Board could proceed with the exploitation of a vast new reserve of coal directly under east Manchester. This development was vital to continued development and modernisation. The Coal Board argued that if the colliery were not allowed to access these new reserves then its future would be in jeopardy.⁵³ In addition, because of manpower recruitment and retention problems the permanent shortage of labour reduced the colliery's operational viability.⁵⁴ As it transpired, the public inquiry was favourable to the Coal Board. The final decision went to the Housing and Local Government Minister, Richard Crossman, who decided that the Board could proceed to exploit the new reserves with the agreement of Manchester City Council on each of the four stages of extensions to workings. The Council could have them stopped but only with specific evidence of subsidence linked directly to the workings involved. This was as good as a green light to proceed.⁵⁵

However, the damage to the colliery had already been done. The delay of five years awaiting a decision to proceed "in principle" following the public inquiry, then a further delay of eighteen months awaiting a decision to proceed to work the first new 'panel' of coal, fatally impaired the future of Bradford. In a test case legal ruling Manchester City Council had obtained a stay on new development until the public inquiry had taken place. The test case had been the reason for the intervention of Richard Crossman. He wanted to use the outcome as a guide for similar cases throughout Britain.⁵⁶ The financial costs incurred by the Coal Board during the interim were huge. There was provision for potential subsidence costs, legal and technical bills and the costs of underwriting manpower recruitment and retention, exacerbated by the uncertainty caused over the colliery's future.⁵⁷

To make matters much worse the Coal Board began to raise doubts over the future of the Stuart Street Power Station to which 30-50 per cent of Bradford's output went. In October 1967 both Lord Robens and Joe Gormley visited the colliery. They noted that the CEGB had indicated they could bring Yorkshire or East Midlands coal to the station at the same price as coal fed by conveyor from Bradford a few hundred yards away. This was, as the

CEGB added, assuming that they did not close Stuart Street in the near future as part of its review of coal-fired units.⁵⁸

What should have been a highly profitable and productive colliery with a future at least until the end of the century was bled dry by this enervating combination of factors, chief of which were continuing uncertainties over subsidence and long-term manpower difficulties. In the circumstances of the ACP the Coal Board had to assess whether it was worth retaining Bradford with a deteriorating financial situation at the colliery.

The 'rank-and-file' at Bradford appreciated the extent of the problems the colliery had faced. However, they felt that having been given the go-ahead "in principle" to exploit new reserves in late 1966 those problems were behind them. A number of factors intervened in the circumstances of closure which produced 'rank-and-file' consternation. In January 1968 both James Kimmins and Joe Gormley, on a joint visit to Bradford, told the workforce that unless the colliery improved performance it would close. This was in stark contrast to prospects less than two years earlier when both Gormley and Robens promised a long-term future for the colliery following the public inquiry outcome.⁵⁹

Agreement to mine the first 'panel' of new reserves was only given by the Coal Board in November 1967, a few months prior to first indications the colliery might close. This was eighteen months after the public inquiry into subsidence had been concluded and twelve months after a ministerial decision had endorsed the findings of the inquiry. The Coal Board suddenly decided not to proceed with opening up new reserves on the grounds that Manchester City Council still retained influence over mining decisions. The Council threatened to re-activate the subsidence issue even though the legal and political arguments for an extension of mining had been won.⁶⁰

There was nothing in this new challenge which would have prevented the Board from proceeding at that stage. Importantly, the Board's embargo on new development went further. Miners were prevented from going anywhere near seams or faces other than those under current operation in existing workings.⁶¹ This implied that a decision had been made to close the colliery. The view from the 'rank-and-file' was that the Board were using the subsidence issue and new doubts over the future of Stuart Street as an excuse for closure,

the actual reason being accumulated financial and current operational losses resulting from manpower problems.⁶² Manpower difficulties were increasing the colliery's costs because of high labour turnover and an inability to maximise machine running times.⁶³ There thus developed a belief among the Bradford workforce that closure was being masterminded by the Government through its need to push through the ACP with the Board under pressure to comply without sanction from local management. Those suspicions were heightened as a result of the delay in reaching a decision on the go-ahead from Government and the Coal Board to exploit new reserves.⁶⁴

What infuriated Bradford miners was that after years of operating under fear of the subsidence issue they had been given hope of an assured future by a positive outcome from the inquiry. They were now seeing defeat snatched from the jaws of victory by manipulation of the issue to clear the way for closure on financial and operational grounds. This knowledge was more difficult to bear given that by the Board's own estimations Bradford could have become one of the most productive and profitable collieries in Britain had it solved its manpower problems and exploited new reserves in an unfettered manner.⁶⁵

There is circumstantial evidence to support the view that Bradford's closure was a deliberate scuttling exercise made in London. The future of the colliery seemed assured until as late as 1967, even taking account of the subsidence issue. Subsidence damage to property was very real indeed. Yet, the evidence at the public enquiry did not show conclusively that an extension of workings would have caused further substantive subsidence. In fact, the inquiry was very positive about Bradford continuing to expand without major subsidence difficulties with a weight of opinion in favour of the continued operation of this premier colliery.⁶⁶ Furthermore, because of manpower problems in east Manchester a new housing estate was built to receive miners and their families from other parts of Lancashire and other coalfields, such was the confidence in the colliery's future.⁶⁷ Likewise, as late as 1967 the divisional board was specifically recruiting experienced mineworkers made redundant in the Durham and Northumberland coalfields to move to east Manchester to maintain production at Bradford and help spear-head the push on the new reserves when the call finally came.⁶⁸ In short these events suggested that Bradford colliery was on the verge of a major expansion into productive and profitable mining until

early 1967. However, during 1967 a decision was taken to abandon the colliery. The nature of the closure at Bradford was thus highly suspect and brought a vociferous 'rank-and-file' reaction, although the cries that the colliery "would not become another Mosley Common" would not prevent a similar fate for Bradford.⁶⁹

Another feature of the Bradford saga which increased 'rank-and-file' hostility was the intervention of the NUMNWA leadership, along with local MPs, in attempts to save it. When the workforce at Bradford received the first warning of closure in January 1968 Gormley delivered a personal call to the workforce to 'fight' to save the colliery. This was to be achieved through maximising co-operation with management, implementing new technology, and improving performance and output levels. This was a call to save the colliery under 'new realism'. It confirmed a 'rank-and-file' suspicion that the closure threat was based on economic and operational grounds rather than the other reasons offered which were seen as elaborate excuses.⁷⁰ Being beaten by the effects of subsidence was one thing - Bradford miners had lived with that threat for years - but the suggestion that a modern productive and profitable colliery was about to be dumped because it was deemed uneconomic was the final straw for the 'rank-and-file'.

The final insult came with last gasp attempts to save the colliery. In the first instance, Gormley 'challenged' the view that Bradford was uneconomic by commissioning a NUMNWA-inspired mining engineer's report after the Coal Board conceded that economic and operational decisions had been influential in reaching its closure decision, officially announced in June 1968.⁷¹ The report concurred with the Board's view that Bradford was uneconomic. It was not surprising because integral to the engineer's estimations was a factor for the costs of subsidence and cumulative losses which Bradford NUM branch committee argued, should have been discounted by this juncture. Gormley, however, accepted the engineer's findings as the final word on closure.⁷² The abortive intervention by Gormley was seen by the 'rank-and-file' as a contrived exercise to justify closure while giving the impression that the NUMNWA leadership was attempting to save the colliery.

This came on top of Gormley's iridescence throughout the progress of the closure. Firstly, telling the workforce that the colliery was safe after a positive public inquiry outcome; then

issuing a gloomy prognosis as he agreed with Robens over the future of Stuart Street, followed by encouragement to save the colliery in early 1968, and finally to an admonishment for the men at Bradford for their despondency and lack of effort in the 'fight' to save the colliery near the end. On top of this Gormley initiated an engineer's report which could have had its findings written in advance.⁷³ Gormley, was widely perceived as doing the bidding for the Government and the Coal Board.

The intervention of three Manchester Labour MPs and Eric Ogden - who had worked underground at Bradford - promised much until it was realised that their only interest was in obtaining a short-term reprieve for the colliery to alleviate the consequences of closure. This was in respect of jobs in industries in the vicinity of the colliery on whose future they directly depended.⁷⁴ These interventions did more harm than good by unnecessarily raising expectations of deliverance from closure among the 'rank-and-file'.

Given that Bradford had earned a reputation for militancy throughout the 1960s it seems surprising that there was not a stronger reaction to closure aside from expressions of resentment. Protest was enfeebled by a combination of the manpower situation; the impact of 'new realism'; and political differences within the colliery. The uncertainty created over the future of Bradford over a long period of time allowed the Coal Board to let manpower drift away during closure because alternative employment prospects were relative good in east Manchester. Of the 1,500 mineworkers remaining in January 1968 at the first hint of closure, only 480 remained at final closure in September 1968. Only 200 Bradford miners retained a job in coal in Lancashire or other coalfields. This still left a 'residual' workforce, many with families to support, in Coal Board tenanted houses on the 'wrong' side of the coalfield with nowhere to go.⁷⁵

Manpower 'drift' during closure reduced the effectiveness of 'rank-and-file' opposition. The workforce was either too busy fleeing the troubled colliery or answering the call to save it. A workforce melting away or pre-occupied in trying to keep the colliery open was unlikely to mount direct action. This factor was undoubtedly an estimation in the decision to proceed with closure in this manner. One outcome was the way in which those likely to become the focus of protest were neutralised. Joe Ryan, a longstanding 'militant' activist at Bradford, was himself engaged in the 'fight' to save the colliery. In addition, Ryan, as

chairman of the tenants group, was involved in representing Coal Board tenants on their rights after the colliery closed.⁷⁶

The mood at the colliery during 1968 was certainly one of anger, which was mainly directed at Government policy, seen at the root of an unnecessary closure. One outcome was the way internal ideological differences within Bradford branch committee were set aside to attack the Government. It is notable that closure produced unity between NUM branch officials from the 'left' and 'right' united in their criticism of the Government throughout 1968. Previous paragons of moderation and leadership loyalty joined more militant voices for the first time. However, the advent of a common platform came much too late for branch officials to mount effective direct action.

Increasingly the combined problems of the colliery informed another sentiment within the 'rank-and-file': weary resignation. As branch officials noted, many miners were "sick and tired of the industry" in which the intention was to "make it as uncomfortable as possible for the lads".⁷⁷ It was not only the decision to close Bradford which was deliberately manipulated, but also the manner of closure as a way of forcing out the remaining workforce. The final snap of dissension came as Coal Board tenants faced rent increases because they no longer qualified for Coal Board subsidies. This came as Sid Vincent personally delivered the final confirmation of closure. The dwindling band of miners still around to hear the colliery's death warrant being read out, ahead of the official announcement, heckled Vincent.⁷⁸

The circumstances of Bradford's closure were a complex affair. Ultimately, the subsidence issue or an adverse decision over the future of Stuart Street Power Station might have done for the colliery. These factors were more serious than the 'rank-and-file' at Bradford appreciated or would admit. However, the fact that neither of these issues was directly responsible for closure, combined with the manipulation surrounding closure, led to friction with the 'rank-and-file'. Also, as Bradford miners claimed, loss of local management autonomy was an important factor. They pointed the finger at the direct hand of Government over decisions affecting the future of the colliery during 1967. Evidence of direct Government involvement in closure beyond the circumstantial is not available.

Either way, the important point is that the 'rank-and-file' believed that the Government was responsible.

These suspicions, together with the anger generated, did not translate into significant protest. The location of the colliery and manpower factors proved inimical to the cohesion required for 'rank-and-file' protest to flourish. Another factor was the persistence of internal ideological divisions at Bradford. Similarly, the pre-occupation with the fight to save the colliery prevented anger turning into direct action. What did emerge from this unhappy affair was a growing enthusiasm for direct criticism of the Government. This, in turn, reflected adversely on the NUMNWA leadership's continued adherence to Government policy.

The strongest reaction to Government policy came over closures in North East Lancashire and St. Helens districts. In St. Helens district this was in response to the partial closure of Sutton Manor colliery. It prefaced a threat to the whole St. Helens district. The decision by the Coal Board to close one of the three pits at Sutton Manor in March 1968 was seen as a huge blow to a district which had been relatively untroubled by closures and where there was optimism for the future of mining.⁷⁹ The district had seen closures at Lea Green in 1964 and Clock Face in 1965. Ravenhead colliery, closed in October 1968, had been on a long-term reprieve since the 1959 Plan. Its further reprieve until the second phase of the ACP was testament to the strength of the industry in the district and the value the Board placed on it. St. Helens miners accepted Ravenhead's closure as a genuine 'exhaustion' case rather than an 'economic' closure. Similarly, doubts over the long-term viability of Wood Colliery, at Haydock, had been expressed since the 1965 announcement. It was expected to close during the second phase of the ACP.⁸⁰

The three remaining collieries in the district: Bold, Cronton and Sutton Manor were seen as modernised and productive collieries with an assured future into the late twentieth century. The NCBLA under pressure of further contraction needed to reduce costs and coal stockpiles in St. Helens. Gradual closure of the three pits at Sutton Manor offered the most obvious method of achieving this because it minimised the risk of confrontation with the 'rank-and-file' at a difficult time. However, 'rank-and-file' anger over Sutton Manor was aggravated because immediately prior to announcement of the pit closure the Coal Board

indicated that the colliery was well placed to receive new investment. The closure of number one pit thus came as a great surprise. It was seen as a harbinger of doom, undermining confidence in the whole district within a mood of fear pervading the whole coalfield in 1968.⁸¹

The pit closure at Sutton Manor brought miners together in St. Helens district in common defence of their collieries. This unparalleled level of unity became more marked as redundancies were announced at Bold colliery - the previously unsinkable flagship of the district. Similarly, Cronton, was placed on a "jeopardy" list. An angry mood was inflamed, as it had been at Clock Face, by concerns over transfers within St. Helens. The decision by the Board to transfer displaced men from number one pit at Sutton Manor to Cronton, Bold and Wood rather than the two remaining pits at Sutton Manor raised fears that the colliery was about to close altogether.⁸²

There were a number of notable features about reaction to the Sutton Manor situation. The forging of previously unseen levels of solidarity was one outcome. One influential factor was Jimmy Dowd's consolidation of the left's control of Bold colliery from where he was able to mount a highly effective critique of closure policy.⁸³ However, the most important development was the prominence of Joe McDermott in leading the protest. McDermott, as miners' agent for St. Helens, was the most senior NUM official in the district. He was dragged into the space created by a growing mood of militancy. McDermott was seen as a leadership loyalist, having the approval of the Labour 'machine' in St. Helens, but his support for Gormley had never been unquestioning. Sutton Manor was McDermott's 'home pit'. His brother, Michael, had been a leader of the 1965 'revolt' at Clock Face where Joe had worked before transferring to Sutton Manor. He had given tacit support then, emerging as a mediator to bring the dispute to a conclusion. Now the dire situation facing St. Helens led McDermott to become increasingly critical of both Gormley and his colleagues on the NUMNWA executive who were loyal to Gormley. Consequently, a majority of the St. Helens district fell in behind McDermott as spokesperson for the growing mood of dissent.

McDermott clashed with Gormley over Sutton Manor. True to form, Gormley supported the Coal Board's decision to close number one pit. He was accused by Sutton Manor

branch committee of aiding closure and of "not giving a damn" what happened to them. Reflecting the growing mood of opposition, McDermott challenged Gormley's protégé, Vincent, for the NUMNWA presidency in 1968 with only the backing of Bold, Sutton Manor and Wood colliery. Ravenhead colliery was in closure mode but backed Vincent. This was as much a case of self-interest in closure as it was the influence of a 'moderate' branch committee. Virtually the entire Ravenhead workforce had been offered transfers because, as a scheduled closure, 'places' had been prepared in advance at receiving collieries.⁸⁴ Cronton was divided because its vice-presidential contender, Bernard Donaghy, was with the leadership.⁸⁵ That McDermott failed in his bid to take the presidency with limited support was not the issue; that a challenge was issued at all, given the level of acceptance the ACP enjoyed within the NUMNWA leadership, was more significant. It tells us much about the extent to which support for the ACP was beginning to fragment within the higher echelons of the NUMNWA.

The second feature of the Sutton Manor affair was the character of 'rank-and-file' reaction. They were no longer prepared to wait and accept a decision on the colliery's future decided by the all too familiar 'stitch up' between divisional management and the NUMNWA leadership. This was demonstrated when miners in St. Helens district 'invaded' a meeting at Sutton Manor between Gormley, branch officials and local management at which Gormley was doing his best to persuade the branch committee to accept closure of number one pit. Gormley had a rough ride.⁸⁶

However, the most important feature of the protest was the way it was strangled almost as soon as it began by the rigid discipline imposed by 'new realism'. McDermott wanted to lead a challenge to keep number one pit open, knowing that if he didn't, this would pave the way for further run-down in St. Helens. However, his enthusiasm for a fight was quenched by the knowledge that the NCBLA, together with Gormley, were attempting to lure the protest into a trap. Divisional management, supported by Gormley, wanted to initiate an inquiry into Sutton Manor to determine feasibility. McDermott decided that they were safer to accept the closure of number one pit than go to a full inquiry because he believed that management and Gormley would use the results to force the complete closure of Sutton Manor. While this could be dismissed as paranoia caused by the panicky atmosphere of the time, based on past evidence of such machinations, McDermott was well

advised not to trust Gormley with an inquiry. He knew Gormley would use it as a stunt to support the Coal Board's plans to close the whole colliery.⁸⁷

The protest at Sutton Manor disintegrated as quickly as it began. Sutton Manor miners found themselves snagged on the spikes of 'new realism'. Outmanoeuvred by McDermott, Gormley and the divisional management insisted on pressing ahead with further capacity reductions at Sutton Manor as a prelude to closure, even though they knew it might provoke an unprecedented 'rank-and-file' backlash. The stage was therefore set for Gormley to issue his standard 'battle cry' to Sutton Manor. He demanded maximum effort and co-operation to demonstrate the viability of the colliery.⁸⁸ This was the familiar 'kiss of death' pretext to closure. Scared witless by the prospect of over 1,000 redundancies the Sutton Manor miners responded, as did the whole of St.Helens district, by undertaking a massive effort on production and performance for an eighteen month period between 1968 and late 1969. This was enough to ensure the survival of the remaining two pits at Sutton Manor as the miners dug their way to more stable times for the industry.

Both Gormley and Vincent paid tribute to the efforts of the Sutton Manor workers as exemplifying how a colliery in jeopardy could avoid closure through "determination, co-operation and through an effort to increase output". Both men saw Sutton Manor as an exemplar of 'new realism' in which a threatened colliery proved "that Lancashire had a future".⁸⁹ Likewise, there were no further closures in the district, enabling Bold, Cronton and Sutton Manor to survive into the 1970s. St.Helens miners were pre-occupied in the 'fight' to save their pits rather than challenge the NUMNWA leadership or divisional management, thus undermining unity of purpose among the 'rank-and-file'.

Antagonistic 'rank-and-file' reaction to further contraction in St.Helens was matched in North East Lancashire. Prior to 1965 the North East Lancashire coalfield had been little affected by contraction compared to areas of South Lancashire. Between vesting date and the 1959 Revised Plan six collieries had closed plus one partial closure with the loss of around 750 jobs.⁹⁰ Between 1959 and 1965 there were a further eight closures with the loss of around 1,000 jobs.⁹¹ However, all but five of those closures were of small moorland drift mines mainly in the Forests of Pendle and Rossendale,⁹² which were significant for representing the end of a unique mining culture and tradition rather than for having a

serious impact on jobs.⁹³ Such pits had always faced a finite life. In addition, the divisional board opened new drifts in these upland areas during the immediate post-war period at a time of coal shortage. Although the drifts presented formidable operational difficulties they remained remarkably profitable, albeit, small producers of coal. These favourable conditions saw the opening of four new drift sites and the re-development of another during the early 1950s.⁹⁴ Two major projects, a new drift colliery at Thorney Bank, and a re-construction at Hapton Valley, including a drift extension, constituted the premier developments in the modernisation of the district during the 1950s, involving heavy capital investment. Later, as demand for coal fell, the attraction of the drifts waned as new and existing sites closed.⁹⁵

Closures other than the drifts had been few. The most important was at Reedley in Burnley in 1959, which, together with the final closure of Salterford drift, provoked a one day token strike at both collieries over an alleged lack of consultation and warning of closure.⁹⁶ The excellent performance and profitability of collieries in North East Lancashire had combined with Coal Board reluctance to close collieries too rapidly, to produce a relatively stable position for coal up to 1965. Coal Board reticence resulted from local authority and political pressure arising from the severe contraction of textiles. The Coal Board did not wish gratuitously to add to the economic and social problems of the district. Even as late as the mid-1960s when contraction had all but reached completion in many parts of South Lancashire, the North East Lancashire coalfield was home to 3,000 mineworkers mainly living and working in the Burnley area operating some of the most profitable pits in Lancashire.⁹⁷

This favourable outlook came to a dramatic end with the ACP. Estimations of the future viability of collieries in North East Lancashire were dependent on the market for coal in power generation. Traditionally, the coal market was in two main sectors: textiles and domestic consumption. Contraction of both these markets saw coal increasingly dependent on the power trade by the mid-1960s. North East Lancashire contained a concentration of four coal-fired power stations in the Calder Valley, and the CEGB planned to build the North West's second large new generation coal-fired station of 2,000 MW at Simonstone not far from the confluence of the Calder and Ribble rivers. The existing coal-fired

stations, along with the big Simonstone project, would have guaranteed not just the future of collieries in North East Lancashire but also those in South Lancashire too.⁹⁸

As Lord Robens noted on a visit to North East Lancashire in December 1965, the future of coal in the district would be determined by the CEEB not the Coal Board. His comments contained an air of grimace.⁹⁹ There were a number of factors in power generation which put the future of coal in the district in peril. The best power coal was reaching exhaustion to the extent that it was blended with power coal from the East Midlands and South Yorkshire. Cheaper power coal from these coalfields was itself threatening completely to displace the Lancashire variety. In addition, the CEEB was reviewing its coal-fired units in the area. The CEEB's decision to shelve the Simonstone project in 1967 was an enormous, but not entirely unexpected blow, because it was felt that the CEEB would opt for a new nuclear power station on the Lancashire coast at Heysham as the North West's next big power project.¹⁰⁰ However, the Simonstone decision greatly increased the threat facing coal in North East Lancashire during 1967-68 thus bringing the crisis in the district to a climax at a critical time for the industry in Lancashire. Removal of local management structures in the district increased the vulnerability of collieries to closure in the absence of local input into closure decisions.

Four collieries, all drifts, were proposed for closure under the ACP announcement in November 1965: Fir Trees, Hill Top, Deerplay and Old Meadows. In addition to the drifts, Huncoat, was to close, though a much later date was expected. The biggest shock was the announcement that Bank Hall colliery - the remaining pit in Burnley and the largest in the area - was on a "doubtful list"¹⁰¹ Bank Hall was put on six-year rollercoaster ride in which it was in a state of near permanent threat until eventual closure in 1971. The central mining workshop in the district was also closed. Many feared that the closure of the workshop was the harbinger of a complete shutdown in North East Lancashire. The divisional board anticipated that only Hapton Valley and Thorney Bank would remain open beyond the early 1970s, putting over 2,000 jobs in the industry at risk.¹⁰²

Doubts over the future of the power market and the costs of operating pits supplying this sector transformed a relatively optimistic outlook for coal in the district. In particular, the Bank Hall decision brought a clamour of protest while the closure of area workshops

provoked abortive interventions from the NUMNWA in the district, Burnley Council and the local Labour MP, Dan Jones.¹⁰³ NUM branches, through the auspices of Burnley Miners' Association, and the miners' agent for the area, Leo Crossley, criticised the decision to close the area workshops and downgrade Bank Hall.¹⁰⁴ Crossley, as miners' agent, was *de facto* leader of the NUMNWA in North East Lancashire. He was also a prominent Labour councillor on Burnley Council with a connection with both the NUM and Labour stretching back to the 1920s.¹⁰⁵ Crossley's influence extended beyond his Burnley redoubt. He was one of the senior full-time miners' agents in Lancashire. Furthermore, he had been NUMNWA president between 1958 and 1961 and again in 1967 during his retirement year. He had also periodically held the vice-presidency. After Gormley and Hammond, he was effectively the 'third man' of Lancashire mining unionism for much of the late 1950s and 1960s until his retirement in 1968.

Coal contraction in North East Lancashire was conflated with the fate of textiles. In addition to Crossley, a number of prominent NUMNWA officials held office on Burnley Council. They were involved with other civic, business and union leaders sitting on the North East Lancashire Development Council (NELDC) through which they fought to save the coal and textile industries; attract new industrial development; and campaign for full development status for the sub-region. This led to tension with the Labour Government which was accused of not doing enough to help prevent the contraction of staple industries and matching promises on new industrial growth. Tensions spilled over into dealings with Dan Jones. The MP, who was by instinct a 'moderniser', had at the same time to mediate the concerns of his constituency. He chided civic and union leaders connected with cotton and coal, demanding that they decide whether they wanted the Government to save these industries or let them decline and support industrial diversification, as they were not going to get both. He warned them that Labour was only interested in industrial diversification.¹⁰⁶

The level of disquiet led to visits to North East Lancashire by prominent Labour politicians, including the most senior members of the Government. George Brown, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, in April 1967 was followed by a high profile visit from Harold Wilson in January 1968 with the Queen appearing shortly after the premier. These were essentially politically motivated jaunts to the 'hinterlands' to express solidarity with the dire economic situation facing North East Lancashire while attempting to raise the

Government's profile during a difficult period for Labour. For example, Wilson used the occasion to offer public endorsement to the "I'm backing Britain" campaign in support of British industry.¹⁰⁷

Throughout 1967-68 the scale of contraction saw criticism of Labour gather momentum. The growing unpopularity of the Government was given sharper focus in North East Lancashire through the decline of staple industries. A measure of the storm brewing can be gauged by the emergence of breakaway militant factions from the textile unions which became prominent during 1967 when they organised vocal and agitated street protests including one to coincide with Brown's visit.¹⁰⁸ Despite these developments a formal alliance of organised labour in the staple industries against contraction at either senior or 'rank-and-file' levels was never a serious proposition. Internecine political troubles on Burnley Council during the post-war period between the various sectional interests in organised labour had created too much bad blood.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, these interests had a common cause and worked together through the forum provided by the NELDC. Although a united front of 'rank-and-file' workers never materialised, mineworkers were eager to take a cue from the tactics of textile workers, especially as matters came to a head in late 1967 and during 1968 with a threat to close Bank Hall colliery; the bringing forward of closures at Deerplay and Huncoat; and an announcement that Thorney Bank was to close.¹¹⁰

Imbued with a growing sense of grievance NUM branches sought immediate industrial and political action against the closures through the offices of Burnley Miners' Association. Bank Hall was the only remaining branch in the association following the disintegration of the once politically influential Prosperity Lodge of Burnley miners.¹¹¹ The Association framed a resolution to go before the NUMNWA. It was one of the most radical in the history of mining unionism in Lancashire. It called for immediate strike action over closures and withdrawal of payment of the political levy to the Labour Party. The prime mover of the emergency resolution from Burnley was Albert Dugan, who became branch secretary at Bank Hall in 1968 having worked in coal since before the Second World War. The ageing and ailing Dugan was a most unlikely militant. He was a branch official of previously moderate views who represented Bank Hall on the NUMNWA executive. His

leader, Leo Crossley, had complete faith in Dugan as a supporter of the NUMNWA and Labour.¹¹²

That the Dugan resolution was not adopted is less important than the prioritisation and reception it received at the time. Far from being attacked, it was discussed as a serious proposal by delegates from across the coalfield including those with impeccable moderate credentials such as Parkside. Even ultra loyal executive members from the Gormley-Vincent clique were prepared to give the resolution a hearing. Under 'normal' conditions in the coalfield the resolution would have been as good as a political suicide note for its mover. These were far from 'normal' times in Lancashire. The resolution was eventually rejected by the leadership and a majority of delegates in favour of continuing to apply pressure on the Government through Labour MPs in the hope of producing some change of policy.¹¹³

Dugan's resolution was important in two other respects. Unlike similar protests over closure, the resolution went beyond a debate framed by 'new realism'. It opened an assault on Labour's policy of modernisation in which coal was seen as just one element. This was informed by the wider critique of policy on the staple industries emerging in North East Lancashire. Dugan noted in his speech to delegates and a gathering of eight coalfield and North West MPs, including his own Dan Jones, that the crux of the matter was a belief that "we are unfashionable, outdated, and outmoded". Dugan went on to challenge this view within the notion of 'new realism' by comparing what coal could offer against the alternative fuels. However, it was Dugan's ability to take argument to a different level which proved so attractive to delegates in the ensuing debate. The realisation that it was Labour's modernisation agenda which was condemning coal, however hard miners fought to save the industry, raised the political pitch immeasurably against Labour during 1967-68.¹¹⁴

The second aspect of Dugan's resolution was the reaction of his 'boss', Leo Crossley. While Crossley did not publicly support the resolution it was more notable that he did not move against Dugan. This is all the more pertinent given that Crossley was due to retire in August 1968 and the likely new leader in North East Lancashire would be Albert Dugan.

¹¹⁵ Crossley's silence was indicative of his willingness to support the 'rank-and-file'

crusade in North East Lancashire throughout 1967-68. Like his fellow senior official, Joe McDermott, on the other side of the coalfield in St.Helens, he had been thrust into the space created by 'rank-and-file' action from where he was heading for a showdown with Gormley on closures in North East Lancashire.

The showdown was precipitated by chronic redundancy and manpower transfer problems set in train by the pile up of closures in the district. In addition to the closure threat at Bank Hall there were two surprisingly early announcements at Deerplay and Huncoat. The NUMNWA in the district accepted that both had a finite life under current circumstances but closure was not expected before 1969. Divisional management demanded an early closure at Huncoat on economic and operational grounds based on its inability to supply power coal of the right quality at the right price. The intention was to use Yorkshire coal. The only chink of light was Huncoat's inclusion in Harold Wilson's closure deferment list in September 1967. At Deerplay there was an announcement that tunnelling teams had hit a massive rock fault. While both closures were conceded in principle by the union in North East Lancashire, they were challenged as premature closures. In addition, it was argued that in spite of geological impediments at Deerplay, mining activity could have continued for a least two years. However, the main reason for the union contesting closure was the build-up of closures in such a short space of time. Fears were compounded with the announcement that Thorney Bank was to close. The pit was expected to remain open, together with Hapton Valley, beyond the 1970s.¹¹⁶

The problem for Crossley was the manpower situation. He was faced with the prospect of over 1,000 mineworkers - nearer 2,000 if Bank Hall closed - with little chance of transfer. The majority lived in Burnley and surrounding villages. The only receiving pit was Hapton Valley, which was incapable of absorbing these numbers. Daily travel to pits in South Lancashire, themselves under chronic strain from closures, was not feasible because it would have involved over a 60-mile round trip each working day. The only option was the nightmare prospect of a mass exodus of 2,000 Burnley miners and their families to other coalfields. To complete this Gordian knot the divisional management announced it was transferring miners displaced from the Mosley Common closure to Burnley collieries, such was the parlous situation in South Lancashire. While Gormley did not officially support this madcap scheme he did not condemn it either, resulting in a spat with Crossley.

Crossley finally snapped, describing the decision as "out of this world". The manpower situation was reaching surreal proportions. The proposal was to transfer miners from South Lancashire to pits with a doubtful future in North East Lancashire involving a 60-mile daily round trip where up to 2,000 Burnley miners faced the imminent prospect of redundancy or of finding work at the one remaining colliery.¹¹⁷

Crossley thus spent the remainder of his union career fighting contraction in North East Lancashire with his 'rank-and-file' squarely behind him. In addition, he joined his colleagues on Burnley Council criticising the Labour Government over its policy on the staple industries through what was described as a "bring Wilson to heel" campaign.¹¹⁸

The position adopted by Crossley at this time was influenced by his impending retirement. In the twilight of his career in the NUM and Labour Party he contemplated the full implications of industrial change in the district. He had been associated with coal since just after the First World War when he joined as a pit lad. His retirement coincided with the disintegration of the industry in the district while his involvement with the NELDC made him acutely aware of what the process was doing to textiles. During his union career Crossley had been at one with leading officials who had supported industrial change in which closures were seen as an essential part of the process. But, as the full impact of contraction of the staple industries in North East Lancashire became apparent, particularly as the ACP cut deep into the sub-region, his views were transformed.¹¹⁹

Although Huncoat, Deerplay and Thorney Bank did close, pressure from both Crossley and a belligerent 'rank-and-file' ensured that the folly of the proposed transfer scheme was recognised while the big prize, a reprieve for Bank Hall, was secured, though doubts remained over its longer-term future. The 'rank-and-file' at Bank Hall had campaigned for the colliery to remain open through pleas to Cabinet Ministers on visits to the area and through Dan Jones who was PPS to the President of the Board of Trade. Divisional management were unnerved by the position taken by Burnley miners supported by the visible presence of a senior union official of the calibre of Leo Crossley. Bank Hall thus had the added fillip of substantial new investment. The colliery even witnessed a manpower recruitment drive during 1968-69 in which miners from closures in the district were absorbed. These moves ensured that it remained a viable proposition, together with

Hapton Valley, as the only two remaining collieries in the district after the last drift at Old Meadows closed in 1969.¹²⁰

For Bank Hall the exultation only lasted three years until March 1971 when it was unexpectedly closed. Such was the sensitivity attaching to closure that the official reason given was safety; the surest way of winning NUMNWA support. The NCBLA argued that continuing ignition flashes from faces constituted a safety hazard which risked a catastrophic explosion. Mineworkers in the district were mindful of an explosion at Hapton Valley in 1962 which killed nineteen miners and seriously injured thirteen more in the worst post-war pit disaster in the Lancashire coalfield. The NUMNWA, including the Bank Hall branch committee headed by Albert Dugan, had no option other than to concede closure since safety issues were sacrosanct. However, closure was disputed by the 'rank-and-file' on the basis that the NCBLA had been looking to close the colliery for six years and had now found its excuse after it had made a hasty retreat under 'rank-and-file' pressure during 1967-68.¹²¹

The promising prognosis for the colliery after the events of 1967-68, together with new investment, ensured that the colliery survived until the return of stability for coal. This made closure seem less plausible. Similarly, there was a view on technical grounds that the safety issue was a pretext. As many miners attested, ignitions had been frequent and indeed much worse over many years. They could not understand why management suddenly wanted to make an issue of it. Likewise, it was alleged that management had promised to install new ignition suppression equipment, but had failed to do so. The accusation thus persisted among the 'rank-and-file' that, after their act of defiance during 1967-68, Bank Hall's closure was an act of retribution wreaked at a more opportune time. The 'black' humour of Burnley miners described the impending closure as the colliery having "gone in a flash" after years of enduring closure threats only punctuated by their stand in 1967-68. As one Bank Hall miner put it "the Board have held a loaded pistol to our heads for a number of years; it was only a matter of them pulling the trigger at a time of their choosing".¹²²

The final closure for consideration was Astley Green, closed in 1970. It survived the main phase of closures during the late 1960s and was expected to survive much longer but

divisional management was still under pressure to reduce costs and Astley Green had made a financial loss in all but one of the five previous years.¹²³ The announcement in April 1969 came as big a shock to the NUMNWA leadership as it did to the 'rank-and-file'. The leadership believed that closures were completed and were anticipating the return of stability. While the leadership wanted to reflect 'rank-and-file' anger at this surprise announcement, coming on the back of the unrest of the late 1960s, it also wished to avoid undermining an ever-closer co-operative relationship with the NCB in the 'fight for coal' at a time when the outlook for the industry was improving. The leadership therefore embarked on the well-worn strategy of maximising pressure on the Board and the Government while obviating more substantive protest.

Astley Green had one of the more 'moderate' reputations in the Manchester district. It was Vincent's 'home' pit from where he had risen through the union ranks. The branch committee remained under his firm control. 'Rank-and-file' protest was not expected. Unlike North East Lancashire and St. Helens where the NUMNWA leadership had faced stiff opposition, it felt able to 'manage' the Astley Green closure on its terms. Vincent therefore used the occasion to take charge of what he euphemistically called a "campaign to save the Lancashire coalfield". The leadership decided at the eleventh hour that there was a potential threat to the whole coalfield if a colliery like Astley Green was closed at a time when no further closures were expected. Vincent's use of the term "campaign" was misleading. He initiated an engineer's report from which a "survival plan" for the colliery was put to the Coal Board. Thereafter, Astley Green miners were encouraged to 'fight' to save their pit by invoking 'new realism'.¹²⁴

Gormley seized on developments at Astley Green as a way of reinforcing his personal authority. He took up the cudgels of the Astley Green case with great enthusiasm. He launched an attack on the Coal Board over closure when he met Lord Robens, alleging a "breach of faith" and "management negligence" which threatened the whole Lancashire industry.¹²⁵ Only a year earlier Gormley had supported the Board over a similar set of circumstances at Sutton Manor. Talking tough on Astley Green at this time proved to be a smart move for both Gormley and Vincent. Vincent was cheered to the rafters when he threatened to draw a line in the coal dust over Astley Green at the 1969 NUMLA annual conference. He told delegates: "If we don't show our teeth now then woe betide us in the

future".¹²⁶ In November 1969 Gormley joined the fray by warning divisional management that "enough is enough".... "in Lancashire we have had enough of this torture".¹²⁷

It was rather late in the day for these leadership interventions. As a result, they lacked credibility. There were personal reasons for Vincent becoming involved, because he had been associated with Astley Green all his working life. In addition, both Gormley and Vincent had self-interested reasons for talking tough at this time. Both were aiming for higher office in their respective ways, Gormley for the national presidency, and, if a vacancy resulted, Vincent for NUMNWA General Secretary. They were aware that they had to catch the current mood of the 'rank-and-file'. In fact, it was just the same rhetoric it had been for the whole of the 1960s. The NUMNWA leadership was ending the decade much as it had spent it. The tough talking amounted to nothing more than the familiar encouragement to the Astley Green miners to produce an unprecedented effort to avert closure. Vincent went as far as telling them that on their success depended the whole future of the Lancashire coalfield.¹²⁸

Under threat of closure, with this heavy duty of responsibility ringing in their ears, Astley Green miners responded. Many gave up their annual holiday entitlement to join a twelve-month 'fight' to save the pit.¹²⁹ . Alas, as was so often the case, all efforts failed. Vincent blamed both a 'higher' authority, exclaiming that the "gods were not with us" and those at Astley Green who had not pulled their weight because "they had one eye on redundancy payments". This declaration came against a backdrop of bewildered and heartbroken miners wandering around the pit bank as the colliery closed. Because closure was unscheduled so late in the programme transfer possibilities were limited. Of the 1,400 mineworkers only 310 retained jobs in mining in Lancashire or elsewhere.¹³⁰

Whether opposition to the Astley Green closure by the 'rank-and-file' would have made any difference to the outcome is doubtful, given previous cases of this kind. However, 'rank-and-file' opposition to closures in North East Lancashire and St. Helens demonstrated that it was possible to influence events, particularly where this had the support of senior NUMNWA officials or where there was intervention from the political establishment, as seen in North East Lancashire. In this respect the 'rank-and-file' at Astley Green were at a distinct disadvantage having only Vincent as their 'champion' in a situation in which the

branch committee was in his 'pocket'. As shown on innumerable occasions throughout the period of industrial change, leaving closure questions to the mercy of the leadership in order to lead a 'challenge' was courting an even more painful end.

6.4 OPPOSITION TO THE ACCELERATED COLLIERY CLOSURE PROGRAMME: AN ASSESSMENT

With regard to 'rank-and-file' unrest during 1967-68 a compelling case can be made that opposition to the ACP was held in check by a powerful range of factors. Furthermore, it could be argued that opposition was only a momentary event as the ACP impacted on specific collieries and sub-regions of the coalfield. On another level there is the question of the extent to which Lancashire's involvement in the rising militancy of the late 1960s and early 1970s in the industry was influenced by the impulses of industrial change. Furthermore, did the impact of industrial change have any influence on the political life of the coalfield? The seeds of these puzzles are raised by Howell. On the one hand he writes of a "corrosive legacy" and of "deep scars" left by industrial change. On the other, he notes that "lift off" into "militancy" occurred as the industry returned to stability, based on the prioritisation again of 'bread and butter' industrial issues such as wages and conditions.¹³¹ This section seeks to unravel these questions in the belief that the experience of industrial change did leave a 'legacy' in the coalfield.

How was opposition to the ACP held in check? Circumstances proved unfavourable to 'rank-and-file' opposition. The important factor was 'new realism'. An overriding belief in the need to 'fight' to save coal within the new situation for fuel was present at all levels throughout the coalfield. Hardly a closure occurred which was unaccompanied by the active participation of the workforce responding to a call from the NUMNWA leadership to save their colliery. The 'rank-and-file' were bitter and resentful with the Government, the Coal Board and the NUMNWA leadership but they responded to the call. 'New realism' facilitated the manipulation of 'survivalist' mentalities in coal. It was the NUMNWA Leadership's *coup de grace* under the ACP. It was a force for 'rank-and-file' co-operation like no other. This was exemplified on many occasions during the late 1960s. It was instrumental in undermining protest against the ACP when opposition collapsed in

St. Helens district in 1968. The NUMNWA leadership, having accepted Government policy on further contraction for political reasons, put every sinew of energy into exhortations to 'fight' for coal within the new regime for fuel.

The effect of 'new realism' was to undermine 'rank-and-file' solidarity. The divisive nature of closure was already clear under rationalisation up to 1965, it was more evident under the ACP. There was little chance of collective protest flourishing against further contraction as the priority was saving one's own pit and job. By the same token, one dog that did not bark, or perhaps did not bark quite as loudly as it might have done, was the question of coal's position within Labour's plans for economic modernisation. It has already been suggested that the NUMNWA leadership and Labour in the coalfield avoided this question after Labour had assumed power in order to concentrate on 'new realism'. But, how did the 'rank-and-file' interpret the wider issue of modernisation under Labour? Did they not care about this? Did they experience industrial change in a state of blissful ignorance of the wider issues involved? The 'rank-and-file' were certainly aware of the wider issues because 'new realism' resulted from Labour's modernisation agenda for fuel. Mineworkers were thus aware of how modernisation had shaped 'new realism' as they digested and debated industrial change.

The 'rank-and-file' participated in the promotion of 'new realism' as a means of articulating a response to the 'multi-fuel' economy. However, a substantive debate over wider economic modernisation never materialised. When issues of wider modernisation were pushed to the forefront of debate, as they were by the intervention from North East Lancashire during 1967-68 over the contraction of staple industries, they proved persuasive. These were infrequent happenings. For the most part the debate over the efficacy, direction and success of Labour's modernisation strategy was not a priority for the 'rank-and-file'. This did not arise from ignorance or indifference but from the strictures imposed by 'new realism'. For the majority of the 'rank-and-file' the priority was defence of the industry against the competition from the new fuels as directed by the NUMNWA leadership. This was why a wider debate over Labour's modernisation strategy never properly took hold. Economic modernisation was thus primarily interpreted as the defence of coal's sectional interests under 'new realism' in the same way as mineworkers sought to ensure the survival of their own job and pit.

Whether outcomes would have been different had there been a more substantial engagement with the wider debate is to speculate. However, the omens were not good. Certainly, when there was an appreciation of the wider issues it increased the tempo of debate. But, this was a long way from turning into industrial or political action. This would have necessitated an unprecedented degree of cross sectional co-operation within organised labour in the staple industries, at the very least. Even from the limited evidence of the situation in North East Lancashire the chances of inter-sectional 'rank-and-file' action taking place, let alone succeeding, would have been extremely unlikely. The run away success story of the late 1960s in the coalfield was the discourse of 'new realism' and mastery by which it was wielded by the NUMNWA leadership.

Arising from this, one view of 'rank-and-file' unrest during 1967-68 was that it was not only a temporal affair, it was also restricted and weak. It was limited to specific collieries and districts which were unable to unite the whole of the coalfield in opposition to further contraction. Under the ACP, the twin fears of uncertainty and insecurity, so apparent under rationalisation, were visited on collieries and districts hitherto largely unaffected by closures. The duplicitous circumstances of a number of closures and the reverberations of Mosley Common's closure combined to raise tension still further. The scale of contraction during 1967-68 added to brooding 'rank-and-file' belligerence. 'Rank-and-file' reaction was strongest in St. Helens and North East Lancashire, with the latter unique because adverse reaction was part of a wider response to the decline of staple industries. This gave protests there an edge compared with other districts of the coalfield.

Although 'rank-and-file' discord displayed variations there were some remarkable similarities in the character of protest in the two geographically separated districts. Both had been largely unaffected by contraction until the ACP. Both saw the emergence of spontaneous 'rank-and-file' protest. Significantly, both were considered likely to respond to leadership direction yet, in the event, senior officials emerged to lead aggressive 'rank-and-file' challenges. These instances had a historical resonance. The coalfield had a long history of factionalism - often territorially based - in which senior officials led 'rank-and-file' uprisings against the union leadership. The events of 1967-68 raised the spectre of factionalism that had haunted coalfield politics for generations. Historical levels of

virulence were not present to the same degree in 1967-68. Yet, the outbreak came dangerously close to producing the first major schism among senior officials during the whole period of industrial change, supported by substantial sections of the 'rank-and-file'. In taking their stance, both Crossley and McDermott were influenced by the impact of industrial change on their respective districts. Although these events were short-lived and quickly subsided they were of such potency that they forced a measure of retreat from the NCBLA and NUMNWA leadership over further contraction.

'Rank-and-file' agitation during 1967-68 was also important in the way it questioned the role of Government in further contraction. 'Rank-and-file' anger was not directed at Government over the initial announcements on fuel and coal but rather at the specific outcomes of contraction under the ACP. Hostility was also directed toward the Coal Board and NUMNWA leadership, but it was a preparedness to offer a critique of Government which was the most momentous aspect of 'rank-and-file' unrest. This made the situation particularly hazardous for the NUMNWA leadership during 1967-68.

The events of 1967-68 were clearly profound. However, as intense as they were, they must be seen in context. The situation in the coalfield away from pits and districts convulsed by these events was quite different. A majority of collieries and other districts of the coalfield were untroubled by these developments. The unrest failed to make a connection to the rest of the coalfield which would have resulted in widespread political protest. Despite the similar characteristics of unrest, an effective linkage never even developed between the loci of protest in North East Lancashire and St. Helens because the concerns of these districts were particular to specific closures and closure threats. There was a great deal of sympathy and support for those involved in these protests from the rest of the coalfield. The unease and sense of panic over further contraction saw many NUMNWA branches which would not ordinarily have become involved, such as Plank Lane (Bickershaw-Parsonage collieries) and Parkside, sustaining high levels of support when these issues were debated including joining the growing criticism of the Labour Government. The reaction to the Dugan resolution in November 1967 demonstrated the strength of feeling across the coalfield.¹³²

Nevertheless, despite the strength of support these protests failed to develop beyond their disparate and restricted origins. The reason for this was the weakness of the *raison d'être* of protest. Protest had its beginnings in reaction to the incidence and pattern of closure under the ACP. This was a recipe for division not unity. While North East Lancashire and St. Helens miners protested, they had remained largely passive when Wigan district bore the brunt of closures during the early 1960s and when collieries were closed in Manchester district under rationalisation. In short they only felt obliged to respond when they were directly affected. Mick Weaver predicted that the ACP marked such a fundamental development in industrial change that mineworkers would reject it.¹³³ He was wrong; reactions differed. A majority of mineworkers did not recognise the distinctive character of the ACP. For them, it was just another round of closures. Why should miners in collieries unaffected by the ACP join in sympathy action? Many had previously been involved in more than one closure, often spending most of the 1960s being shunted between collieries facing the prospect of redundancy, 'downgrading' and lost earnings while their colleagues, now feeling the pinch under the ACP, had not raised a voice in anger. These were potent reasons for eschewing involvement. The divisions created by the pattern and process of colliery closures undermined the occasion for a united stand against the ACP.

The opportunity for collective action was dealt a further blow by the strategies developed by both Gormley and Vincent which ensured 'rank-and-file' cohesion amongst those unaffected by further contraction. Such strategies were linked to 'new realism'. One of the great enigmas was how Joe Gormley managed to attain such a high level of personal popularity. This is more puzzling given that Gormley played a far from noble role in industrial change. Under the ACP this reputation plumbed new depths. Many of the brickbats accompanying 'rank-and-file' unrest were directed at Gormley.

The answer lies in Gormley's immense ability to operate a twin-track policy on industrial change. In 1970, reflecting on the events of the previous decade and looking forward to the challenges of the next he remained typically unapologetic:

“ I have been involved in more pit closures percentage wise than any other Area Secretary in Britain, and I have not liked it. I don't like it all having to be placed in this position, but if acceptance of a high wage policy means pit closures, it means pit closures. We may have to pay the consequences. As long as we know that and back it to the hilt let's go for high wages ”¹³⁴

Gormley did not see industrial change in a declining coalfield like Lancashire as something approaching the *Gotterdammerung* that many felt it heralded. For Gormley, it represented not the end, but an opening in his ceaseless quest for opportunities. For him, pit closures were initially the stepping stone to a modernised industry. Thereafter, they became part of a strategy of ensuring the best deal for those who remained inside the modernised industry even if that meant more sacrificial closures on the altar that Gormley sought to label 'progress'.

Gormley saw 'new realism' as another opportunity to make the industry even fitter to compete, a continuum of his adherence to Coal Board business strategy, in which he accepted that coal was competing in a near free market for fuel well before the ACP. Post-1965, Gormley approved of the ACP with its intensification of closure of 'under-performing' collieries. Gormley's twin-track approach was one of accepting pit closures, adopting all manner of tactical manoeuvres to ensure they succeeded and rebuffing the dissent they created. The other was genuinely and successfully piloting the industrial objectives of those who remained inside the industry at the two new collieries and surviving re-constructions where performance could be improved and rewarded. Vincent continued this strategy in a more effective and systematic way. Mineworkers remaining in the industry were thus left giving thanks for deliverance from the evils of the ACP while singing the praises of Gormley, and later Vincent, in bringing improved wages and conditions. This strategy became clearer as the industry settled back into stability after the events of 1967-68.

One factor assisting this strategy was the character of the ACP. In contrast to pre-1965 rationalisation, the ACP resulted in less intra-coalfield manpower transfer because of the higher rate of job attrition and reduction in the number of receiving 'places'. Although transfers were problematic prior to 1965 the coalfield managed to absorb the majority of

those affected. Under the ACP the situation was reversed with only a small proportion of those involved in closure being absorbed by remaining collieries. Absorption possibilities were further reduced by the number of collieries which closed during the late 1960s and 1970s which were not included in the 1965 announcement. These closures saw only 20 per cent of their workforces absorbed into the industry either in Lancashire or other coalfields. Prior to 1965 it was the reverse with 80 per cent absorption not untypical.¹³⁵ The majority of miners affected by the 'unscheduled' closures of the late 1960s left the industry altogether. Throughout the late 1960s there were thus smaller numbers of miners remaining inside the industry who had recent direct experience of closure.

As a result there were fewer aggrieved mineworkers festering inside the industry and an increase in the relative size of Gormley's support at the remaining recently developed or re-constructed collieries which both Gormley and Vincent were able to control with the backing of the majority of mineworkers. These were branches at Agecroft, Astley Green (before closure), Golborne, Parkside and Plank Lane (Bickershaw-Parsonage). Both Gormley and Vincent could even point to some support in the St. Helens district, notably at Cronton, while Hapton Valley in North East Lancashire was not completely beyond their reach. The 1967-68 unrest saw branches unaffected by closure and closures threats offering succour to the protests, but remaining essentially under leadership control. It is important to note that Bickershaw-Parsonage was under closure threat for much of the late 1960s yet remained passive, save for a flicker of protest at the time of the ACP announcement in 1965 in response to the Clock Face 'revolt'.¹³⁶

The return of some stability to the industry, combined with the leadership's ability to deliver improved pay and conditions ensured that the authority and popularity of both Gormley and Vincent was maintained for the majority of the 'rank-and-file' at these collieries. The character of the ACP thus greatly perpetuated the distinctions between the 'winners' and 'losers' of industrial change in which the 'winners' progressively occupied the majority. This polarisation was a powerful force for reinforcing a sense of division among the 'rank-and-file'. For those remaining in the industry, with a guaranteed future in the greater security that the 1970s promised, Gormley represented the most successful figure in the NUM for obtaining beneficial improvements to his members - or at least those who remained in the industry.

Finally, for the leadership, there was an added bonus from the ACP. It divested them of their pestilent priests. The majority of the coalfield's 'militant' activists were swept away by closures. Not that they had played a significant part in the response to the ACP, with the exception of Joe Ryan. All, including Ryan, had been pre-occupied with the 'battle for coal' in attempts to save their threatened collieries. The triumvirate of Clarke, Weaver and Woolley were holed-up at Mosley Common engaged in the bid to save the colliery until redundancy beckoned in 1968. A similar fate awaited Ryan at Bradford. These activists posed a potential threat to the NUMNWA leadership. They were neutralised by the ACP. Moreover, Clarke and Woolley signalled their tacit acceptance of the 'reality' of the new regime for fuel. Weaver became a much constrained and pre-occupied figure. In terms of the 'rank-and-file' protest of 1967-68 they were yesterday's heroes whose zenith of importance had passed. Factionalism in Lancashire based around territoriality and personality had once again proved a far more powerful influence on events than ideology as the 'militant' activists showed no inclination to link up with spontaneous 'rank-and-file' protest confined to specific collieries and districts fronted by senior union officials. The removal, at a stroke, of four leading activists left only Jimmy Dowd at Bold colliery as the coalfield's remaining 'militant' voice. As Howell notes, Dowd "stood virtually alone" "as an advocate of the left position".¹³⁷ The chastened position of the left stood in stark contrast to the impressive resilience of Labour hegemony during the late 1960s, despite the opprobrium heaped on Labour through 'rank-and-file' protest.

Clearly, 'rank-and-file' unrest produced a sharper critique of Labour policy, but how widespread was criticism of Labour in the coalfield? Had it the strength to overturn Government policy? The chances of this happening were extremely slim indeed. Support for Labour was effective in maintaining the passivity of those sections of the 'rank-and-file' uninvolved in the events of 1967-68. From early on in the process the NUMNWA leadership had made it clear that whatever Labour did to coal it would remain loyal. This was a view echoed by delegates on numerous occasions even as criticism of Labour policy mounted.¹³⁸ The belief thus prevailed that the Government could have closed the coalfield completely but Lancashire miners would have remained loyal to Labour. Loyalty to Labour was a fundamental fact of political life. Labour's hegemony had been developed over half a century. It was so entrenched that industrial change was unlikely to wrest it

from the party's grip. Politically, the Lancashire miners would not shift their allegiance because there was nowhere else to go.

A high level of continuing support was reinforced by a belief that Labour would honour its pledges on economic and social amelioration as further contraction took hold. In spite of growing disquiet over Labour's ability to deliver on this issue it continued to be seen as the party most likely to bring industrial diversification. For all these reasons Labour's position was unassailable. The extent of Labour's clear political advantage undoubtedly influenced political decisions to embark upon further contraction along with the widespread acceptance it received from the NUMNWA leadership and Labour in the coalfield.

The maintenance of Labour's integrity throughout the ACP was greatly assisted by the NUMNWA leadership muddying the waters. Personalised blame shifting to mining MPs and focusing on faceless bureaucrats and technocrats all served to help keep the Government clear of political fallout, as did the stout defence of Labour's record on coal.

Having established how opposition to the ACP was contained the question is whether these events left a 'legacy'. There was a 'legacy' from the experience of the events of 1967-68 in the way it fed into rising industrial militancy. The 'legacy' also influenced coalfield politics from the end of the 1960s. Both these processes had unexpected twists. In terms of rising industrial militancy Lancashire's experience of industrial change influenced debates over its involvement in the big industrial struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s. These had origins not in industrial change but questions of wages and conditions which had continued unabated, mainly as a result of the implementation of the National Power Loading Agreement (NPLA) in 1966. From the end of the 1960s growing militancy in the Yorkshire coalfield influenced these issues.¹³⁹

It was the intervention of 'flying pickets' from Yorkshire, mainly from the Doncaster Panel, during the surface worker's dispute in the autumn of 1969 which indicated there was a hangover from the experience of the ACP which affected sentiment in Lancashire. There was a call for a national strike over shorter working hours and wage increases for surface workers. The NUMNEC voted to reject strike action. This resulted in mineworkers taking unofficial action in many coalfields with the lead coming from Yorkshire. The

Yorkshire miners 'visited' pits in Lancashire to 'persuade' Lancashire miners to join the unofficial action. Unsurprisingly, Vincent condemned the invaders from over the Pennines as "anarchists".¹⁴⁰

However, it was the reaction of delegates which proved more interesting. Reaction in Lancashire was at best mixed with a general atmosphere of hostility toward Yorkshire intervention. Hostility arose because intervention from Yorkshire was traditionally resented in Lancashire pits. The mood of rejection stemmed, in part, from a belief that the modern productive Yorkshire coalfield had successfully challenged Lancashire for most of the twentieth century. This helped inflame hostility which Vincent adeptly manipulated. There were also objections to the direct methods of the Yorkshiremen in demanding an unofficial response from Lancashire rather than to entering into negotiations with the Coal Board. Above all, there was a widespread belief that a dispute, official or unofficial, would seriously compromise Lancashire's ability to compete in the market for coal. Arguments in favour of 'new realism' predominated in an overwhelming rejection of the Yorkshire intervention. This view prevailed among the 'rank-and-file' at a majority of collieries the 'flying pickets' visited which were under NUMNWA leadership control or were under threat of closure such as Astley Green and Sutton Manor. The only measure of success for the Yorkshiremen came at Agecroft.¹⁴¹

Within the 'rejectionist' position there were a number of notable exceptions. There was too a more favourable response to Yorkshire intervention when this was discussed by union delegates in the calmer atmosphere of the miners' offices rather than the edgy and dangerous 'head-to-head' confrontations at the colliery gates. For example, there was 'trouble' at Bold colliery not between Lancashire and Yorkshire miners but between those who supported the Yorkshire intervention and those who opposed it with many Bold men voting with their feet and joining the unofficial dispute. The Bold delegate noted that he might not be able to control those at the pit who wanted to support the dispute. Here, Jimmy Dowd was forging links with the left in other coalfields, particularly Yorkshire, through a 'rank-and-file' group known as the 'Miners Forum'. This loose gathering of the 'rank-and-file' political left within the NUM was involved in criticism of the NUM leadership and calls for greater democracy within the union. At Bank Hall colliery the welcome mat was rolled out for Yorkshire miners because it was felt that it was only direct

action which would bring a quick and successful resolution of the issues. Bank Hall miners supported a national strike. Delegates from Cronton and Sutton Manor in the St.Helens district and Hapton Valley in North East Lancashire were more cautious. However, there were positive signs that they were prepared to give qualified support to the Yorkshiremen, subject to "proper channels" being used to initiate a national strike. Other delegates, including those under leadership control, echoed this view.¹⁴²

There were indications that the mood was changing in favour of a willingness to break the shackles of 'new realism' and join the fray. The Yorkshire 'militants' were at least given a hearing from a wide audience, with tangible signs of positive backing. Significantly, there was growing support for leaving aside concerns over the damage that a dispute might have on 'new realism' especially in North East Lancashire and St.Helens districts. Miners here were in a volatile mood. They demonstrated that for the first time in Lancashire since the industrial unrest of the late 1940s they were prepared to throw caution to the wind. The unrest of 1967-68, caused by the bitter experience of closures and closure threats, was nourishing an ominous climate at collieries in these districts. It was as if the experience of 1967-68 had helped them re-discover their voice of protest. It is not without coincidence that it was pits in these districts which were in the vanguard of protest again. Importantly, those involved in the protest of 1967-68 at pits in Burnley and St.Helens remained substantially inside the industry rather than having left it.

To confirm that reaction to the 1969 surface worker's dispute was no aberration, the events of autumn 1970 once again saw Lancashire debating its response to impending large-scale industrial action. On this occasion it was an overtime ban: the situation was far more serious. Again, it was a demand for national strike action over the wages issue against the newly elected Conservative Government which precipitated events. An uncertain outcome to a strike ballot both nationally and in Lancashire led to industrial action in several coalfields. In Lancashire, the response was an unofficial overtime ban, which was under threat of removal by the NUMNWA leadership. The coalfield was pitched into confusion, chaos and turmoil. Again, St.Helens district was in the eye of the storm leading the counter attack on the NUMNWA leadership. Bold and Sutton Manor once again figured prominently as the epicentres of trouble as they became involved in the unofficial dispute. The situation was so grave that the majority of St.Helens district was operating virtually as

an autonomous body detached from the control of the NUMNWA with Joe McDermott as *de facto* leader. This dispute had produced the much-feared schism within the union with a situation on the verge of fragmentation.¹⁴³

Another poisonous clash between Gormley and McDermott was a certainty after McDermott angrily told Gormley he had "a set of stooges" for an executive committee. The distance St. Helens district had moved from the central authority of the NUMNWA in the space of just two years can be measured by the judgement of Lawrence Cunliffe. Cunliffe was Walkden Craftman's delegate; a figure in the ascendancy on the right and a leadership loyalist who later became Labour MP for Leigh. He asserted "there were two official policy making bodies within the North Western Area - the Conference and St. Helens Miners' Central Panel". A complete break between St. Helens miners and the NUMNWA was only narrowly averted during this dispute as centripetal tendencies re-asserted themselves.¹⁴⁴ These events confirmed that the whole district had become a focus for militancy. This situation persisted beyond the period with which this study is concerned and included a more complete leftward lurch at Cronton. Similarly, in North East Lancashire, despite Bank Hall's closure in 1971, rising militancy at the remaining colliery of Hapton Valley was reinforced by the infusion of a small number of miners transferred from Bank Hall.¹⁴⁵

Although rising industrial militancy did not threaten the overall control exercised by Gormley and Vincent and their supporters, these events served to confirm that the unrest of 1967-68 had left permanent marks on the industrial politics of the coalfield. A hitherto vice-like leadership grip was beginning to loosen with the most forceful expression of factionalist tendencies since the inter-war period.

The twist in the industrial politics of the Lancashire miners during the late 1960s was not the role played by St. Helens and North East Lancashire districts, but the reaction of more passive collieries in the coalfield. The 1970 overtime ban crisis began with an action involving Plank Lane branch (Bickershaw-Parsonage collieries) and quickly spread to collieries which had not been involved in the events of 1967-68 such as Agecroft and Parkside, ordinarily within the leadership yoke. The paths which led to this development were complex and varied. They were unrelated directly to industrial change. The rising

influence of the left outside the coalfield was clearly one factor. However, the experience of industrial change was important in the way it induced 'rank-and-file' militancy throughout the coalfield.¹⁴⁶

One aspect was how delegates justified their support for the rising tide of militancy. The language delegates used, as they tentatively contemplated involvement, related directly to their experience of industrial change. Phrases used in 1969 are suggestive: "we have come a long way"; "we have nothing to lose" and "after all we have been through in Lancashire" were typical. These were clear references to industrial change.¹⁴⁷ For those remaining in coal by the end of the 1960s there was recognition of the unique position they enjoyed. They were survivors who had survived to see stability return. Within calculations of what could be achieved through increased militancy to attain industrial objectives the 'rank-and-file' inputted an incremental value-added as a bonus or recompense for their troubles. Experience of industrial change affected how they perceived support for industrial demands. Undeniably, this was only made possible with the return of stability for the industry.

However, experience of industrial change had emboldened the 'rank-and-file' at more quiescent collieries. Industrial contraction through closure and threat of closure would usually be seen as a force for passivity. It could be counter-productive if applied in profusion particularly if assurances appeared to be broken. There was a sense that the 'rank-and-file' had seen so many closures and threats that this increased, rather than diminished, the confidence with which they approached industrial issues. The way in which they were beginning to shrug off dire warnings about the detrimental effects of industrial action on the coalfield was a good indication of this mood. The collective experience of industrial change was thus instrumental in reducing their fear of the bugbear of 'new realism'. There was a distinct feeling among the remaining 'rank-and-file' that they were 'fireproof' by the end of the 1960s. There was an unprecedented recklessness abroad in Lancashire. From the late 1960s, for those remaining in coal, the mood of what Howell describes as one of "demoralisation" over industrial change was beginning to lift.¹⁴⁸

NUMNWA leadership attempts to quell rising militancy contributed to this mood. The leadership had accepted an unparalleled level of contraction while prioritising the needs of those remaining in the industry. The ACP saw more 'winners' remain within the rump of the industry than under modernisation and rationalisation up to 1965. The 'losers' had largely left the industry altogether. A sharper distinction between 'winners' and 'losers' under the ACP, combined with leadership eagerness to attend to the needs of 'winners' translated directly into rising 'rank-and-file' expectations. A sense of 'survivability', together with enhanced expectations, was a powerful force for increased militancy across the coalfield. When this was added to the return of stability for coal together with the growing influence of the left the result was an insatiable demand for more by the remaining 'rank-and-file'. The leadership found these demands difficult to keep in check as Lancashire joined the increasingly militant mood which led directly to the events of 1972 and the first national strike since 1926.

Increasing industrial militancy at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s was matched by the rise of new elements on the left in coalfield politics. The surprising feature of this development was the strength and scope enjoyed by a diverse gathering of left-wing interests. Again, the experience of industrial change was important. One memorable example was at Wigan. Throughout the late 1960s there was growing dissatisfaction with Alan Fitch which was prevented from becoming something more potent by internal political divisions within Wigan Trades Council and Labour Party. The trades council was dominated by the major unions in the area, chief of which had traditionally been the miners. The Labour Party in Wigan was an assembly of constituency socialist political interests. The party witnessed the growing influence of the left during the 1960s among members and through the influence of various left-wing groups. The Socialist Labour League had attempted to seize control of the youth section. Later, an assortment of left-wing interests including Communist and Trotskyist 'entrists' of the 'old left' and a variety of individuals from the 'New Left' held a marginal, but vocal presence, on the fringes of the constituency Labour Party.¹⁴⁹

Criticism of Fitch from these elements had been held in check by the trades council which held the key to the constituency and continuing support for Fitch. Two developments upset this balance. The influential position of the once powerful Wigan miners' panels was

receding. Other interests in organised labour were eclipsing the miners on the trades council, mainly the Amalgamated Union of Engineers and Foundrymen (AEF) who were to the left of the NUMNWA. The Wigan branches of the AEF included both members in engineering and iron and steel who worked locally and those who travelled to work elsewhere in the region. These growing sectional interests on the trades council were much more responsive to the left in Wigan than the NUMNWA.¹⁵⁰

The second development was Jimmy Dowd's accession to the chairmanship of Wigan Trades Council, supported by two Communist delegates. Though Dowd was branch secretary of Bold colliery in St.Helens he was a native of Wigan having contested local council seats for the CPGB during the 1950s and assisted Weaver's campaigns in the constituency.¹⁵¹ Dowd was the leading figure on the left in the St.Helens and Wigan areas. During the late 1960s an alliance of political interests developed in these areas including former and working miners, militant engineers, other workers in organised labour and a diverse gathering of groups and individuals on the left. At its fulcrum was Jimmy Dowd. His ability to mobilise these diverse groups was partly testimony to his own political eclecticism typified by his willingness to talk to individuals or groups many of his colleagues, both in the NUM and CPGB, would have disavowed.¹⁵²

This alliance embarked on a crusade against Alan Fitch with the object of unseating him. Criticism of Fitch included his stance on incomes policy, views on the Vietnam War, and more latterly, support for the industrial relations legislation. His pro-Common Market position and multilateralism had irritated the left since he took the Wigan seat in 1958. However, it was his alleged inaction on coal contraction which occupied centre stage. Criticism was as much over alleged failure to match promises on industrial diversification as it was over allegations of having ignored colliery closures.¹⁵³

Matters reached a head in September 1969 at a meeting of Wigan Labour Party. The meeting came toward the end of a protracted and bitter dispute of engineering workers at British Leyland plants in Chorley and Leyland led by 'militant' convenor Len Brindle. Many of the workers at the plants came from the Wigan and St.Helens areas, having sought employment there due to lack of opportunities in the coalfield. Fitch was due to speak on his support for the Government's industrial relations legislation. The meeting was

thrown into pandemonium. Inside the Labour club where Fitch attempted to address the meeting he was barracked, while outside placard waving demonstrators were involved in scuffles and fist fights with pro-Fitch supporters and the police trying to keep the two groups apart. Fitch blamed the disruption on "Communists, Trotskyists and left-wing elements". That was only a part of it. Both inside the meeting and on the streets among the duffle-coated 'lefties' were engineers, working miners and ex-pit men, many whom now worked in engineering. Fitch asked "what had a strike at Leyland Motors to do with his meeting" ?¹⁵⁴ Many of those disrupting the meeting had voted for Fitch and been part of NUMNWA structures which had supported him for so long. The ex-pit men among the engineers owed their politicisation not to the pits of the Wigan area, where the NUMNWA and Labour had exercised its hegemony, but to the machine shops of central Lancashire.

Criticism of Fitch and attempts to remove him continued into the 1970s. In 1970 there was an effort to prevent Fitch re-affirming his candidature ahead of the 1970 general election through a no confidence motion mounted by the anti-Fitch camp within the trades council and Labour Party. In 1971 Fitch's abstention from the Common Market vote provoked a resignation campaign headed by Dowd and the Bold branch committee. Accompanying the attacks on Fitch the question of coal contraction was writ large. He was accused of a lack of "personal commitment" to the area, having been inert when closures occurred, and of languor in attempts to bring new economic and social development to the coalfield because he had been too close to the Labour Government. He was condemned as a "high handed" Labour "lackey" and "traitor"; "the man who closed the coalfield". The significance of this campaign was its strength and the fact the NUMNWA leadership did not come directly to the aid of its besieged sponsored MP. The NUMNWA leadership were concerned, but Vincent remained steadfastly on the sidelines. The campaign, spear-headed from Bold colliery, claimed exclusive support in St. Helens district: from Bold, Cronton and Sutton Manor together with St. Helens craftsman's branch and importantly included Parkside within its ambit - a most serious development.¹⁵⁵

The campaign to remove Fitch eventually ran out of steam. It foundered because although mobilisation of the left around Dowd was some feat, it was inherently unstable because of the diverse composition of participants. The only objective which united them was removing Fitch. Moreover, the campaign was flawed because it concentrated too much on

Alan Fitch. It was an overtly personalised campaign of political vilification. The left's objective of taking a notable regional political scalp was misplaced because it descended into a political vendetta against Fitch. It was no secret that Dowd had been looking for an opportunity to 'ambush' Fitch for years. As a 'get Fitch' strategy it also failed because it allowed for the galvanisation of a pro-Fitch counter campaign which made a success of defending the MP. A majority pro-Fitch group managed to repulse handsomely the no confidence vote in 1970 and overturn a motion in 1971 from Wigan Trades Council and Labour Party to withdraw financial support for the Labour Party.¹⁵⁶ It was flawed too because it made the mistake of heaping blame on a mining MP in the same way as the NUMNWA leadership had done in 1967 during the blame shifting exercise. The composition and scale of the campaign worried Vincent, as did the attack on the NUMNWA's leading Labour spokesperson. However, Vincent knew that criticism of the MP diverted attention from an examination of the NUMNWA leadership's role in contraction. He could afford to let matters take their course in the expectation that Fitch would re-assert himself.

The fact that the Dowd campaign failed is less important than what it said about how much coalfield politics was changing as a result of industrial change and what this might portend for the future. The campaign demonstrated that industrial change had begun to have implications for the previously unshakeable grip of the NUMNWA and Labour in the coalfield. Contraction meant the structures of mutual political support between the NUMNWA and Labour were being gradually eroded. Never again would the relationship exercise the same influence and power it had enjoyed for most of the twentieth century. In constituencies across the coalfield the influence of the NUMNWA was waning. With it came the rising importance of other groups in organised labour on the trades councils. Many were further to the left than the Lancashire miners. Above all, the declining influence of the NUMNWA, together with the decline of organised labour generally, saw the balance of power shift from the trades councils to the constituency Labour Parties. These developments presented opportunities for the left both within the Labour Party and outside it.

It was not only the loosening of NUM-Labour hegemony through the disintegration of the institutional structures of the NUMNWA and declining numbers in mining which was

important.¹⁵⁷ It was an increasing willingness to question the validity of hegemony for the first time. The Dowd campaign contained elements of a critique developing across the coalfield. This was a retrospective analysis of industrial change and the role the NUMNWA-Labour edifice had played in it. It was retrospective because the full impact of industrial change was only becoming apparent from the late 1960s. The analysis extended to include the whole post-war 'settlement' for coal under public ownership of which the NUMNWA and Labour in the coalfield had been such devotees. The conclusion being drawn was that the 'settlement' had not delivered desired objectives for the coalfield through the industrial change it launched because of the role played by the NUMNWA and Labour in dispensing industrial change. This issue was also linked to issues of democracy within the NUMNWA and Labour in the coalfield which had been of rising prominence throughout the 1960s.¹⁵⁸

Questioning the legitimacy of the relationship came from two main directions. The influence of a cogent 'New Left' analysis was gaining currency. This focused on the cohabitation and incestuous relationship enjoyed between the NUMNWA and the Coal Board, and the NUMNWA and Labour which were seen as squeezing the goodwill of mineworkers and coalfield community like a pulpless orange. The relationships were seen as highly influential in effecting coal contraction. These arguments were not unattractive to the 'old left' who had been critics of the status quo or who saw themselves as the 'losers' of industrial change. The extent to which Ince, Wigan and other coalfield constituency Labour Parties had moved to the left by the 1980s was partly symptomatic of both the weakening of NUM-Labour hegemony and of the growing credibility of these arguments. This was witnessed by the prominence of selection and de-selection issues.¹⁵⁹

Of equal importance to this developing analysis was a wider examination of the process of de-industrialisation. In the North West this introspection encompassed the gamut of staple industries. For instance, from the late 1960s, Dan Jones, the Labour MP for Burnley, was coming under intense constituency pressure over de-industrialisation in North East Lancashire, as indeed were many of his colleagues in the region as the full impact of de-industrialisation became clear. This wider examination brought within its remit de-industrialisation on Merseyside. The politics of de-industrialisation were beginning to have a more general application as the broader issues of modernisation were questioned. It is not

without some import that the CPGB chose Jack Kay to fight Alan Fitch for the Wigan seat at the 1970 general election. Kay was a Liverpool based Communist who made a strong connection between de-industrialisation in the coalfield and on Merseyside in an aggressive assault on the process in the region. Kay brought his experience of politics on Merseyside where modernisation had been central to reinforcing Labour's growing success in Liverpool during the 1960s. This process was undertaken by a city council dominated by the Labour right. It occurred against a backdrop of one of the severest episodes of localised de-industrialisation in Britain from the late 1960s which was the context in which rising militancy occurred on Merseyside. The politics of Liverpool and the coalfield were quite distinct. Yet, it is instructive to note there was convergence between the developing critique of Labour by the left in the two respective areas. Experience of de-industrialisation enabled both to identify common political elements. This process was with particular reference to developments on the left in the St. Helens and Wigan districts.¹⁶⁰

The analysis gave more prominence to the consequences of de-industrialisation than to the causes, focusing on the growing economic and social problems produced by industrial change. In the harsher economic climate of the 1970s issues of social deprivation and unemployment were thrust to the fore again in the coalfield as de-industrialisation extended beyond the staple industries to manufacturing industry more generally.¹⁶¹ In this way, the analysis by the left was less one of linking modernisation to de-industrialisation. It was directed at failure to tackle the outcomes of de-industrialisation. This was because the priorities of the coalfield community were, and indeed had always been, those concerned with the outcomes, rather than the causes of industrial change. In fact, it was as much an argument over a lack of modernisation for the coalfield to tackle the negative outcomes of de-industrialisation than a debate over the destructive processes that modernisation had unleashed. It illustrated that the central dilemma faced by the left over modernisation persisted.

Notwithstanding the continuing dilemmas of the left, it is clear that the terrain of political debate had been irrevocably altered as Labour in the coalfield faced a less certain and more uncomfortable time during the 1970s. Industrial change had thus some impact on political change. It is interesting to reflect how rapid this change had been. In the space of just over ten years the old certainties and verities that sustained NUM-Labour hegemony for over

half a century were now undergoing critical examination. It did not extend to a new dispensation for the coalfield. The strength and durability of Labour domination was enough to ensure it endured in spite of questioning. However, industrial change had initiated a loosening of this hegemony for the first time.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The response to the ACP was most important in the way all levels in the NUMNWA accepted the 'new realities' facing the industry. This level of acceptance did most to shape outcomes in the coalfield during the late 1960s. The character of the ACP was itself influential in limiting 'rank-and-file' protest. Discernible trends apparent during the period of modernisation and rationalisation up to 1965 continued under the ACP, but in a more distinctive way. The dimensions and dynamics of the ACP was a force for continued division rather than unity among the 'rank-and-file'. Similarly, 'rank-and-file' unrest arose out of the circumstances of specific closures and in certain districts. This came at a difficult juncture during 1967-68 when a large number of closures or closure threats took place within a short space of time raising anxieties over transfer and redundancy issues. The period marked the most perilous point for the cohesion of the NUMNWA during the prosecution of industrial change. The resultant factionalism threatened schism within the ranks of the Lancashire miners for the first time since before the Second World War.

Threats to cohesion were limited because reaction to the specific impact of the ACP failed to resonate throughout the coalfield at unaffected collieries. There was implicit recognition by the 'rank-and-file' that closures under the ACP were not the occasion for a demonstration of collective solidarity. Furthermore, although criticism of the Labour Government was heightened by the specific impact of the ACP there was never any possibility that fuel policy or further contraction would pose a threat to Labour's political domination. In this respect, the strategies employed by the NUMNWA leadership were successful in confining and containing 'rank-and-file' unrest and protecting the Government from criticism. The notion of 'new realism' enabled the leadership to sharpen 'rank-and-file' divisions through selective attention to the needs of those remaining in the industry. This strategy became more evident as stability began to return from the end of the

1960s. Similarly, a leadership strategy of relegating industrial change as an issue, combined with a renewed sense of partnership with the Coal Board, helped sustain 'rank-and-file' passivity.

However, there were permanent outcomes from these events. The experience of industrial change had an affect on rising industrial militancy from the late 1960s. These indelible marks altered the industrial politics of coal in Lancashire in a more profound way than at any time during the post-war period. Industrial change also began to manifest itself through political change. For the first time in the twentieth century NUM-Labour hegemony began to wane in the coalfield. Labour's previously unapproachable domination was compromised for the first time. For a coalfield whose industrial and political life had been set in stone for so long the 1960s marked a decade of extraordinary change. The events of the latter half of the decade were absolutely crucial in this process.

6.6 APPENDIX; TWO POEMS BY PETER DICCONSON

From the Colliery Guardian 29 September 1967 in response to the announcement that some pit closures would be delayed including Mosley Common following the intervention of Harold Wilson;

Untitled

They've got themselves their bit of cheer,
And advertised their bit of a soul,
But the cheering isn't in earshot here,
Furlongs down in a useless hole,
Slogging away at unwanted coal.

If there'd been a couple of hundred thou,
(Only that!) on the bleeding dole,
They'd have had me up in the queue by now.
Too add my name to the hopeless roll,

Of buggers who used to mine for coal.

They talk about our "short-sighted fears",
But *they* can look at the problem whole-
One eye on the votes in a couple of years,
And one upon last week's Gallup Poll,
And none of the buggers who dig the coal.

At least I've a winter digging coal,
I've much to be thankful for, think you,
(And I was bred a human mole!),
I'd feel more thankful if they'd a clue,
About what, *next* winter, they're going to do.

From 'The Lancashire Miner' No 9 January 1986. Reprint of a poem from February 1968 following the closure of Mosley Common Colliery:

The Cost of Coal

And so its true, Mosley Common did fall,
Our proudest pit has faced the call.

To stop the wheels, to end the losses,
Who was to blame, the men or bosses?

No more reprieves, targets or trials,
To test the Board's and the union's wiles.

Its finished now, the ends in sight,
No more the urge to sweat and fight.

For increased output and other natters,
The cost of coal, that's all that matters.

The cost of coal, aye, there's a figure,
To be reckoned up, there's none that's bigger.

In human cost, and men left lame,
Who, some cried out, "Should play the game".

What do they know, those who set the goal,
For the Common to reach, of the real cost of coal.

It's not for those who can do their sums,
Scribbling away at memorandums.

Nor for those at the top, or those in the House,
Who can add up figures, but haven't the nous.

To measure costs in human lives,
Not things like graphs with dives.

There's an army of men down Tyldesley way,
Who don't talk too much, but could probably say.

Why the millions spent on this showpiece pit,
Went down the drain, they forecast it!

¹ NUMWA, Week-End School Report, 11-12 December 1965: The weekend gatherings were henceforth styled as 'schools' rather than 'conferences' indicating that the function of these events was essentially educational aimed at informing and persuading participants as opposed to promoting debate and dialogue over industrial change.

² NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 11-12 December 1965.

³ NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 11-12 December 1965.

⁴ NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 11-12 December 1965.

⁵ Harmer, H, The Labour Party 1900-1998, 1999, Longman Companion, Longman, p.252: Ryan invoked a comment first ascribed to Aneurin Bevan made 29 September 1954 which "was assumed to refer to his ideological opponent Hugh Gaitskell".

⁶ NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 11-12 December 1965.

⁷ NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 11-12 December 1965.

⁸ NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 11-12 December 1965.

⁹ NUMNWA, ACM, 29 January 1966. PRO, File No POWE 52/87: 1966: Lobbying of MPs by members of the NUM 17 February 1966: Ministry of Power comment on press reports 31 January 1966.

¹⁰ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1966.

¹¹ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1966: President's Address: Jim Hammond.

¹² Wigan Observer 25 March 1966, 1 April 1966.

¹³ PRO, File No COAL 31/6: NCB Chairman's Department: Relations with Members of Parliament 1961 August-1965 December: Notes for Consideration by Miners' Group of MPs, Brief and Report of Mining MPs meeting with the Prime Minister 17 February 1965.

¹⁴ Evening Post and Chronicle 1 June 1985: A retrospective review of the career of Michael McGuire at the time of his de-selection for the Ince constituency.

¹⁵ Hansard 1965-66 Vol 720 9 November-19 November 1965, Queen's Speech Debate Second Day 10 November 1966; 1965-66, Vol 721 22 November-3 December 1965, 25 November 1965 Cols 801,802, 850, 851, 860: Coal Industry Bill Second Reading Debate.

¹⁶ Hansard Vol 755, 1967-68, 27 November- 8 December 1967, Cols 347-348, 357, 378, 388, 389; Vol 761 1967-68 18 March-29 March, 26 March 1968, Cols 1404-9,1410-1411,1416, 1421,1424-5: Fuel and Power Debates.

¹⁷ NUMNEC, Minutes of Meeting, 17 September 1964: General Election: North West. McClelland, A, 'The Mersey sound that Wilson doesn't like' Labour Monthly, May 1969. Guardian 3 May 1969, 30 October 1969. Liverpool Echo 11 January 1969. Liverpool Daily Post 27 April 1968, 16 August 1969, 22 October 1969, 29 October 1969, 15 January 1970, 7 January 1971, 20 January 1971, 19 July 1971. Daily Telegraph 22 October 1965, 1 November 1965, 8 November 1965. Ogden had a colourful and tragic personal and political life. On a personal level he was involved in a high profile divorce case while his son was killed in an accident. Politically, he was ensnared in Merseyside politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s in which he became a prominent figure denouncing and fighting growing industrial and political militancy in Liverpool within constituency Labour parties. Although he originated from Middleton near Manchester, Ogden had family connections in Liverpool and joined the merchant navy as a radio officer during the Second World War before he became a miner at Bradford colliery. During the late 1960s he was PPS to the President of the Board of Trade where he became embroiled with the immense task of working on the Merchant Shipping Bill. Also as chairman of Labour's Northern Ireland Committee he operated under a death threat and was involved in securing a pardon for Bernadette Devlin for her part in the Bogside riots.

¹⁸ NUMNWA, ACM, 6 November 1965.

¹⁹ Minkin, L, The Labour Party Conference: A Study in the Politics of Intra-Party Democracy, 1980 Paperback edition, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp.170,305. 'Rank-and-file' pressures were such that the 1968 Labour Party Conference was "stormed" by miners over Labour's fuel and further coal contraction policy during the conference chairman's speech. As Minkin notes, Joe Gormley, as a Labour NEC member, who "was known to take an accommodating position on pit closures".... "attacked the Government's policy with what some on the Committee considered merely 'ritual anger'".

²⁰ PRO, File POWE 52/274: 1967: Minister of Power: Meeting between Minister and Miner's MPs to discuss the coal industry, Minister's case papers and report of meeting with the Mining Group of MPs: Prospects for the Coal Industry 7 February 1967: Both McGuire and Ogden were present at this meeting and contributed to discussion. Alan Fitch was one of the three members of the 29 strong Mining Group who was absent.

²¹ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1967. NUMNWA, ACM, 16 September 1967.

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- ²² NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1967. NUMNWA, ACM, 16 September 1967.
- ²³ NUMNWA, ACM, 16 September 1967. NUMNWA, ACM, 18 November 1967: The MPs present at the 18 November meeting were the three NUMNWA-sponsored MPs: Fitch (Wigan), McGuire (Ince), Ogden (Liverpool West Derby). In addition the coalfield MPs included Boardman (Leigh), Jones (Burnley) and Price (Westhoughton). There were other North West MPs present at the meeting : Allaun (Salford East) and Carter-Jones (Eccles).
- ²⁴ NUMNWA, ACM, 18 November 1967.
- ²⁵ NUM, Special Conference Report, 15 March 1968. NUM, Annual Conference Report, 1968: Address by Wil Paynter. NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1968: Address by Wil Paynter.
- ²⁶ NUMNWA, ACM, 18 November 1967. NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1968: Address by Wil Paynter.
- ²⁷ NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 30-31 March 1968. NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 15-16 February 1969.
- ²⁸ NUMNWA, ACM, 16 September 1967: Jim Hammond's retirement speech.
- ²⁹ NUMNWA, ACM, 18 September 1971: Election of Sid Vincent, acting General Secretary, as General Secretary. NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1972: Report on change of senior officials since the last annual conference in 1971. Coal News: North Western Edition October 1971.
- ³⁰ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM: A Lancashire View, 1989, Manchester University Press, Manchester, p.37.
- ³¹ NUMNWA, ACM, 18 November 1967. Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, pp.19-20.
- ³² NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1970: Presidential Address: Sid Vincent.

³³ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1970: Presidential Address: Sid Vincent. NUMNWA, ACM, 18 September 1971 including Appendix: Report of the Production and Statistics Committee. NUMNWA, ACM, 16 June 1972: Report of the Production and Statistics Committee.

³⁴ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1970: Presidential Address: Sid Vincent. NUMNWA, ACM, 18 September 1971 including Appendix: Report of the Production and Statistics Committee. NUMNWA, ACM, 16 June 1972: Appendix: Report of the Production and Statistics Committee.

³⁵ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1970: Presidential Address: Sid Vincent. NUMNWA, ACM, 18 September 1971 including Appendix: Report of the Production and Statistics Committee. NUMNWA, ACM, 16 June 1972: Appendix: Report of the Production and Statistics Committee.

³⁶ NUMNWA, Special ECM, 14 January 1972: Discussion of Organisation of National Strike: Power Station Picket Deployments

³⁷ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1971: Presidential Address: Sid Vincent. NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1972: Presidential Address E.Dooley and Address by Lawrence Daly NUM General Secretary on the Situation in the Industry. NUMNWA, Minutes of Joint Meeting NUMNWA and NCBLA, 19 September 1972, Anderton House, Lowton, Warrington: Situation in Lancashire.

³⁸ These closures were at Albert colliery, Abram; Chanters colliery, Atherton, and Summersales colliery, Wigan, all in areas of the coalfield having already undergone severe contraction. Wood colliery, Haydock was closed in 1971. It had been scheduled to close under the second phase of the ACP announced in November 1965. The closure at Clock Face has been detailed in the previous chapter. The closures at Ellerbeck colliery and Chisnall Hall colliery have been mentioned in the previous chapter.

³⁹ The closures in the Manchester District were at Bradford, Bedford and Mosley Common.

⁴⁰ In the St.Helens district the Clock Face closure has already been mentioned. The other closures and partial closures during the late 1960s and early 1970s were at Ravenhead and Wood with a

partial closure at Sutton Manor. In North East Lancashire there was closure of seven collieries at Fir Trees, Old Meadows, Hill Top, Deerplay, Huncoat, Thorney Bank and Bank Hall.

⁴¹ NUMNWA, ACM, 23 March 1968.

⁴² Colliery Guardian 6 January 1967, 10 February 1967, 3 March 1967, 5 May 1967 :

John Brass had previously been West Midlands divisional chairman. Prior to becoming Production Director NCBNWD in January 1961, James Kimmins had been Deputy Director of Operations at NCBHQ. His early career was spent in the Warwickshire and Yorkshire coalfields. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 223: 1963 Jan: National Plan: September 1962 Review: Re-organised Area Management Structure with new collieries: East and West Lancashire. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 258: Area No 3 (St.Helens) General Manager: 1960 May-1961 March: Re-organisation of West Lancashire. At nationalisation the coalfield was divided into four sub-regions: Burnley, Manchester, St.Helens and Wigan. Re-organisation in March 1961 created just two sub-regions: East and West Lancashire. However, the sub-regions retained management structures within the two new areas. These structures disappeared altogether following further re-organisation in 1967.

⁴³ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 278: NCBNWD East Lancashire Area: General Manager: 1961 July: Bradford colliery: Report: Exercise on Future Policy. Manchester Evening News 24 April 1966.

⁴⁴ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 254: 1958 Improving Colliery Results: NCBNWD No 2 (Wigan) Area: Special Reports: Unprofitable Collieries: Bedford Colliery 13 February 1958. Leigh, Tyldesley and Atherton Journal 27 July 1967, 5 October 1967. Bedford colliery came under the control of Wigan district until 1961 when it was transferred to the new East Lancashire Area. Thereafter, it was considered as part of the Manchester district. Bedford colliery was situated in a township of the same name abutting east Leigh. It was on the border of the Wigan and Manchester districts under the original coalfield sub-divisions at vesting date.

⁴⁵ Manchester Evening News 28 December 1967, 9 February 1968.

⁴⁶ Manchester Evening News 31 July 1967: Inter-coalfield transfers for Lancashire miners announced for the first time at the time of the Bedford closure. A 'Pick-your-Pit' recruitment van visited the colliery. The scheme was henceforth used at most closures in Lancashire. The scheme

allowed miners to transfer to other coalfields and offered them some choice over coalfield and colliery along with what the Coal Board considered was an attractive package of removal and re-settlement benefits. The choice of destination was in reality dictated by Coal Board recruitment demands in the more promising coalfields such as the East Midlands and South Yorkshire. The Bedford men were offered jobs at two of the largest and most modern collieries in Britain: Kellingley in Yorkshire and Bevercotes in Nottinghamshire.

⁴⁷ Manchester Evening News 1 September 1967.

⁴⁸ Manchester Evening News 9 February 1968.

⁴⁹ Guardian 15 July 1967. Leigh, Tyldesley and Atherton Journal 15 October 1967.

⁵⁰ Guardian 15 July 1967, 18 July 1967. Leigh, Tyldesley and Atherton Journal 27 July 1967.

⁵¹ Manchester Evening News 10 June 1962, 16 August 1962, 17 August 1962, 16 October 1962, 21 September 1964. Guardian 16 August 1962, 16 October 1962, 2 April 1963, 22 May 1964. Gorton and Openshaw Reporter 10 August 1962.

⁵² Manchester Evening News 20 April 1966. Manchester Evening Chronicle 20 April 1966.

⁵³ Denton Times 30 January 1966. Manchester Evening News 29 March 1966. East Manchester Reporter 1 April 1966.

⁵⁴ Manchester Evening News 20 January 1967.

⁵⁵ Manchester Evening News 22 December 1965, April 20 1966, 20 January 1967. Guardian 22 December 1965.

⁵⁶ Manchester Evening Post 22 December 1965. Guardian 22 December 1965.

⁵⁷ Denton Times 30 January 1966. Manchester Evening News 20 April 1966. Guardian 31 January 1968.

⁵⁸ Gorton and Openshaw Reporter 2 February 1968.

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- ⁵⁹ Guardian 31 January 1968. Gorton and Openshaw Reporter 2 February 1968.
- ⁶⁰ Guardian 31 January 1968.
- ⁶¹ Guardian 31 January 1968.
- ⁶² Gorton and Openshaw Reporter 2 February 1968.
- ⁶³ Guardian 31 January 1968.
- ⁶⁴ Guardian 31 January 1968. Manchester Evening News 22 July 1968.
- ⁶⁵ East Manchester Reporter 1 April 1966.
- ⁶⁶ Manchester Evening News 20 April 1966.
- ⁶⁷ Coal News and Pit Prop August 1965.
- ⁶⁸ Manchester Evening News 20 January 1967.
- ⁶⁹ Manchester Evening News 30 April 1968.
- ⁷⁰ Gorton and Openshaw Reporter 2 February 1968. Denton Times 30 January 1968.
- ⁷¹ Manchester Evening News 7 June 1968.
- ⁷² NUMNWA, ACM, 13 July 1968: Bradford colliery closure debate including Appendix: Report by Mining Engineer to Joe Gormley 12 July 1968. Manchester Evening News 19 July 1968.
- ⁷³ Manchester Evening News 24 June 1968, 19 July 1968.
- ⁷⁴ Manchester Evening News 15 June 1968: The three Manchester MPs involved were Charles Morris (Manchester Openshaw), Paul Rose (Manchester Blackley) and Ken Marks (Manchester Gorton). The three MPs, together with Eric Ogden, campaigned for a sixth-month reprieve from closure because of the impact on other industrial sectors in the east Manchester area. The Bradford

NUM branch committee commented that a reprieve would only delay the inevitable for them. They demanded that the colliery stay open permanently. Hansard Vol 767, Session June 24-July 5 1968, 2 July 1968: Oral Answers Cols 30-32: Rose and Ogden questioned the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Power Mr.Reginald Freeson over a number of colliery closure announcements in the Lancashire coalfield including Bradford colliery. The purpose was to obtain a short reprieve for the threatened collieries. Hansard Vol 767, Session June 24-July 5 1968,1 July 1968: Written Answers Cols 12, 19,24: Involved Rose, Marks and Ogden dealing with the impact of the closure of Bradford colliery, re-deployment prospects and the impact of the closure on other economic sectors in east Manchester.

⁷⁵ Lancashire and Merseyside Development Association (LAMIDA), General Purposes Committee: 'The Coal Industry', 25 November 1959, Unpublished Typescript, produced by E.G.W.Allen, LAMIDA Director, Reference No B 30(2) P, St.Helens Metropolitan Archives and Local Studies, Gamble Institute, Victoria, Square, St.Helens. Guardian 31 January 1968,22 July 1968. Manchester Evening News 22 July 1968,6 September 1968.

⁷⁶ Manchester Evening News 6 September 1968.

⁷⁷ Manchester Evening News 14 June 1968,22 July 1968. Gorton and Openshaw Reporter 14 June 1968.

⁷⁸ Manchester Evening News 30 August 1968,6 September 1968.

⁷⁹ NUMNWA, ACM, 23 March 1968.

⁸⁰ St.Helens Newspaper 22 October 1968.

⁸¹ NUMNWA, ACM, 23 March 1968. NUMNWA,ACM, 13 July 1968.

⁸² NUMNWA, ACM, 23 March 1968. NUMNWA, ACM, 13 July 1968.

⁸³ Taped Interview with Jimmy Dowd, Reference C/14/85, St.Helens Oral History Collection, St.Helens Metropolitan Archives and Local Studies, Gamble Institute, Victoria Square, St.Helens;

⁸⁴ St.Helens Newspaper 22 October 1968.

⁸⁵ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1968.

⁸⁶ NUMNWA, ACM, 23 March 1968.

⁸⁷ NUMNWA, ACM, 23 March 1968.

⁸⁸ NUMNWA, ACM, 23 March 1968.

⁸⁹ Leigh Reporter 2 January 1969: Gormley's New Year message to Lancashire miners: Gormley cited the case of Sutton Manor and the St.Helens district. NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1969: Presidential Address: Sid Vincent. In the interim since the threat at Sutton Manor, Bickershaw and Parsonage Collieries, in Wigan district, had been placed on the 'jeopardy' list but similarly survived.

⁹⁰ Nadin, J, 'Burnley Area Coal Mines', n.d., Unpublished Bound Typescript, Burnley Central Library Local Studies, p.329. The closures were: Emelay at Bacup, Moorfield at Accrington, Townley Demesne at Burnley, Nabb at Bacup, Clifton at Burnley and Calder at Padiham with a partial closure of Salterford at Burnley. The closure of Townley Demesne was matched by the development of Salterford drift on the same site.

⁹¹ Between 1959 and 1965 closures were at Copy, Reedley and Wood End at Burnley, Fence at Brierfield, Hoddlesden at Darwen, Scaitcliffe at Accrington and Grime Bridge at Waterfoot, all in addition to the complete closure of Salterford.

⁹² The none-drift closures between 1947 and 1959 were at Calder, Clifton, Moorfield and Townley Demesne. Between 1959 and 1965 only Reedley at Burnley was a none-drift closure. The term 'Forest' is rather misleading because this denotes the arcane physical geography of the area. Both the Forest of Rossendale and Pendle were open Pennine moorland environments.

⁹³ Ormerod, I, 'The 1873 Coal Strike in Burnley: The Devon and Cornwall men and the families who came to the area', n.d., Unpublished Typescript, n.d. Burnley Central Library Local studies, pp. 2,10. Baron, K.F., The Book of Bacup, n.d., Baron Birch, Whittlebury, Northants, pp.36-37. Coal News North Western Edition May 1968. Taped Interviews: Mr J.Wilson, ID No 1985.0040A, Mr.Heys and Mr Bentley, ID No 1985.0041A, Mr Earnshaw ID No NSWA 0143A 1988, North West Sound Archive, Old Stewards Office, Clitheroe Castle, Lancashire.

⁹⁴ Coal News: North Western Edition and Pit Prop March 1962: Deerplay colliery Profile. Nadin, J, 'The Burnley Area Coal Mines', n.d., pp.153-154,157,159,329, 341-348. Baron, K.F., The Book of Bacup, n.d., p.52. The new drifts were at Fence, Fir Trees, Salterford and Thorney Bank while Deerplay was a re-constructed moorland drift.Fence was closed in 1960,Fir Trees in 1966 and Deerplay and Thorney Bank both in 1968.Salterford was partly closed in 1956 with complete closure in 1959

⁹⁵ Burnley Express 13 February 1957: Report of the re-development of Hapton Valley colliery to access new coal reserves. Nadin, J, 'The Burnley Area Coal Mines', pp.341-348: The development of Thorney Bank drift.

⁹⁶ Burnley Express 18 November 1959, 21 November 1959. PRO, File LAB/34/75:Ministry of Labour: Ledger of Entries: Trade Disputes 1959: All Industries: Coal Mining Region 10: North Western: Dispute at Reedley Colliery Burnley 17 November 1959.

⁹⁷ PRO, File No COAL 30/84: NCBNWD to NCBHQ: Board Reviewed Collieries Presently operating Uneconomically or at Low Productiveness: Burnley and North East Lancashire 14 November 1958. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 47:Deputy Divisional Chairman's Office: 1958 Oct-1959 May: Review of Collieries: Output Reduction in 1959 by Concentration: NCBHQ Secretary's Dept to NCBNWD Secretary's Dept 31 October 1958 and reply 14 November 1958: Special Note: Burnley. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 203:NCBNWD: Marketing Director: Organisation: Closure of Collieries 1962-1964: Town Clerk Burnley to Production Manager NCBNWD No 4 (Burnley) Area 5 September 1963. Burnley Express 6 October 1965.

⁹⁸ CEA, Annual Report and Accounts, 1957. Burnley Express 31 January 1967. Robens, Lord, Ten Year Stint, 1972,Cassell, pp.67, 292. The North West's first large new generation coal-fired power station was at Fiddlers Ferry near Widnes on the Mersey, commissioned in 1963.

⁹⁹ Burnley Express 26 November 1965: Lord Robens met with Dan Jones, Labour MP for Burnley, the mayor of Burnley, the NCBNWD chairman, James Anderton, and Leo Crossley NUMNWA miners' agent for North East Lancashire.

¹⁰⁰ Burnley Express 26 November 1965, 31 January 1967: Environmental objections to the Simonstone project played a part in its shelving. It would have been located in an area of natural

beauty in the Calder and Ribble valleys. However, CEGB priorities were more important in influencing the unfavourable decision against Simonstone.

¹⁰¹ Manchester Evening News 18 November 1965. Burnley Express 19 November 1965.

¹⁰² Burnley Express 26 October 1965, 18 November 1965.

¹⁰³ NUMNWA, ACM, 4 December 1965: Debate over Bank Hall closure threat. Burnley Express 29 October 1965, 2 November 1965, 14 December 1965: Dan Jones took the closure of the area workshops as far as Douglas Jay, the President of the Board of Trade.

¹⁰⁴ Burnley Express 29 October 1965, 2 November 1965, 19 November 1965, 26 November 1965.

¹⁰⁵ Burnley Evening Star 16 May 1968: Profile of Leo Crossley. Coal News North Western Edition June 1968: Profile and retirement of Leo Crossley.

¹⁰⁶ Burnley Express 3 January 1967, 29 December 1967.

¹⁰⁷ Burnley Express 11 April 1967, 29 December 1967, 9 January 1968.

¹⁰⁸ Burnley Express 11 April 1967. Padiham Advertiser 14 April 1967.

¹⁰⁹ Burnley Express and News 18 April 1953. Burnley Express 19 June 1965, 4 August 1965.

¹¹⁰ Burnley Express 29 December 1967, 2 February 1968, 7 February 1968, 12 July 1968. Burnley Evening Star 30 September 1967, 1 February 1968, 3 February 1968.

¹¹¹ Burnley Express 21 November 1959: The Prosperity Lodge ceased to exist after the closure of its last constituent colliery at Reedley in 1959.

¹¹² NUMNWA, ACM, 18 November 1967: Minute 42: Fuel Policy: Discussion of Fuel Policy initiated by Albert Dugan, Bank Hall colliery, following emergency resolution adopted by Bank Hall colliery branch, and subsequent debate. NUMLA, ACM, 19 August 1961: Dugan was a NUMLA delegate to the 1961 Labour Party conference at Blackpool. Burnley Express 19 March 1971: Profile of Albert Dugan following closure of Bank Hall colliery.

¹¹³ NUMNWA, ACM, 18 November 1967: Minute 42: Fuel policy: Discussion and Debate.

¹¹⁴ NUMNWA, ACM, 18 November 1967: Minute 42: Fuel Policy: Discussion and Debate.

¹¹⁵ Coal News: North Western Edition May 1968: Leo Crossley pays tribute to the late Frank Flynn MBE. Burnley Express and News 18 April 1953: Profile of Frank Flynn. That Dugan would be *de facto* leader was confirmed with the death of Frank Flynn in May 1968. Flynn like Crossley was a Labour stalwart and Burnley councillor who was branch secretary at Hapton Valley - the only colliery not under threat in North East Lancashire. Flynn remained an underground mineworker as a belt patrolman at Hapton Valley throughout his NUM and Labour Party career.

¹¹⁶ Burnley Evening Star 30 September 1967, 3 January 1968, 1 February 1968, 3 February 1968, 7 February 1968. Burnley Express 2 February 1968. Coal News: North Western Edition October 1967, February 1968.

¹¹⁷ Burnley Evening Star 1 February 1968, 3 February 1968. Burnley Express 12 July 1968.

¹¹⁸ Burnley Evening Star 16 May 1968, 28 June 1968.

¹¹⁹ Burnley Evening Star 16 May 1968. Coal News North Western Edition June 1968.

¹²⁰ Burnley Evening Star 3 January 1968, 10 January 1968, 1 February 1968, 3 February 1968, 20 May 1968. Burnley Express 29 December 1967, 12 July 1968: Barbara Castle's visit in December 1967 was particularly useful in furthering the Bank Hall case. Castle's visit was slightly ahead of Harold Wilson's a week later. Castle was MP for nearby Blackburn. Leo Crossley carried the added authority of the NUMNWA presidency in his retirement year 1967-68.

¹²¹ Burnley Evening Star 18 March 1971. Burnley Express 19 March 1971. Ministry of Power: Explosion at Hapton Valley Colliery, Lancashire, 22 March 1962, November 1962, Command Paper 1845, HMSO. NUMLA, ACM, 31 March 1962: Hapton Valley Colliery disaster.

¹²² Burnley Evening Star 18 March 1971. Burnley Express 19 March 1971. Nadin, J, The Coal Mines of East Lancashire, 1997, Northern Mines Research Society, British Mining No 38, Keighley, pp. 28-29.

¹²³ Leigh Reporter 23 April 1969.

¹²⁴ Leigh Reporter 23 April 1969, 27 June 1969.

¹²⁵ Leigh Reporter 21 May 1969.

¹²⁶ NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1969: Presidential Address: Sid Vincent. Leigh Reporter 18 June 1969.

¹²⁷ Leigh Reporter 19 November 1969.

¹²⁸ Leigh Reporter 18 June 1969: Report of rally and speech by Sid Vincent at Leigh Miners' Welfare Institute in support of the 'campaign' to save Astley Green colliery.

¹²⁹ Leigh Reporter 2 July 1969.

¹³⁰ NUMNWA, ACM, 21 March 1970: Sid Vincent in response to questioning of the Astley Green closure by a St.Helens delegate. Leigh Reporter 11 February 1970, 4 March 1970, 8 April 1970.

¹³¹ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, pp.16,61,79.

¹³² NUMNWA, ACM, 18 November 1967.

¹³³ NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 11-12 December 1965.

¹³⁴ NUMNWA, Annual, Conference Report, 1970: Speech by Joe Gormley on 'Wages': National officials reflected Gormley's views. Lawrence Daly, NUM National General Secretary, had made similar observations at the 1969 NUM National Conference. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1969: 10 July 1969: Morning Session: NUMNEC Report: Situation in the Coalmining Industry: Lawrence Daly.

¹³⁵ Coal News: North Western Edition January 1968. Manchester Evening News 11 August 1967, 9 February 1968. Burnley Evening Star 18 March 1971. Farnworth and Worsley Journal 26 September 1968. Leigh Reporter 8 April 1970. NUMNEC, Minutes of

Meetings 18 December 1966, 13 April 1967, 18 January 1968: Appendices: Situation in the Industry: Divisional Profiles. Of the nearly 8,000 workers involved in closures at Astley Green, Bedford, Bradford, Bank Hall, Deerplay, Huncoat, Mosley Common and Thorney Bank only 1,600 or 20 per cent retained a job in mining either in Lancashire or in other coalfields. The bulk of those - around 600 - were from Mosley Common. Absorption rates (the percentage of mineworkers retaining a job in mining in Lancashire or other coalfields) varied between individual closures during the late 1960s. However, the later stages of the ACP, saw much lower absorption rates. Thus some of the closures announced in November 1965 or the reprieves from 1959 successfully transferred the bulk of their workers. The later 'unscheduled' closures were more problematic. The aforementioned collieries were all 'unscheduled' except Bedford, Deerplay and Huncoat, but even here there were difficulties caused by premature closure. By the late 1960s and early 1970s absorption rates were typically around or below 20 per cent. For example, rates were down to 14 per cent and 18 per cent at Bank Hall and Astley Green respectively.

Both the NCB and NUM manipulated redundancy and transfer figures for presentational purposes to show them in a better light. This had been a feature since 1959. One typical ruse was quoting a separate figure for men undertaking "short-term salvage work" at affected pits rather than including them within the total of those "unplaced" within the industry. Similarly, those retiring from the industry were included in those 'placed', while figures were often those the NCB hoped to 'place' within the industry rather than actual placements successfully completed. Absorption rates were quoted as percentages of manpower retained inside the industry against manpower at closure. Peak manpower at the affected pits was much higher during the 1950s and early 1960s. Retention rates were favourably skewed in this way.

¹³⁶ Manchester Evening News 18 November 1965, 25 November, 26 November 1965. NUMNWA, ACM, 23 March 1968, 2 January 1969, 21 March 1970.

¹³⁷ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, p.12.

¹³⁸ NUMNWA, Week-End School Report, 11-12 December 1965. NUMNWA, ACM, 29 January 1966. NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1966: Presidential Address: Jim Hammond. NUMNWA, ACM, 18 November 1967.

¹³⁹ This receives treatment in Taylor, A, The Politics of the Yorkshire Miners, 1984, Croom Helm Ltd, Beckenham, particularly Chapter 7 pp.191-213: Unofficial Strikes and the Rise of the Left, 1969-1973.

¹⁴⁰ NUMNWA, Special Conference Report, 22 October 1969.

¹⁴¹ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1988, p.24. NUMNWA, Special Conference Report, 22 October 1969.

¹⁴² Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, pp.23-26: For a treatment of the surface workers dispute in the Lancashire coalfield. Allen, V.L. The Militancy of British Miners, 1981, The Moor Press, Shipley, pp.8-10, 11, 321. Taylor, A, The Politics of the Yorkshire Miners, 1984, pp. 150,175: Reference to the Barnsley Miners' Forum. NUMNWA, Special Conference Report, 22 October 1969. Taped Interview with Jimmy Dowd.

¹⁴³ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, pp.27-29: For a treatment of the overtime ban in the Lancashire coalfield. NUMNWA, Special Conference Report, 21 November 1970.

¹⁴⁴ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, pp.27-29. NUMNWA, Special Conference Report, 21 November 1970.

¹⁴⁵ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, pp.12, 79. Burnley Evening Star 21 March 1971.

¹⁴⁶ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, pp.27-29. NUMNWA, Special Conference Report, 21 November 1970.

¹⁴⁷ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, p. 28. NUMNWA, Special Conference Report, 22 October 1969.

¹⁴⁸ Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM, 1989, p.16

¹⁴⁹ Wigan Observer, 30 May 1969. Brown, D, 'The Labour Movement in Wigan, 1874-1967', 1969, Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Liverpool, pp.157-158,171: The three main far left groupings during the 1960s were the Socialist Labour League, the International Socialists and the Wigan Teachers' Defence Association. Brown was a Labour Party member in Wigan during

this period. He was a history and politics lecturer at Wigan College. Academics and students were well represented on the left of the Labour Party and within left-wing groups in the constituency during this period.

¹⁵⁰ Wigan Observer 30 May 1969. Brown, D, 'The Labour Movement in Wigan', pp.157-158, 181: NUMNWA influence was declining during the late 1960s, but was still influential in Ince and Wigan. Although most pits had closed in the Wigan district by the late 1960s many mineworkers lived in the area but worked at pits in other districts. The political influence of Wigan miners' panels, branches and collieries had disappeared but mining issues remained prominent while many ex-miners and working miners were still politically active in the district. The engineering trades had been prominent in Wigan for centuries. The growth of coal brought large-scale iron and steel production in the vicinity of the town. During the inter- and post-war periods re-organisation of the iron and steel industry in Lancashire saw foundry workers from Wigan travel to work at the Lancashire Steel Corporation's plant at Irlam. During the post-war period large numbers of workers from the Wigan area travelled to work in the expanding engineering centres of Chorley, Leyland and Preston.

¹⁵¹ Wigan Observer 30 May 1969. Wigan Examiner 6 June 1958. Brown, D, 'The Labour Movement in Wigan', 1969, p.171: Although relations between the Trades Council and Labour Party in Wigan are described as generally good throughout the 1960s there were some notable clashes, specifically over Fitch's multilateralism and pro-Common Market views. Another source of friction was the "frosty reception" Fitch gave to a demonstration of local textile workers in London in 1962.

¹⁵² Taped Interview with Jimmy Dowd: Dowd began his political life with the ILP and moved to CPGB. In later life, in 1981, he joined Labour. In more recent years he joined the Socialist Labour Party.

¹⁵³ Evening Post and Chronicle 9 April 1970. Wigan Observer 30 May 1969.

¹⁵⁴ Chorley Guardian 22 May 1969, 29 May 1969, 5 June 1969, 12 June 1969, 19 June 1969, 26 June 1969. Wigan Observer 30 May 1969, 6 June 1969.

¹⁵⁵ Evening Post and Chronicle 22 February 1970, 3 March 1970, 9 April 1970, 16 November 1971.
Daily Telegraph 10 April 1970. Wigan Observer 10 April 1970. Taped Interview with
Jimmy Dowd.

¹⁵⁶ Evening Post and Chronicle 16 November 1971. Daily Telegraph 10 April 1970. Wigan
Observer 10 April 1970.

¹⁵⁷ LCMF, Monthly Conference Report, Monthly Balance Sheet: Membership, 10 January 1920.
NUMLA, ACM, 31 December: Half-Yearly Balance Sheets. NUMNWA, ACM, 19
December 1970: Membership Table as at 31 December 1970. At the end of December 1970 the
NUMNWA had a membership of 13,367 of whom 10,303 were full paying members. Of those,
8,526 belonged to 14 colliery branches (a year later two more branches had disappeared). The rest
belonged to 9 branches of craft unions after the craftsmen become fully part of the Lancashire
union in 1966. This compared with eleven years previously when membership stood at 39,498 in
1959, of whom 33,524 were full-time members and 50 years previously in January 1920 when the
LCMF boasted a membership of 97,371 of whom 75,655 were full members organised into 117
branches.

¹⁵⁸ Wigan Evening Post 14 June 1985, 17 June 1985. Evening Post and Chronicle 13 May
1983, 1 June 1983, 3 February 1984. Wigan Observer 25 November 1982, 27 March 1987.
Taped Interview with Jimmy Dowd. Brown, D, 'The Labour Movement in Wigan',
1969, pp. 171, 18, 189.

¹⁵⁹ Wigan Evening Post 14 June 1985, 17 June 1985. Evening Post and Chronicle 13 May
1983, 1 June 1983, 3 February 1984. Wigan Observer 25 November 1982, 27 March 1987.
Taped Interview with Jimmy Dowd. Brown, D. 'The Labour Movement in Wigan', 1969, pp.
171, 181, 189.

¹⁶⁰ Wigan Observer 5 June 1970: Report of general election campaign, profile of CPGB candidate
Jack Kay and issues raised during the party's campaign in Wigan. Davis, S, Liverpool Labour:
Social and Political Influences on the Development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900-1939
, 1996, Keele University Press, Keele, Staffordshire. Davies, S, 'Times of Change - Liverpool
Trades Council 1948 - 1998' in 150 Years of Struggle: The Liverpool Labour Movement 1848-
1998, 1998, Pamphlet, Jim Dye (ed), Liverpool Trades Council, Liverpool, pp. 57-62.

¹⁶¹ Wigan Observer 5 June 1970. Davies, S, 'Times of Change-Liverpool Trades Council 1948-1998', 1998, pp.57-62.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CONSEQUENCES OF INDUSTRIAL CHANGE IN THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD

7.1 INTRODUCTION

An integral part of the modernisation of coal in Lancashire was the need to bring new investment to the coalfield to replace jobs lost in mining. This was an objective shared by government, the NUMLA, the Labour Party in the coalfield, local authorities and the coalfield community. It was based on an admission that coal would no longer play a central role. As industrial change proceeded so the desire for industrial diversification grew. This chapter examines the two obstacles which emerged to a successful transformation. The first was a failure by government to understand the specific context of the coalfield in its application of industrial and regional policies. The second was the dilemma faced by the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield in reconciling coal industry modernisation and coalfield modernisation because the two required different approaches. As this chapter will show, a failure to reconcile these competing aims became a recipe for political impasse and diversion. These policy and political failures between them produced disastrous consequences for the coalfield.

7.2 ASSUMPTIONS INFORMING INDUSTRIAL CHANGE IN THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD: A CRITIQUE

The necessity to modernise the coal industry had to take account of the contraction which resulted from rationalisation. This had been clear since the Second World War. It formed part of the 1950 Plan for Coal and subsequent amendments. These estimations had to assess not only the future reduced role for coal but also the capacity of the coalfield to absorb a high degree of contraction based on its urban morphology and economic, social and demographic characteristics. One assumption built into planning was that Lancashire

was able to undergo high levels of contraction without commensurate economic and social repercussions. Academic and government perceptions of the region in general, and the coalfield in particular, had informed these assumptions. These were based on official assessments of inter-war economic and social conditions and seen through the development of regional and industrial policy. These assumptions were crucially flawed. Importantly they endured throughout contraction of the coalfield from the late 1950s. They informed opinion on the scale of contraction and contributed to the coalfield's economic and social problems.

Chief among the misplaced views on the region and the coalfield was the question of homogeneity. Government-informed opinion during the inter-war period considered that the North West could be treated as a single entity. This was particularly the case when the region was compared with other 'depressed' regions. One criteria of economic and social deprivation was the degree of intra-regional industrial specialisation. It was believed that regional susceptibility to structural economic problems was a function of the degree of dependence on specialisation in declining industries. These estimations underscored the severity of economic and social problems within the region. It was argued that because only a relatively small proportion of the region's overall workforce were employed in coal mining compared with South Wales, for example, regional economic problems were less severe. Lancashire was only regarded as problematic in terms of its specialisation in textile weaving concentrated in North East Lancashire. It was believed that the North West was better placed than the other 'depressed' regions such as North East England, with its over-reliance on coal and shipbuilding, or South Wales, dependent on coal and iron and steel.¹

These assessments did not take account of the variegated situation in the North West. During the inter-war period there were large variations in experience of unemployment and underemployment not only between different parts of the North West but also within economic sub-regions, including the coalfield.² However, official interest rarely focused on these specific occurrences. Instead, it focused on inter-regional comparisons between 'depressed' areas where inter-regional and inter-coalfield comparisons showed Lancashire in a relatively favourable light despite some early and accurate warnings that ignoring intra-regional experience was a mistake.³ Despite a widespread acknowledgement that extensive areas of the region were 'depressed' governments persisted in believing that

Lancashire was able to attract new industrial growth unlike other 'depressed' regions.⁴ Although Lancashire did have a more diversified and vigorous industrial structure than other 'special' areas, this was absent from large parts of the region. There was a concentration of specialisation in coal in the central area of the South Lancashire coalfield in the Wigan and Leigh districts.⁵ The problem for the coalfield was that during the genesis of regional policy, and within the planning for post-war reconstruction, there was a failure to account adequately for sub-regional and industrial sectional variations.⁶

During the Second World War and its immediate aftermath planning for re-construction introduced additional considerations to relegate further the coalfield as an area requiring 'special' assistance. While it was acknowledged that the coalfield experienced grave economic and social problems during the inter-war period, it was argued that these problems were now behind it. The unique features of the coalfield would contribute to its robustness relative to other declining coalfields. It was noted that the coalfield was within one of Britain's largest concentrations of industry with major markets and a large population.⁷

The coalfield was not initially 'scheduled' under the Labour Government's 1945 Distribution of Industry Act. In 1946, the St. Helens and Wigan districts were 'scheduled' as development areas because it was conceded that each had highly specialised industrial structures - the St. Helens area in coal and glass and Wigan in coal. Most of the South Lancashire coalfield except the Atherton - Leigh - Tydesley area maintained development status as part of the South Lancashire Development Area (SLDA) until 'descheduling' in 1959. However, it was the specialised industrial structure of these sub-regions which influenced opinion rather than any conception of the specific problems of these areas. Paradoxically, St. Helens was the most buoyant coal mining district in Lancashire, yet it was offered development status in preference to other declining mining areas because of its high level of industrial specialisation.⁸

Government policy was based on misconceptions about the character of economic and social experience in the coalfield. Post-war governments were half-hearted about offering assistance for the reasons outlined. There was also a clear political imperative affecting policy. Post-war governments were haunted by the spectre of the 1930s. The consciousness

of British post-war political leadership, including the Labour leadership, was influenced more by images of inter-war coalfield depression in coalfields other than Lancashire. The coalfield was not seen as part of the political baggage carried into the decision-making process after 1945; it found itself relegated in post-war industrial and regional policy. Those sentiments were echoed in the treatment of Lancashire in the 1950 Plan for Coal. Although the coalfield was expected to contract it was felt that the 'special' characteristics of the region would help absorb the impact of contraction with relatively little economic and social dislocation.⁹

Opinion in the region matched this confidence. When the Lancashire and Merseyside Development Association (LAMIDA) delivered its response to the 1950 Plan for Coal, it was optimistic about the coalfield's prospects based on differing perceptions of contraction between coal and cotton. Contraction in coal was seen as one of 'transformation' rather than 'decline' whereas cotton was seen in absolute decline. An optimistic outlook for coal during the early 1950s favourably influenced opinion in contrast to cotton. The key factor in estimations of the coalfield's ability to absorb high levels of contraction was a belief that decline in parts of the coalfield would be met by expansion in others. Likewise diversity of the labour market in the region would ensure absorption of workers displaced from coal. It also emphasised the proximity of new loci of economic growth to which former mineworkers would travel to work, such as central Lancashire. Emerging travel-to-work patterns combined with new house building in expanding areas of the coalfield would cushion the effects of industrial change. There was one caveat. It acknowledged that those areas of the coalfield facing severe decline would require special assistance. These included fifteen local authority districts in the Wigan area where existing levels of assistance were criticised as *ad hoc*. Nevertheless, it was believed that the size of markets in the region, proximity to two major population centres and advantages of infrastructure would ensure difficulties would be minimised. Emphasis was placed on the mobility of surplus labour to transfer within coal or to new industrial sectors.¹⁰ It was felt that coal contraction in Lancashire would be easily managed based on positive factors of geography, regional economic health and labour mobility.

Crucially, this benign view informed estimations for the coalfield accompanying the 1959 Revised Plan involving extensive rationalisation in an altogether different climate for coal.

Following the 1950 Plan for Coal, government and NCB attention turned to the ameliorative measures required to meet contraction. As a number of commentators have noted, post-war regional policy continued to "reflect inter-war rather than post-war thinking".¹¹ Even as late as the 1960s, as Parsons notes, official conceptions of regional policy were influenced by notions of the "other England" in which "politicians and commentators perceptions of unemployment were fundamentally formed by the experience of the 'depressed' areas' ".¹² Additional measures of assistance for the coalfield were dismissed on the grounds of industrial diversity in Lancashire. It was further argued that diversity had been widened in recent years and was set to continue. Even in the Wigan area, where extensive contraction was envisaged, it was felt that there would be "ample opportunities for redundant miners".¹³

It was believed that Lancashire was the least problematic of the coalfields. In particular, it was felt that three of its sub-regions: Burnley, Manchester and St.Helens were capable of absorbing contraction. The Manchester district was well placed because of the number of new and re-constructed pits able to absorb miners displaced by closures and high levels of alternative job availability for those leaving the industry. The St.Helens district was seen as an expanding district for coal, well capable of placing those displaced from the handful of closures and the large number in neighbouring Wigan. In Burnley, the small number of closures, mainly of moorland drifts, was not expected to cause dislocation. Only in Wigan district was it conceded there might be difficulties. However it was believed these would be minimised by travel-to-work or residential movement to Manchester and St.Helens districts. The only hint of concern was over the potential problems of accumulated pit closures in the Wigan district from the late 1960s.¹⁴

The Lancashire coalfield was thus pushed to the margins. Even misgivings over the future of the Wigan district were dismissed. It was deleted from a schedule of specific localities requiring additional measures of assistance with a note to the effect that:

"manpower in the Wigan area was expected to fall by about 6,000 men by 1970 but, being in an highly industrialised part of the country was in a rather different category from the others mentioned".¹⁵

Thus rationalisation began during the late 1950s with every confidence that there would be minimal economic and social impact. This confidence was based on the durability of assumptions about the region and the coalfield carried forward through official assessments based on inter-war experience and political imperatives informing industrial and regional policy. This level of confidence permeated the NUMLA leadership and Labour in the coalfield. It was not just the case that they were enthused by the optimistic prognosis, they also had to believe in it simply because they wanted modernisation of coal to succeed at all costs. Consequently, the specific issues of the coalfield were never properly addressed. No special measures to cushion the impact of rationalisation were sought or offered during the late 1950s. The de-scheduling of the Wigan and St.Helens areas from development status in 1959 coincided with the Revised Plan for Coal. This further exposed the coalfield to the repercussions of rationalisation.

Assumptions underlying the plans for contraction were flawed because they ignored the peculiarities of the coalfield. They informed estimates of employment contraction in the coalfield. Government projections following the Second World War envisaged that coal employment in Lancashire would fall from 50,000 in 1945 to 18,000 by 1975.¹⁶ However, both the Reid Report and the 1950 Plan for Coal indicated a more promising outlook for employment based on modernisation of the industry and favourable regional economic factors.¹⁷ Furthermore, policy during the immediate post-war period was accompanied by overly optimistic forecasts of demand for coal that never materialised. Regional assessments reflected this degree of confidence. Thus the LAMIDA report in the early 1950s estimated overall employment contraction as low as 10,000 up to 1965 with only the possibility of an acceleration thereafter. It was believed that continuing demand for coal and labour surplus absorption in modernised collieries would ensure that displacement would be minimised.¹⁸ The earlier estimates proved to be remarkably accurate. Total employment contraction was well over 30,000 by the early 1970s; three times that of the more confident forecasts being bandied around during the early 1950s.¹⁹

The loss of over 30,000 mining jobs was not spread evenly across the coalfield. The two most seriously affected districts were Manchester and Wigan. It was only in the late 1960s that contraction reached into the North East Lancashire and St.Helens districts. The total displacement of workers between 1945 and 1972 was approximately 3,800 in North East

Lancashire and 2,200 in St.Helens, with most of the losses occurring post-1965. By contrast, the Manchester district lost 14,500 mining jobs while the Wigan district lost 10,800. However, it was Wigan district which suffered inordinately. The majority of losses in Wigan were concentrated during the 1957-65 period. While losses in Manchester were numerically greater, 40 per cent came from the three big closures at Astley Green, Mosley Common and Bradford during the late 1960s. Many of the pit closures in Manchester district bordered Wigan in the Atherton-Leigh-Tyldesley area in contiguous localities to the 'Wigan coalfield'. Furthermore, job losses in Manchester included many former Wigan miners who travelled to pits in Manchester between contiguous areas. 20-30 per cent of displacement in Manchester was of miners who lived in Wigan district. Consequently, around 50 per cent of total job losses in the coalfield were of mineworkers from Wigan district which, unlike Manchester, was less able to absorb them because of its undiversified economic structure. The scale of job losses in central areas of the South Lancashire coalfield was nearly three times the forecasts of the late 1950s.²⁰ Thus a combination of inadequate government assessments, an over-optimistic prognosis of coalfield prospects and the specific impact of contraction had far-reaching effects on the consequences of industrial change. However, it was flawed government assumptions which did most to make the ramifications of rationalisation that much more pronounced.

There was clearly difficulty in coming to terms with sub-regional and local conditions based on official conceptions of homogeneity in the coalfield. One example was the question of local economic specialisation. The percentage of the male working population in coal varied considerably. Occupational concentration levels had shrunk from the peak of coal employment during the early twentieth century while geographical patterns had altered considerably. Yet, even by the 1950s concentration levels of nearly 50 per cent were not untypical in the Wigan and Leigh areas.²¹ Consequently, the levels of localised concentration were as great as in many coalfields where industrial specialisation in coal was felt to be at uncomfortably high levels. Moreover, the areas of highest concentration, mainly in the Wigan and Leigh areas, were those which offered the least in the way of alternative employment.

Failure to appreciate the significance of high concentration levels in parts of the coalfield was linked to assumptions of intra-coalfield labour mobility. Estimations of the effects of

contraction were based on unimpeded labour mobility with mineworkers able and willing to travel to other parts of the coalfield or to take jobs in other industries elsewhere in the region. In the early phases of contraction this depended on substantial movement out of the Wigan district to both Manchester and St.Helens based on assumptions about patterns of labour mobility which had developed since the inter-war period. These informed a view that regional 'economic problems' could be solved based on putative assessments of labour mobility.²²

It was assumed that approximately 30-40 per cent of mineworkers travelled more than a few miles to work in Lancashire from the inter-war period, while around 60-70 per cent lived and worked within the immediate vicinity of the pit. The bulk of this daily exodus involved miners travelling from Wigan and Leigh to collieries in the surrounding district and further out to collieries in St.Helens.²³ After the Second World War more miners were travelling and for longer distances from these areas. In addition, the modernisation of the Manchester district saw more daily travel to collieries in this area but to a much lesser degree because of transport impediments. It was assumed that because this travel-to-work culture was already well-established, with upwards of 40 per cent of miners travelling to work, there would be few problems proceeding with contraction which impacted most heavily in the Wigan and Leigh areas.²⁴

The drawback with this assumption was that it did not take account of local conditions and impediments to movement. When rationalisation was being planned during the late 1950s Colonel Bolton voiced his concerns with the Coal Board about being handed a problem over contraction in Wigan district. As he accurately forecast, Wigan miners encountered difficulties transferring to Manchester district because of transport problems.²⁵ More critically, as the divisional board discovered, there were huge disparities in the travel-to-work composition of individual collieries. By 1964 the divisional board conceded that in addition to transport problems, local variations in travel-to-work patterns had hampered rationalisation plans. While the divisional board found that travel-to-work/local residence ratios of miners were broadly in line with estimations there were significant intra-coalfield differences. Of the seven remaining collieries in the Wigan district in 1964 80 per cent of the workforce lived within 2.5 miles of the pithead. In three of those collieries the figure was over 85 per cent. By contrast in the two new collieries and four of the re-constructions

in the St. Helens and Manchester district the equivalent figure was less than 60 per cent. Thus the problem for the board was that although miners were travelling from the Wigan district to the modernised pits in Manchester and St. Helens many mineworkers who had a tradition of working at the local pit were concentrated at collieries in Wigan. There was reluctance by Wigan miners to travel outside their immediate vicinity particularly in view of the transport obstacles involved in a move to the Manchester district where the board faced its most acute manpower problems.²⁶

If the board had problems then these were much more fundamental for local communities. The difficulty facing communities in Wigan district was that when pits closed they had a far greater impact because miners lived and worked within them. Moreover, the divisional board's figures from 1964 showed the situation in a better light because it only analysed the position at the seven remaining collieries, not at those which had already closed. Between 1945 and 1964 nineteen collieries closed in Wigan district, of which thirteen had closed since 1959. Although travel-to-work figures are unavailable for closures up to 1964 it can be inferred that the values for those collieries would have been similar, if not higher, in terms of the percentage of mineworkers living and working locally.

Ogden produced findings in line with this analysis. This allowed him to argue that there were three distinct paradigms of colliery/ socio-economic community. Ogden's first category was "collieries dependent on local labour associated with village settlements in largely undiversified economic settings". While it is possible to argue about the precise qualities of Ogden's paradigms they had, as Ogden noted, some relevance to the Lancashire case. Certainly, Wigan district contained a large number of collieries in Ogden's first category, quite unlike the rest of the coalfield. That, as Ogden argued, made the Wigan area especially vulnerable to closures.²⁷ There was a mitigating factor which influenced the experience of more vulnerable communities in a more positive way. Pit closures forced mineworkers to move to collieries in other areas of the coalfield and retain a job in mining. Consequently, as Ogden suggested, by living in Wigan district but working elsewhere the 'commuting miner' at least remained within the community to help sustain its economic and social infrastructure. This was as much a deliberate calculation by the Coal Board to legitimate its advocacy of industrial change.²⁸ However, aside from the limited influence of this 'positive' factor, the aforementioned findings, together with those

adduced by Ogden indicate that rationalisation was most keenly felt in the more vulnerable areas of the coalfield, with the weakest industrial structure, and obstacles to labour mobility.

Assumptions about the coalfield ignored two further factors. Firstly, many areas of the coalfield in which there was a higher degree of industrial diversity were witnessing decline in other staple industrial sectors. There was multi-sectional industrial decline in the region's staple industries from the 1950s, particularly in textiles where over 190,000 jobs were lost between 1951 and the late 1960s, dwarfing decline in coal. This had an impact on coalfield communities because many were mutually dependent on both coal and cotton. For example, localities in the South Lancashire coalfield such as Atherton, Leigh, Hindley, Tyldesley and Westhoughton - all within the cotton spinning 'belt' - were heavily dependent on both trades.²⁹

Secondly, the assumption that ex-mineworkers could find jobs outside of coal based on the size and fluidity of the labour market in the region was misplaced. It overlooked one disturbing indicator. The coalfield had one of the worst records of British coalfields for long-term unemployment. This was apparent during the inter-war period. However, duration of unemployment was of less importance in official policy than absolute figures and its concentration by geographical area or industrial sector. More worryingly, duration of unemployment in the SLDA between 1946 and 1959 was the greatest of any development area other than South Wales and the Wrexham area.³⁰ This underlined the inability of ex-miners to find work outside the industry even in relatively buoyant times in Lancashire. It also tells us much about lack of success of industrial re-location policies.

The way in which detailed consideration of the experience of the coalfield was brushed aside was evident as industrial change progressed. Similarly, the rank deficiency of official conceptions of the coalfield became more apparent. This was witnessed by a continuing obsession with regional industrial 'specialisation' and 'concentration' as applied to individual pit closures based on assumptions about the spatial configuration of the coalfield. For example, rarely was the impact of a specific closure queried by NCBHQ or the Ministry of Power. On the infrequent occasions that it was the main consideration was the geographical 'isolation' of a particular colliery. Thus during the late 1950s and early

1960s officials fussed unnecessarily over the impact of closing certain collieries which were 'isolated' from other groups of collieries and pit communities.³¹ This continued under the ACP.³²

Government and NCB officials believed that 'distance' and 'isolation' made communities more vulnerable to closures. Measurements of 'distance' and 'isolation' were useless unless they made some sense of the context of the communities involved. They also believed closures were less likely to create economic and social problems in areas with high concentrations of mining activity because of the availability of alternative work in coal. This did not take into account the dimensions or dynamics of contraction within those areas or impediments to labour mobility nor local levels of industrial diversification. In this way, while official attention was focused on specific closure cases, the majority of closures proceeded without query in districts such as Wigan where it was clear there were serious issues emerging over the impact of closures.³³

Throughout rationalisation government concerns over contraction highlighted coalfields other than Lancashire. This was exemplified during the 1962 recession which coincided with the 'Review of the Revised Plan for Coal'.³⁴ Government anxiety focused on the repercussions in South Wales, Scotland, the North East and West Cumberland where both headline and localised rates of unemployment were seen as politically unacceptable. There was only an admission that there might be potential problems in parts of the Lancashire coalfield.³⁵ Sentiment toward Lancashire was also affected by manpower shortages in specific areas of the coalfield particularly the Manchester district where alternative job opportunities were most abundant.³⁶ Government opinion had not altered by the time of the ACP announcement. Despite Labour's promise to underwrite economic and social hardship in Lancashire, the Government explicitly ruled out special assistance maintaining the view that the coalfield was able to absorb further contraction without economic and social problems. The Government re-iterated the view that "continuing pressure of the labour market made the prognosis for the men affected by closure in Lancashire good".³⁷

It was only by the late 1960s, as part of considerations for the 1967 Fuel White Paper, that the Government acknowledged incipient socio-economic problems in the Lancashire coalfield as a result of continued contraction. This admission came as a result of concerns

expressed over the scale of closures anticipated during 1967-68. The Government noted that displacement of miners in Lancashire would be accentuated. At the same time there were also more general fears about the possibility of industrial unrest and social hardship as a result of 'unscheduled' closures. Even at this stage the Government failed to offer additional assistance.³⁸

7.3 INDUSTRIAL CHANGE: SOME IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES

Official confidence about the ability of the coalfield to absorb high levels of contraction was felt to have been justified. Unemployment throughout the late 1950s and 1960s remained at historically low levels. This was more remarkable given the decline of coal, textiles and other staple industries. In parts of the coalfield unemployment was so low it was not inaccurate to talk of the return of full employment. In Manchester district unemployment levels during the early 1960s were consistently below two per cent and frequently below one per cent. Only recession in 1962 saw unemployment levels temporarily reach 4 per cent. By the late 1960s these levels had increased slightly. Yet, the Mosley Common closure with its wave of redundancies only saw rates flicker above 3.4 per cent. In St. Helens, although unemployment was consistently above national and regional averages, it rarely reached 3 per cent throughout the decade; a noteworthy achievement in an area with a limited range of employment possibilities. In North East Lancashire, with severe decline in textiles, rates varied with the scale of lay-offs from the mills and the impact of new industrial growth. There were periods during the 1960s when the rates were under 2 per cent. In 1963 the Youth Employment Service in Burnley boasted that of 700 school leavers only 20 had not found work. On the other hand, unemployment rates reached nearly 5 per cent during the late 1960s as textile contraction accumulated with the added effect of contraction in coal. Even so, for an economically 'depressed' area the 1960s saw remarkably low unemployment with the bulk resulting from textile contraction. In Wigan district, where contraction was greatest, unemployment during the early 1960s rarely exceeded 3 per cent although it climbed during the late 1960s. Within this satisfactory situation there were warning signs with the occurrence of high levels of localised unemployment at certain periods. For instance, in Hindley unemployment reached 7 per cent in 1964 as a result of accumulated coal and cotton contraction.³⁹

Throughout the coalfield during the early 1960s, aside from the 1962-63 recession, the trend of unemployment was low until the 1967-68 period. Thereafter, it fell back again before beginning a more significant and steep rise to reach new post-war highs during the early 1970s. However, the most striking feature was the high level of unemployment among men relative to woman, with a widening gap throughout the late 1960s. By the early 1970s a more general retrenchment in all industrial sectors saw some closing of the gap. During the mid-1960s, in the Wigan area, unemployment among men was four times higher than among woman. By the end of the decade it was nine times higher. There were wide gaps developing too in the Leigh and St. Helens areas throughout the 1960s although the high levels of displacement of woman in textiles in Burnley meant that the gap was closer there. The trend toward employment opportunities for woman in the coalfield during the 1960s saw a complete role reversal in an area with a traditional shortage of opportunities for woman. Finally, although the Manchester area enjoyed lower levels of unemployment than elsewhere in the coalfield, rates were above the national average and increasingly above the regional average from the late 1960s.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, if headline unemployment rates were the sole indicator of the impact of coal contraction then, as the Government argued, its confidence had been justified by any yardstick.

It is not the purpose here to argue that coal contraction caused widespread misery through high levels of unemployment. Rather, the intention is to demonstrate that contraction left a legacy in the coalfield which persisted beyond the period with which this work is concerned, chiefly through a failure to provide effectively for substitute economic activity. Furthermore, there were immediate consequences of contraction beyond those revealed by reference to headline rates of unemployment. As was increasingly the case during the 1960s commentators were turning their attention from measuring outcomes in terms of unemployment to multivariate analysis of the consequences of industrial change. This involved assessments of demographic trends, social and quality of life issues.⁴¹

One important immediate consequence of contraction was the experience of sections of the mining community most acutely affected by industrial change. Two groups suffered the most grievous hardship: older miners and 'disabled' miners - often one and the same. Numerically, they were not insignificant. Between ten and twenty per cent of 'displacements' were mineworkers of retirement age or nearing retirement. The 'disabled'

miners were known in the industry as 'light work cases'. At least 10 per cent of Lancashire mineworkers fell into this category. These were men with various 'disabilities' including pneumocotics and those who had lost, or lost the use of, limbs in pit accidents. They were employed on lighter jobs on the surface. The practice of keeping 'light work men' on in the pits had arisen under private control as a socially responsible gesture from colliery owners. Most Lancashire pits carried a 'light work' contingent. Thus a considerable percentage of Lancashire miners during the early 1960s were older or 'disabled' miners.⁴²

The Government and NCB saw older and 'disabled' miners as a manpower issue during the early stages of industrial change. The Coal Board liked to be seen as a progressive and empathetic employer. At the same time, it was under pressure to proceed with industrial change. The 'disabled' miners were not what the Board had in mind when they talked of 'virile labour' pioneering the modernised industry into the late twentieth century. Similarly, for government and the Coal Board under political pressure to avoid redundancies and ensure effective manpower transfer, this group was an obvious 'target' when reducing numbers in the industry. Accordingly, it was argued that they should retire, take redundancy before retirement or be placed on the 'disabled' register.⁴³

In Lancashire, the 'light work' issue was raised during discussion of the Maypole closure. Bolton told Hall that avoidance of redundancies would mean the NUMLA having to accept that older and 'disabled' workers would be "first to go". Hall was outraged. He described plans to cull 'disabled' miners as "a moral disgrace in order to get the industry out of its difficulties". The 'disabled' were least likely to obtain work outside the industry. Furthermore, older miners and 'light work' cases were inordinately concentrated in pits in Wigan district, a fact which complicated matters considerably.⁴⁴ Hall had taken an interest in the welfare of 'disabled' miners by providing facilities for them at the Lancashire miners' convalescent home at Blackpool. He had been the leading figure in establishing a paraplegic miners' centre near Wigan providing medical, social and welfare facilities. After his death his ashes were spread on the paraplegic centre playing fields.⁴⁵

There seems little doubt that Hall, backed by the NUMLA executive, were opposed to the divisional board taking the easy option on manpower reductions. Yet, for all his genuine work with 'disabled' miners it seems astonishing that Hall settled for what amounted to

nothing more than a 'gentlemen's agreement' on 'light work' cases rather than a more formal guarantee in meetings with the divisional board in 1958 which established the union's position on closures. Again, it was some measure of the NUMLA's commitment to support industrial change that they accepted only a board pledge to work with the union to ensure a fair deal for the non-discriminatory treatment of 'light work' cases in determining redundancy, transfer and retirement.⁴⁶

In the event, NUM branches and NCB management exercised sensitivity on the issue during the early stages of rationalisation. However, by 1963 the divisional board were coming under intense pressure on manpower. Similarly, the NUMLA, having committed itself to co-operation with the board, was equally anxious to ensure that modernisation and rationalisation succeeded. This resulted in the NUMLA allowing the divisional board unobstructed manoeuvre on the 'light work' issue. The divisional board argued it was facing the loss of manpower in certain areas of the coalfield. At the same time, it faced an ageing labour profile with an increasing proportion of 'light work' cases. Younger miners were leaving as uncertainty over the future of coal grew. The board was especially hit by the loss of young trained facemen whom it was anxious to retain. On the other hand, the board noted that older and 'disabled' miners were "hanging on" at certain collieries. The board thus asserted that the "burden of 'light work' cases" was "more properly the responsibility of the community" arguing that they were "incapacity retirements" which should be transferred to the disabled register and seek work with Remploy.⁴⁷

The divisional board, with NUMLA acquiescence, transformed a manpower problem into a 'social problem' in the name of modernisation. Remploy was unable to cope with the numbers of 'disabled' miners leaving the pits. 'Disabled' ex-miners faced a ghastly time throughout the 1960s. In 1967 the Coal Board's Disablement Advisory Committee drew attention to " 'disabled' miners having suffered the worst effects of pit closures with no chance of re-employment".⁴⁸ In embarking on the 1967 Fuel White Paper the Labour Government conceded there was a problem with social hardship caused to older and 'disabled' miners in all declining coalfield areas. It noted there was a large concentration in parts of the Lancashire coalfield. It further acknowledged that contraction would continue to "disturb or even destroy mining communities". Still, it was all part of what the

Government chillingly referred to as “social factors outside the pricing system” in its estimations of the costs of further contraction in coal.⁴⁹

Regarding the experience of older miners more generally, government and the Coal Board saw them as a manpower obstruction in the same way as ‘disabled’ miners. Mining custom and practice allowed miners to retire at 70 if they wished. This increased the age profile of the labour force and meant that the Coal Board had large numbers of older miners whom it believed were ‘non-productive’. They were not regarded as the type of labour needed in the modernised industry because it was felt they would not be amenable to new technology and work practices. Furthermore, like ‘disabled’ miners, ‘displacing’ them made the manpower problem much easier for the Coal Board. Many older miners accepted these assertions and took retirement. At national level, discussions during the late 1950s and early 1960s saw the Coal Board attempting to persuade the NUM to accept that retirement at 65 should be the norm in order to ease the manpower situation.⁵⁰

The NUMLA leadership approved the ‘principle’ of retirement at 65 under pressure from the divisional board at the time of discussions over the Maypole closure.⁵¹ The ‘rank-and-file’ did not raise objections. Both leadership and ‘rank-and-file’ accepted that despite interference with mining custom the universal practice of retirement with pension at 65 was a desirable social objective. However, there were two points at issue. The first was freedom of choice. A substantial number of miners wanted to work until they were ready to leave. They demanded that this freedom of choice be respected. The second and most contentious point was the question of compulsion. In its attempts to avoid large-scale redundancies the divisional board pressured miners over 50 to take redundancy or retire. For men over 65 this was not as much of an issue. The problem was faced by miners - many with ‘disabilities’ - in the fifties and early sixties age group who were being harried to leave. They were coerced to take redundancy before they reached retirement age and qualified for a pension. This not inconsiderable group was faced with the prospect of waiting some years before they could draw a pension with little chance of finding work outside mining. In addition, these men had not been big earners within the industry because surface modernisation together with low piecework wages underground at the older pits had reduced both job opportunities and earning levels.⁵²

Coercion of older miners became a political issue at the time of the Maypole closure. Nearly 100 men in this category wanted to stay in the industry. The divisional board was accused of forcing them either to take redundancy or transfer to Manchester district. This was seen as a Hobson's choice. The board knew that older Wigan miners would not be happy moving to the new working environment of pits in Manchester district, aside from the transport obstacles they would face. The only 'choice' was to take 'forced' redundancy. This led to protest from affected miners at Maypole. The divisional board, already under pressure over more general problems involved in transferring men out from Maypole to Manchester district, asked Hall to intervene to persuade the affected miners to take redundancy. This led to conflict because Hall was accused by the 'rank-and-file' of colluding with the board to dump them out of the industry. The case raised the profile of this issue throughout the coalfield. A dint of effort persuaded both management and NUMLA branches in Wigan district to agree to the miners involved being transferred *en mass* to Parsonage colliery in Wigan district.⁵³

As this case demonstrated, even at the earliest stages of rationalisation older miners were not seen as having a place within the modern industry, still less of exercising choice over whether to stay. The divisional board wanted them out. The NUMLA leadership, while sympathetic to older miners, was committed to assisting the board's plans for industrial change. In the Maypole case there was a satisfactory outcome only because rationalisation was in its early stages and there were still enough receiving pits to accommodate these men. As industrial change proceeded throughout the 1960s pressures intensified on both the divisional board and the NUMLA, combined with decreasing opportunities for transfer of older miners. Like the 'disabled miners' the position of older miners was increasingly difficult as they were pushed out of the industry and into the community.

Reluctance to leave the industry by 'disabled' and older miners was not just a case of difficulties in finding alternative work; it also resulted from fears over financial insecurity. As Goodman noted, although the Coal Board claimed that its redundancy scheme was "the most comprehensive attempt to tackle redundancy in a nationalised industry", it was hardly one "erring on the side of generosity" during the early 1960s. According to Goodman "A sense of insecurity" was "returning to many parts of Britain". It was contraction in staple industries which was contributing to new levels of insecurity.⁵⁴

New redundancy terms introduced by the Labour Government, such as the 1965 Redundancy Payments Act, were not an effective remedy, as Bulmer noted in his study of the North East coalfield. During the late 1960s 'rank-and-file' anger over further coal contraction was fuelled by poor redundancy provision. The Coal Board, under pressure from the Government, was accused of avoiding redundancy payments in Lancashire. The tactic was not summarily to dismiss miners ahead of closure to obviate qualification for redundancy under the Act. Instead, the Board persuaded miners to accept a 'place' at another colliery on the basis that this constituted "an acceptance of reasonable employment" thus avoiding payment under the Act. Whether the offer of a 'place' was credible or not given the dire labour situation in Lancashire during the late 1960s was immaterial. Even if it was a genuine 'placement' it almost certainly resulted in 'downgrading' on less pay with no protection of earnings.⁵⁵

As Goodman suggested, the impact of redundancy in the staple industries was underestimated by government during the 1960s.⁵⁶ Numerically, older and 'disabled miners' displaced in the Lancashire coalfield ran into thousands. Most were concentrated in the Wigan and Leigh areas. From a political perspective there was no distinctive forum or voice to take up the specific issues of the older or 'disabled' miners aside from the political left. For the left, claims for a better deal for the elderly formed part of its pitch for industrial and welfare improvements in the industry. This included *inter alia* a demand for statutory retirement at 60 with pension for all those employed in 'heavy' industry.⁵⁷ But specific campaigns for such groups were still some years away.

There was a more general 're-discovery' of poverty during the early 1960s which emphasised high levels of social injustice suffered by the elderly. It is clear that the ramifications of decline in the staple industries contributed to 'hidden poverty' which stood in contrast to accounts of the 'affluent sixties'.⁵⁸ In Lancashire, these portrayed a new coalfield emerging from the old through the creation of a modern regional identity. A description of Wigan from 1964 was typical:

“if George Formby senior could revisit Wigan today he would scarcely believe his eyes. The new schools, the shops selling salami and other foreign fiddle-faddles, the shining new Mini-Minors, and the girls in kinky boots and bouffant hairstyles would all convince him that he must have got off at the wrong station”

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Undoubtedly, the coalfield of the 1960s was changing, but the image of modernity that ‘informed opinion’ in the region liked to project, relegated pressing social issues. There was a widespread belief that public ownership of coal and the welfare state had ended hundreds of years of poverty. It was only by the late 1950s and early 1960s that poverty and social deprivation was beginning to be tackled. This provoked a retired miner from the pit township of Pendlebury to ask why he was living “in a down in the dump” place like Pendlebury because, as he added, “after all this is the 1960s”. These concerns centred on poor housing and urban deprivation in pit areas. The specific link was made between low incomes, the elderly and enervated social conditions.⁶⁰

The coalfield which repelled generations of social commentators including Heinemann, Orwell and Ruskin was still in evidence.⁶¹ Housing and urban squalor was a problem in the background of political debate, but of rising prominence throughout the 1960s as inroads were made to clear away the coalfield’s urban eyesores through modernisation schemes. Deprivation persisted despite substantial public housing building during the inter- and post-war period to cater for the needs of the mining community. The course of coal contraction throughout the 1960s shifted ‘hidden poverty’ from the slums of the main urban areas to the council estates. A report on social hardship in 1967 pointed to severe poverty and unemployment on the council estates of the coalfield in which life had returned to the “bleak forgotten days of nearly 40 years ago”. It highlighted the circumstances of those ‘displaced’ from jobs in coal and cotton in contrast to those with jobs in new economic sectors.⁶² There was a desperate hopelessness facing workers - particularly older workers - who were forced to leave coal without prospect of sharing in new economic opportunities.

One option for those facing the ramifications of industrial change was to leave the coalfield to find work in other areas. Demographic trends since the inter-war depression indicated

that the coalfield was depopulating. In localities in the Wigan and Leigh areas depopulation was a marked feature during the late 1940s and 1950s in spite of coal modernisation.⁶³ Depopulation was an alarming indicator of economic and social decline in which those with the means and skills moved out leaving behind an ageing population. However, absolute depopulation failed to reveal the extent of the problem highlighted by other demographic trends. Another indicator was the level of population movement between the coalfield and other areas of the North West and other regions of Britain. Population movement into and out of the South Lancashire coalfield from other regions was the second lowest level of thirteen Board of Trade research areas in the North West. The only significant population movement was between the coalfield and other British coalfields. Inter-regional movement involving the South Lancashire coalfield was only half the regional average. Population movement was even less in the North East Lancashire coalfield which formed part of the depressed Lancashire 'weaving belt'.⁶⁴

Similarly, on a measure of intra-regional movement both the South Lancashire and North East Lancashire coalfields recorded values at only half the regional average. Although population movement involving the coalfield increased during the post-war period both low inter-and intra-regional population movement confirmed that it was an area of population 'stagnation' as well as depopulation. This said much about the socio-economic health of the coalfield. Low levels of population movement were determined less by employment prospects than by economic and social aspirations, social class, income and housing.⁶⁵

Population stagnation underlined another feature of the coalfield which had become apparent since the inter-war period. There was reluctance to leave Lancashire by the mining population. This was confirmed by trends during the 1960s. Miners involved in closure had the choice of moving to other coalfields, yet few did so until the late 1960s when one of the few chances of keeping a job in mining was to undertake an inter-divisional transfer assisted by the Coal Board's 'pick-your-pit' scheme. Even under this pressure miners were reluctant to leave Lancashire. Of 1,600 men 'placed' in the industry after the major closures of the late 1960s only a few hundred opted for inter-divisional transfers, mainly from Astley Green, Bank Hall, Bedford and Mosley Common, of which Mosley Common saw the largest inter-divisional movement. Reluctance to leave

Lancashire mainly resulted from the economics of residence. Most Lancashire miners lived in low cost rented accommodation or council housing with few in colliery housing. They had a clear disincentive to leave.⁶⁶

The reluctance to move to other coalfields went beyond the economics of residence. Findings from the inter-war period suggest that relatively few Lancashire miners made transfers to the expanding coalfields. Lancashire miners and their families found it exceedingly difficult to adapt to new environments as cultural and social factors intervened.⁶⁷ Gildart's observations of Lancashire miners in the North Wales coalfield in more recent times tends to substantiate this view.⁶⁸

By complete contrast a small number of Lancashire miners found the move to a completely different environment more enticing. The 1960s saw mineworkers opt for a new life abroad either in mining jobs or in other industries. Australia was one popular destination. Economic factors were compelling in decisions to make these moves from Lancashire with its limited alternative job opportunities. As one confident Lea Green miner taking redundancy after 32 years underground quipped: "there are 370 factories in Freemantle alone" as he looked forward to taking his family 'down under' to search for a new job.⁶⁹ One positive development from the low level of outward movement was that coalfield communities remained largely intact much longer. The downside was that this left more mineworkers searching for opportunities in coal in the region or for the restricted range of opportunities outside mining.

During the 1960s a picture was emerging in many parts of the coalfield of a mining population characterised by low incomes living in poor private rented or council housing. This population was one with an increasingly ageing profile suffering high levels of industrial disability and sickness and disinclined or unable to move to take advantage of economic opportunities either elsewhere in the region or in other parts of Britain. There was hardly any population movement into the coalfield of the economically active. It suffered from the contraction of both coal and cotton with little alternative economic activity, urban squalor and a derelict environment. Unemployment levels, while modest for most of the 1960s, revealed an upward trend towards the end of the decade and into the

1970s while some localities endured occasional high levels of unemployment during the 1960s.

The high level of male unemployment relative to female unemployment confirmed the lack of alternative economic openings for the 'surplus' mining population as the effects of coal contraction accumulated. The demographics of 'stagnation' epitomised the prevailing economic and social malaise of the coalfield. The 1960s saw the development of features of a declining mining or heavy industrial area that we have become familiar with since. Many socio-economic trends had been evident since the inter-war period. Contraction accentuated these trends. Finally, these characteristics were more prevalent in the Wigan district of the coalfield where economic and social depression had been most pronounced during the inter-war period and where rationalisation had its greatest impact during the late 1950s and 1960s.

7.4 INDUSTRIAL DIVERSIFICATION: RHETORIC AND REALITY

There were mounting problems for the coalfield under the impact of contraction. This led to a desire for industrial diversification across a range of opinion. For the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield the solution was two-fold: the introduction of new economic activity and the creation of an institutional and political framework in which this could be achieved. This meant campaigning for full development status for the coalfield. Industrial diversification was seen as an integral component of industrial change. It was argued that obtaining development status was the most effective way of achieving industrial diversification through government location of industry and regional policy. It was believed that government financial and political commitment would produce the momentum to make rapid progress in new coalfield investment. For the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield obtaining development status was the Holy Grail of the 1960s. Industrial diversification and development status would ensure the future well-being of the coalfield after coal no longer played the leading role in economic life.

The emphasis on these twin objectives increased as the negative implications of contraction became clearer throughout the 1960s. The NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield

laid great stress on the return of a Labour government committed to delivering these two objectives. However, it was clear from early on that industrial diversification would be ineffectual in Lancashire. Likewise, the granting of development status was unlikely to occur. Finally, policy on the regions and industry underwent a shift of emphasis during the 1960s which added to the burdens of the coalfield and seriously undermined its ability to recover from the impact of industrial change.

How effective was industrial diversification likely to be given that the success of industrial location and regional policy was substantially determined by private sector decisions? The omens were not propitious. The record of industrial movement into the St. Helens and Wigan areas (comprising the SLDA until 1959) between 1945 and 1967 was abysmal. Industrial movement created just over 20,000 new additional jobs. Of those, 3,000 were at one development: the Heinz plant at Kitt Green, Wigan. 26 per cent of the new jobs were in Skelmersdale new town. Most of the remainder - some 66 per cent of the total - were new jobs within the towns of Leigh, St. Helens and Wigan where coal mining activity had already ceased some years before or was of negligible importance by the 1960s. The bulk of new additional job creation by industrial movement was in Wigan borough and most of that was at Heinz. In the mining districts outside the three main towns of the South Lancashire coalfield, industrial movement had, in 22 years, created just 1,700 new additional jobs.⁷⁰

There was worse news. Although new additional job creation through industrial movement was accelerating during the 1960s the new jobs were overwhelmingly concentrated in Skelmersdale new town. The paltry impact of new industrial growth in South Lancashire was appalling even by the poor experience of the North West as a whole in attracting new jobs in the secondary sector.⁷¹ This was a dreadful indictment of industrial location policy and regional policy as it affected South Lancashire. For many localities in the South Lancashire coalfield suffering under the twin impact of contraction in coal and textiles this feeble record confirmed the worst fears that the coalfield was losing staple industry but not gaining commensurate levels of substitute economic activity. Failure to attract new economic activity was one issue. The character of new industry was another which did little to help those affected by industrial change in coal.

The growth of new economic activity was badly geared to meet the needs of ex-mineworkers. Expansion of employment opportunity in the coalfield was very much in favour of women during the 1950s and 1960s. This reflected national trends. In one sense this was a welcome development as employment opportunities for women had been limited for generations. Female unemployment and underemployment was a great unresolved issue. On the other hand, this expansion did nothing to help thousands of mineworkers seeking alternative work in areas of new economic growth. Growth in the employment of women in the coalfield was below the national average but was nevertheless spectacular in many localities where male pit jobs disappeared.⁷² Private job creation in new economic sectors involving basic assembly work was almost exclusively of women. Industries in food processing, electrical assembly and textiles and garments (excluding cotton) were heavily dependent on female labour during the post-war period.⁷³ The scale of expansion of female employment opportunities was all the more impressive given that the cotton industry - the coalfield's only major employer of women - was in decline, displacing thousands of women workers.

Growth in female employment highlighted another feature of industrial diversification in terms of the type of industrial expansion experienced. Most of the growth in secondary sector employment was in light manufacturing and assembly industries: artificial fibres and fashion wear, electrical components and food and drink. In addition, although growth of the tertiary sector in the coalfield did not match regional trends during the post-war period, there were the first signs of growth in the service sector which was a large employer of women. The growth mirrored both regional and national trends.⁷⁴ The major structural change in regional employment between 1945 and the 1960s was a shift from the primary and secondary sectors to the tertiary sector. However, this was confined to the major towns, particularly Wigan. In fact, service employment went into decline in many coalfield localities during the 1970s after significant post-war growth.⁷⁵

One negative aspect of new employment growth was lacked of sustainability. New jobs were mainly in branches or subsidiaries of existing firms with headquarters located elsewhere in Britain. Firms took advantage of government assistance in areas of the coalfield covered by the SLDA up to 1959 to exploit the type of labour available. As

Massey rightly indicates, job creation in the British regions, including the coalfield, during this period was characterised by:

“a response to the need to cut costs, often in the face of intensifying competition. Among those industries were clothing, parts of the service sector, electronics and even the central state. In each case, however, the new jobs in the regions were primarily in branch plants and the employment offered was low paid, of low skill status and quite often part-time. The attraction of the regions was a reserve of green labour (in this case mainly women) further cheapened by regional policy”⁷⁶

This is an accurate description of the employment situation in the coalfield during the 1950s and 1960s apart from the absence of central state direction of the public sector. The jobs created not only failed to address structural decline in coal they failed to bring sustainable high quality skilled jobs essential to the future economic well being of the coalfield.

There was an absence of substantial growth in ‘large-scale industrial projects’ throughout the 1950s and 1960s despite some high profile new industrial sites. There was a particular deficiency in the central area of the South Lancashire coalfield in urgent need of this type of investment.⁷⁷ Given these deficiencies where did new employment opportunities for ex-miners arise? The answer reveals much about the inability of the coalfield to attract new industrial growth. Not only was there disjunction between job displacement and job creation there was a failure to share in growth of new industrial sectors which were creating new male jobs elsewhere in Britain and within the North West. The four main industrial growth sectors for male employment in the region were in engineering, motor vehicle and aircraft manufacture, metal industries and paper and publishing. However, within the SLDA there was little employment growth in these sectors resulting from industrial re-location compared to new jobs created in sectors mainly employing woman.⁷⁸

The SLDA’s record in the new sectors of male employment was well below regional levels. Re-location which did occur arose from firms establishing branches or depots in the coalfield, rather than production re-locations.⁷⁹ The vast majority of new job creation in the

new growth sectors went to the Manchester conurbation, Merseyside and central Lancashire. Merseyside and Manchester were creating new jobs in these sectors at, respectively, twice and 50 per cent more than in the South Lancashire coalfield during the late 1950s either through re-location or expansion of existing firms. In the North West only North East Lancashire had a worse record than the South Lancashire coalfield in creating employment opportunities in the growth areas of the region's economy.⁸⁰

One leading growth sector: engineering, highlighted lack of progress toward industrial diversification in the coalfield. Growth, either by re-location or expansion, was mainly taking place in areas of the North West with established engineering connections. While there were some major engineering developments in the coalfield, expansion mostly occurred in Manchester, Merseyside and central Lancashire. Firms demanded generic engineering skills from new recruits while re-locating businesses brought many of their key skilled workers and managers with them.⁸¹ Furthermore, engineering in the region had a tradition of specialisation in a multiplicity of branches. This put the coalfield at a distinct disadvantage in attracting new engineering industry because, aside from specialisation in tools and implements in the Wigan area, existing engineering industries had a bias toward servicing the mining industry with its vulnerability to industrial change.⁸²

From a labour mobility perspective former miners hoping to enter engineering faced formidable entry obstacles. Union-management agreements were guardians of skill, status and pay. Ex-miners could, and did, enter engineering, but only at the lowest level in a three-card system of skill demarcation.⁸³ In the growing motor vehicle and aircraft industries of the region ex-miners were unattractive because of the demand for engineering skills. For example, De Havilland's and Hawker Siddeley's large aircraft factories near Bolton underwent major expansion during the 1950s and 1960s. Their preference was for recruits from men made redundant at the British Rail engineering works at Horwich which was undergoing re-structuring during the late 1950s as it stopped locomotive building and concentrated on repairs and servicing.⁸⁴ Similarly, on Merseyside, Ford's Halewood plant was the biggest single post-war industrial project in the North West.⁸⁵ Its location made it more accessible from parts of the coalfield than Liverpool or the Wirral, yet ex-miners hardly featured in the workforce. Recruits came from engineering backgrounds on Merseyside.⁸⁶

There were positive aspects for ex-miners hoping to transfer to new growth areas. The relative economic prosperity of the 1960s meant there was insatiable demand for workers in these sectors. Shortages of skilled labour meant that firms were willing to recruit and re-train ex-miners ensuring that they not only found employment but quickly gained promotion.⁸⁷ Another favourable development was the ability of ex-miners to take advantage of economic expansion in central Lancashire with its absence of the transport impediments which accompanied travel-to-work in the Manchester conurbation. Wartime demands arising from Lancashire's position on the strategically 'soft side' of Britain saw a huge expansion in defence related industries in aircraft engineering and assembly, armaments production and support industries in engineering and rubber in Chorley, Leyland and Preston. The Cold War sustained this expansion. Peacetime conditions also brought expansion in bus and truck production, diesel locomotives and electrical and nuclear engineering.⁸⁸ These industries employed over 40,000 workers. Local workers including woman involved in assembly work filled many jobs. However, the scale of expansion meant that demand for labour extended into the coalfield as large numbers of former mineworkers swelled the growing workforce. The daily exodus northward from St.Helens and Wigan districts was a feature of life for many ex-miners from the 1950s.⁸⁹

Economic expansion in central Lancashire was an employment safety valve for those displaced by coal contraction. It vindicated the notion of new areas of growth in the region to match decline in mining and other staple industries. However, it offered only a partial solution because by no means all ex-miners were in a position to enjoy these opportunities. Likewise, it only proved to be a medium-term solution to coalfield employment needs as more general contraction in manufacturing set in from the 1970s, followed by severe contraction during the 1980s subsequently followed by a collapse in defence-related employment with the end of the Cold War.

Another factor which helped maintain employment for men leaving the pits was expansion of local firms. This highlighted the paucity of job creation through industrial re-location policies. As the LAMIDA noted in 1967, job creation was proceeding in spite of industrial re-location rather than as a result of it.⁹⁰ It was "Lancashire's ability to produce and sustain independently owned firms" which was the main economic success story.⁹¹ The continued ability of indigenous Lancashire business to absorb job losses in mining was in contrast to

the failure of industrial relocation policies. This was especially the case in growth sectors such as engineering. In the central areas of the South Lancashire coalfield the majority of new businesses established between 1945 and the 1970s were in the tertiary sector including many established under development status. Of those in existence prior to 1939 a number were major engineering employers founded during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁹² Similarly, in Wigan borough post-war businesses expansion was substantially in the tertiary sector with most manufacturing firms, specifically in engineering, having origins before 1939 and much further back.⁹³ Apart from some limited success in manufacturing industrial expansion and diversification under development status the central area of the South Lancashire coalfield was heavily reliant on the continuing success of established manufacturing firms to create new jobs for men.⁹⁴

Post-war expansion of the service sector in central areas of the South Lancashire coalfield - mainly concentrated in Wigan borough - offered few openings for ex-miners apart from jobs in construction, distribution, transport and motor services. For the most part, ex-miners faced a limited range of job opportunities if they were unable or unwilling to move or travel-to-work or re-train in the new industrial growth sectors. At best, it was a case of taking a low paid unskilled labouring job. Throughout the 1960s in the North West generally opportunities for skilled men improved while those for unskilled men deteriorated, as the skilled, or those able and willing to re-train, exploited a worsening skills shortage particularly in engineering while unskilled men chased decreasing numbers of labouring jobs.⁹⁵

Furthermore, opportunities in the new sectors were almost exclusively restricted to ex-pit men under 45 years of age. For the thousands over 45 or with 'disabilities' opportunities were virtually non-existent. Moreover, for those fortunate enough to secure a job locally in a growth sector there was no long-term future. The fact that Wigan district had a preponderance of expanding manufacturing firms of a certain vintage, enjoying the relative economic prosperity of the post-war period, did not provide a long-term solution to employment needs. The late twentieth century brought more turbulent economic conditions which swept many away for good.

Industrial diversification saw considerable intra-coalfield variation in experience. Outside the grave situation in the central areas of the South Lancashire coalfield ex-miners on the fringes of the Manchester conurbation took advantage of employment growth in the new sectors which helped reduce the impact of major closures in Manchester district.⁹⁶ It was only in the late 1960s that the impact of industrial change affected employment in St.Helens and North East Lancashire districts. The issue facing ex-miners here was single industry domination of the local economy, respectively in textiles and glass, together with structural and technological change in those industries. There was a further obstacle for ex-miners created by entry obstacles to the glass industry.⁹⁷ There were few opportunities other than in glass. Development status had been more favourable to St.Helens than Wigan, yet new industry was only small-scale with few openings for men.⁹⁸

Coal contraction in North East Lancashire and St.Helens was light compared with Wigan district. However, miners struggled to find employment from the late 1960s with the more general downturn in manufacturing industry. In North East Lancashire, where coal contraction was overshadowed by decline in textiles, limited opportunities were exacerbated by restricted travel-to-work possibilities in an area isolated from employment growth areas. The one favourable aspect was that the scale of economic decline provoked political action which ensured the sub-region was at the forefront of attention. As a result, new large-scale manufacturing projects were established between 1953 and 1959 when the area held development status.⁹⁹ But these only cushioned the effects of contraction in the staple industries and again represented medium-term solutions to employment growth.

Industrial diversification did not deliver the necessary level of sustainable economic opportunities even when parts of the coalfield enjoyed developments status. Given these circumstances what did this say about NUMLA and Labour objectives? In one respect the poor record on industrial re-location resulted from a weak commitment to regional policy by post-war Conservative governments which under-funded and relegated it in policy considerations.¹⁰⁰ One commentator has gone as far as to suggest that there was "an absence of an active regional policy during the 1950s".¹⁰¹ In the Lancashire coalfield failure was much more fundamental than the relatively limited importance political parties and governments attached to regional policy. Lancashire was not prominent in political concerns from the very beginning. The granting of development status to part of the

coalfield during the post-war period was a reluctant affair. The post-war Labour Government made it clear that the SLDA was not a priority. Likewise, the Board of Trade indicated that South Lancashire was peripheral to regional policy considerations. Two industrial estates in the Wigan area and one in St. Helens were as much as it ever amounted to.¹⁰²

Although the 1950s saw some major industrial projects in the coalfield, employment creation was poor, given this was a period of economic expansion. Furthermore, expansion mostly took place within established firms. One could point to 45 new projects attracted through development status, but these were small-scale enterprises or branches of multi-plant concerns offering work mainly to women. There were big projects by Heinz, Reed Paper and TBA Industrial Products while Metal Box established two factories in the coalfield outside the SLDA.¹⁰³ However, the Heinz project illustrated the deficiency of industrial re-location policies. It was not a new development as such. The American parents had operated a food processing plant at Standish near Wigan since the 1920s. The Kitt Green plant was more of a major expansion than a re-location. Asked why he had chosen to expand, H.J. Heinz 2nd said it was because "he liked the area".¹⁰⁴ What he meant was that he liked the cheap labour on offer in an area with only limited opportunities for workers, particularly women. Private business re-located primarily because of the 'availability' of labour. Moreover, firms only re-located during the 1950s and 1960s in response to increased demand prompted by the favourable economic situation, thus confirming the unsustainable nature of employment creation.¹⁰⁵

These firms had high labour costs in assembly or production processes in multi-plant operations which could be closed and switched quickly. Government could offer as many incentives as it liked but outcomes were ultimately determined by private business decisions. The Lancashire coalfield was unattractive to private investment for the same reasons as coalfields in general, because of adverse features such as poor infrastructure and shortage of skilled workers. Private capital was only attracted because of government incentives, relative economic prosperity and cheap labour.

De-scheduling of the SLDA brought a hue and cry from the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield. This increased throughout the 1960s. They blamed the Conservative Government

for kicking away the economic lifeline of the coalfield. Given the scale of coal contraction in Lancashire it would be churlish to suggest that development status would not have at least offered some new employment opportunities. It was estimated that the Board of Trade had been important in 67 per cent of decisions to relocate under development status.¹⁰⁶ However, the question must be asked just how effective development status would have been in alleviating contraction in coal during the 1960s when its record up to 1959 had been one of attracting opportunistic unsustainable employment with jobs irrelevant to the needs of those displaced from coal?

The NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield pursued a political imperative in which industrial diversification and development status were legitimate objectives despite evidence that it brought only limited employment gains. There were a number of reasons for this. There was a political advantage in tying these issues to the return of a Labour government on a modernisation ticket. Both the NUM and Labour were ideologically committed to support a policy of 'bringing work to the workers' as industrial re-location was a key aspect of post-war Labour policy.

For the NUMLA leadership it helped facilitate industrial change by persuading mineworkers that it would absorb those displaced in coal. As the scale of contraction impacted throughout the 1960s pressure from the 'rank-and-file' and the coalfield community increased on the NUMLA leadership and Labour to deliver on promises of coalfield modernisation. Adherence to political imperatives and pressure to deliver led both to mistakenly to over-emphasise the link between development status and industrial diversification. They pointed to the success of development status elsewhere as a "catalyst for accelerating and giving direction to the process of change".¹⁰⁷ For instance, they cast an envious eye on Merseyside where development status had been more successful in attracting large-scale employment projects in new growth sectors. Merseyside had been a government priority in the North West because of its 'special' problems. It enjoyed development status from 1949 until 1969 when it was de-scheduled by the Hunt Committee.¹⁰⁸ In contrast to the SLDA, Merseyside attracted 70 per cent of the North West's share of new jobs through industrial re-location during this period.¹⁰⁹ There was a view that the South Lancashire coalfield should enjoy parity with Merseyside.

Granted that both the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield remained committed to the re-scheduling of the whole South Lancashire coalfield, how effective were they in advancing the case during the 1960s? The main role fell to Labour MPs and Labour-controlled local authorities. One avenue was through the offices of both the South Lancashire Development Committee (SLDC) and the LAMIDA.¹¹⁰ The NUMLA and Labour believed that the coalfield had suffered a great wrong in losing development status. Given too the desire for new economic growth, it might be supposed that the coalfield's political establishment would have pursued a vigorous campaign to secure both development status and new investment. In fact, the political campaign during the 1960s was notable for its lack of vigour.

What was the reason for this enigma bearing in mind these issues were critical supports for industrial change? The primary reason was the NUMLA's and Labour's interpretation of industrial change. The union's representative on the SLDC for many years was Sam Unsworth, the miners' agent for St. Helens. Labour was represented by all the Labour controlled local authorities, Lancashire County Council and by two MPs - Tom Price, Westhoughton, and Fred Lee, Newton. Later Fitch assumed the twin role as NUMLA and Labour representative on Unsworth's retirement in 1962 and as a result of Lee's elevation to higher office in Labour opposition and government. Fitch, the obvious choice for the SLDC, quickly established himself as its chairman and leading spokesperson. However, NUMLA and Labour representatives were hamstrung on the SLDC because of the contradictory messages they sent out about the future of coal in Lancashire. On the one hand, they demanded the reinstatement of development status and new investment, while on the other they refused to concede that coal in Lancashire was in decline, maintaining the process was one of 'transformation' into a modernised industry.¹¹¹

Not surprisingly neither the NUMLA nor Labour in the coalfield was taken seriously. It confirmed the view of government that contraction in coal in Lancashire was having only negligible consequences and that they were right not to offer additional assistance. In 1965, the new Labour Government was sanguine in its assessment that the effects of coal contraction in Lancashire "would be no more than marginal". It reiterated its confidence that the South Lancashire coalfield was capable of future economic prosperity based on industrial diversification and the growth of the tertiary sector.¹¹² There was only a slight

amendment to this view was in 1966 when the Government included an area of St. Helens district within the Merseyside Development Area. This was more of an administrative change than a shift in policy.¹¹³ The NUMNWA and Labour in the coalfield never questioned the validity of these continuing claims. For all their rhetoric on coalfield modernisation, both were never fully engaged with challenging Government on the consequences of industrial change because they stuck rigidly to a view which denied that industrial change would have a major economic and social impact.

This belief was informed, in part, by over optimistic assessments of industrial change carried forward from the immediate post-war period. This was perpetuated by the divisional board and enthusiastically supported by the NUMLA and Labour in self-denial over coal contraction. Colonel Bolton told the LAMIDA as late as 1959 that "the Lancashire coalfield will not suffer any radical or immediate contraction" believing the optimistic predictions of a loss of 10,000 jobs.¹¹⁴ This statement might be seen as venial in terms of the optimistic scenario for coal contraction anticipated during the 1950s. However, this view predominated as late as 1967. Both the NUMLA and divisional board offered a perspective on contraction during the late 1960s which concluded that further contraction would be achieved "without any significant redundancy" in the face of clear evidence to the contrary.¹¹⁵ There was thus a persistent and damaging denial of the impact of contraction throughout industrial change even as it became obvious that the consequences were beginning to have a devastating effect.

A state of denial was pivotal to the NUMLA's and Labour's belief in industrial change at all costs, to the extent of ignoring the consequences. They were trapped into adherence to a government view that the effects of contraction would be minimal simply because to have done otherwise might have jeopardised their commitment to coal industry modernisation. Conceding the implications of contraction or shouting too loudly at government might have undermined this commitment. Their dilemma only increased with the return of Labour in 1964. An unwillingness to come to terms with the effects of industrial change made the task of campaigning effectively for development status and industrial diversification virtually impossible.

It could be argued that the development associations were nothing more than toothless 'corporatist' bodies with no effective influence on outcomes. Before they are dismissed in this way it is worth contrasting the work of the SLDC with that of the North East Lancashire Development Council (NELDC) in campaigning for development status and new investment. The main trade union input on the NELDC came from the textile unions. Unlike the NUMLA in South Lancashire, the textile unions, along with Labour controlled local authorities fought an aggressive campaign through the NELDC. In 1959 Burnley Textile Trades Federation formed the Cotton Crisis Action Group to fight to retain a viable textile industry in the area and co-ordinate action with other bodies and trades federations in textiles in the North West.¹¹⁶ 'Rank-and-file' calls for a more robust response to government by the textile unions added weight to the case in North East Lancashire rather than diminishing it.¹¹⁷ The textile unions were unafraid of criticising the Labour Government over inaction. Levels of protest intensified in North East Lancashire during the late 1960s bringing some success in persuading the Government of the need for more assistance for the sub-region.

There were some favourable factors operating in North East Lancashire. Dan Jones, the Labour MP for Burnley, was PPS to Douglas Jay at the Board of Trade for a spell.¹¹⁸ North East Lancashire had been the focus of official attention over a long period of time, unlike South Lancashire. Although it was de-scheduled in 1960 after having held development status since 1953, it was 'borderline' for re-inclusion. There was also a strong sense of sub-regional identity, distinctive not just from the rest of Britain but from the rest of Lancashire. It was argued that the problems of the area were of a different order from other areas of the North West. A sense of 'otherness' fed directly into the political domain to help mobilise support across a spectrum of interests which made for such a powerful case. The sense of injustice was palpable.¹¹⁹ One example was the outcry when the Government decided to proceed with the Central Lancashire new town project and the expansion of Skelmersdale new town in 1968 because it was believed they would divert resources from North East Lancashire.¹²⁰

However, there was another more important reason why the campaign in North East Lancashire was more effective than in South Lancashire. This was based on an interpretation of decline in textiles in contrast to coal. There was division within the textile

unions and Labour in North East Lancashire between those who demanded more support from the Government for textiles and those who accepted the finality of its decline. Those who argued that the campaign should concentrate on the modernisation of the area began to occupy the majority. This led to a more effective campaign in favour of new investment. It also meant that Dan Jones, who had been instrumental in arguing for economic modernisation, was in for a tough time as he was called upon to deliver.¹²¹ This position should be compared with the South Lancashire coalfield. Here industrial change in coal was informed by a persistent belief that the industry was not in decline but in a state of 'transformation' to a modernised and viable industry in which there would be little economic and social dislocation. North East Lancashire was thus able to free itself more quickly and more effectively from the contradictions that dogged progress in South Lancashire and make for a more coherent case.

Negation of their own campaign by the NUMLA and Labour was a recipe for political inertia throughout the 1960s. Alan Fitch and Michael McGuire headed the political campaign for development status after Labour was returned to office in 1964, promising that the Government would reinstate it. This was a popular issue with the electorate who responded positively to a desire for new economic and social opportunities. The Labour Governments of the 1960s had no intention of granting development status based on the continuance of dominant views of the coalfield. Loyalty of both MPs to the Government prevented a challenge to alter policy. This was combined with prevailing views of industrial change in coal which the sponsored MPs continued to hold with the NUMLA leadership. The 'campaign' waged by Fitch and McGuire on behalf of the NUMLA was a political smokescreen. They knew the Government would not budge but adopted a public pretence that they could persuade Government to change policy as a way of fending off criticism of inaction. At the same time, they sought to marginalise debate over the consequences of contraction in favour of extolling coal industry modernisation.

The problem for both men was that by the late 1960s the 'game' was up as siren voices grew louder over coal contraction. There was a realisation that new economic activity was not coming to South Lancashire to the extent required as the cost of nearly a decade of contraction was being counted. New industrial growth was even less than during the late 1940s and 1950s. Furthermore, new investment during the 1960s confirmed the shift to

light industry with mainly low cost female employment engaged in assembly and process work.¹²² Fitch, McGuire and other coalfield MPs took the flak from local authorities and the political left. Harold Boardman, the Labour MP for Leigh, received a public excoriation from Tyldesley council.¹²³ It was a cruel irony for Boardman that he, together with Les Spriggs, the Labour MP for St.Helens, had been the only two MPs to acknowledge the implications of contraction as they took up the plight of 'disabled' miners.¹²⁴

Growing pressure on sponsored and other coalfield Labour MPs bore fruit in prompting them to adopt a more pro-active posture in challenging the Labour Government on the outcomes of industrial change. By 1970, Fitch, under constituency pressure, was forced to concede that "new industry was not coming to Wigan". He admitted that a "one-time industrial town" had become a "dormitory". He formed a 'council of action' comprising local business, organised labour and political parties to pressure the Government. Through this venture, Fitch headed an abortive deputation to see Eric Varley, the Minister of State for Technology, to demand more Government assistance for the South Lancashire coalfield.¹²⁵ McGuire, again under constituency pressure, questioned the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries in 1969 about the type of industry being established in declining pit areas such as Lancashire, arguing in favour of the "big structural industries, which will give a sounder base than the advance factory type of industry".¹²⁶ These interventions were belated and, in McGuire's case, desperate attempts to fend off criticism that coal contraction had occurred without adequate levels of new investment to replace jobs lost in coal.

One result of pressure on the coalfield political establishment during the late 1960s was a move toward what were seen by Labour's critics as political diversions. Efforts were directed into coalfield modernisation through initiatives which had no direct bearing on job creation. One example was dalliance with environmental concerns in the quest to clear derelict land. There was a case for undertaking this task. Dereliction caused by coal mining added to the squalor of the coalfield. It was an environmental disgrace and robbed land which could be reclaimed for new residential, industrial or amenity use. It was also a hazard for children which claimed young lives. In South Lancashire, dereliction was substantial at three times the national average, covering ten per cent of the coalfield. In

Ince-in-Makerfield 40 per cent of land was derelict. The main area of dereliction was a large arc shape running from the west of Wigan into the central area of the South Lancashire. It had altered topography to produce the spectacular 'Wigan Alps' or *Oberland* culminating in the 'Three Sisters' spoil heaps interspersed by 'flashes' (artificial lakes caused by mining subsidence).¹²⁷

Initiatives to return derelict land to productive use from the late 1960s were right and proper. Fitch, in conjunction with local authorities, led initiatives to clear areas of despoilment. However, the problem with these environmental initiatives was two-fold. In the first instance they were seen by Labour's critics on the left as attempts to divert attention from policy and political failure. It was a very thin line indeed between a pressing need to rid hideous areas of dereliction and what were seen as exercises in cosmetic gentrification of the coalfield and its urban areas. For Labour's critics it was about giving a highly visible impression of action in the absence of doing something more positive to create new employment opportunities for ex-miners. For the left, the politics of land rehabilitation thus became indicative of failure on industrial diversification.¹²⁸

The second point was that the level of political enthusiasm and resources poured into land rehabilitation pointed up Labour's difficulties with coalfield modernisation. At the heart of this was the inner conflict within the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield over the consequences of industrial change witnessed by the ineffective campaign for industrial diversification. Both struggled to reconcile their interpretation of industrial change with demands to modernise the coalfield. Tackling dereliction emerged out of this struggle. Land rehabilitation thus represented a symbolic erasure of traces of an industry which had blighted not only the land but also countless generations.¹²⁹

Inner conflict was manifested in other ways. McGuire's intervention on the Select Committee over the type of industry coming to the coalfield underlined another dilemma for Labour over coalfield modernisation. The move to 'advance' type factories or 'light' industry creating 'modern' jobs in assembly and distribution was not just the result of structural economic change. Labour had been advocating this type of 'replacement' industry for years. Socialists dreamed of the day when they would be unchained from the repression and rigours of heavy industry. Labour's post-war reconstruction plans involved

avoiding the 'mistakes' of the past through reducing industrial specialisation and concentration, and breaking the "excesses" of monopoly power, mass production and the regimentation of workers. These were antecedents of an emphasis on decentralised, small-scale, modern light industries which Labour favoured and were affirmed in its post-war support for the industrial estates 'movement'.¹³⁰ The strength of these notions was seen in the coalfield as both the NUMLA and Labour celebrated the arrival of modern light industry. It was a key concept of industrial diversification. Heavy industry was something from the dark past to be avoided in the pursuit of modernity in new industrial growth. The problem for Labour was that while it carried before it a vision of modernity in this way it singularly failed to meet the demands of contraction in coal through new industrial growth of this type.

There was one final act to play for the outcomes of industrial change. This too came to be seen as one primarily about seeking political diversions in the modernisation of the coalfield. The emphasis of policy during the 1960s shifted from one exclusively based on economic issues and industrial diversification to one focused on regional planning in the round. This resulted from internal policy debates within the Labour Party moving in favour of 'regional' and 'urban' planning rather than relying solely on 'economic' planning.¹³¹ For the NUMNWA and Labour in the coalfield this shift was largely outside its control, yet its effects were most pronounced in the way the coalfield political establishment responded. Attention focused on regional and urban planning in the North West. This was modernisation writ large. It involved the wholesale planning and promotion of new foci of urban growth through the building of new communities. The return of a Labour Government saw new institutional frameworks established for this purpose, such as the Regional Economic Councils working in conjunction with local authorities.¹³²

The NUMNWA and Labour in the coalfield greeted these developments with great enthusiasm believing that they marked a big step in Labour's commitment to coalfield modernisation. New urban development, especially the new towns, spiced up Labour's modernisation agenda.¹³³ For NUMLA and Labour, attaching themselves to 'planning' created another highly attractive and visible political diversion from engagement with failed policies of industrial diversification. In another sense, the shift of policy had a devastating affect on the ability of the coalfield to transform itself. Crucially, these

developments by-passed the coalfield leaving it as a run-down backwater as they diverted attention and resources. Moreover, as host to new urban growth, the coalfield was burdened by demands placed on local authorities and employment opportunities, already at a premium. By the late 1960s it was clear that the new urban communities were failing. By this time, it was also apparent that the deficiencies exposed, and burdens imposed, by new urban communities were being eclipsed by concerns over the effects of de-industrialisation in the North West's main urban centres which the new communities were intended to relieve.

The new concept of coalfield modernisation which emerged during the early 1960s was "to scrap and re-build". It was argued that the coalfield was finished as a viable economic and social unit. The only way to improve its fortunes was to develop new communities within it or adjacent to it.¹³⁴ The planners hoped to tackle three issues simultaneously. The first was to "relieve congestion" in the main urban areas of the North West: Liverpool, Manchester and Salford by clearing urban squalor and creating new urban communities. The second was to ensure that the new communities acted as stimuli to new growth in the region. The third, was that in doing so they would re-invigorate declining areas such as the South Lancashire coalfield.¹³⁵

There was a failure to proceed beyond the first objective. Fatally for the South Lancashire coalfield the exercise resulted in a multiplication of its problems. The North West saw new urban development during the late 1940s and 1950s through the creation of 'overspill' communities. These projects portended the character and scale of problems associated with the new towns. There were a number of 'overspill' developments throughout the South Lancashire coalfield. One of the largest was at Worsley, based on the former pit village of Little Hulton, taking families from slum clearance in Salford and Manchester. Another was the Wigan 'crescent'; a vast swathe of public housing between Worsley Mesnes, west of Wigan, and Ashton-in-Makerfield, centred on two estates at Newtown and Norley Hall. These mainly took families from urban re-development schemes in Wigan and Liverpool. Another huge 'overspill' at Westhoughton, which would have housed 42,000 people, was rejected after an inquiry. The 'overspills' brought pre-existing social problems to an overburdened coalfield. They were residential barracks with few amenities. However, the main difficulty they created for the coalfield was to exacerbate the problems caused by

lack of local employment opportunities. Even in an area of relatively high industrial growth such as Worsley during the late 1950s, at a time of economic expansion, there were major employment deficiencies. The 'overspills' gratuitously aggravated an already worsening outlook for employment in South Lancashire.¹³⁶

1960s planning moved from the concept of the 'overspills' to new towns. It was believed they would provide the stimulus to the growth in the coalfield by acting as employment 'quasars', unlike the 'overspills'. The three new towns were in central Lancashire based on the Chorley-Leyland-Preston axis, Skelmersdale and Warrington-Runcorn. Initially Central Lancashire New Town was the only success in creating employment for the coalfield based on travel-to-work opportunities because it developed an already growing travel-to-work culture between the coalfield and central Lancashire through the large-scale employment of ex-miners.¹³⁷ Later, during the 1970s and 1980s, Warrington new town provided similar, though more limited, 'travel-to-work' opportunities.

Although employment creation in Skelmersdale was primarily intended to cater for population migration from Liverpool it was also expected to act as a stimulus for growth in the coalfield. It was based on a former pit township to the west of Wigan. What little new employment growth there was in the coalfield during the 1960s was focused on Skelmersdale. However, it did little to improve permanently employment opportunities. It became a Mecca for light unsustainable employment as major employment projects collapsed or moved elsewhere. Skelmersdale rapidly became a by-word for failing new towns and 'sixties' urban planning. 'Life in Skem', as it is known locally, became synonymous with high rates of unemployment, empty and vandalised new houses as a lack of employment deterred families from moving there, and rising social tensions.¹³⁸ Skelmersdale failed both as a focus for growth in its own right and as a stimulus for growth in the coalfield.

One forlorn hope was that Skelmersdale would not only act as a foci of growth to revive the coalfield but that it would be a model for the revival of declining townships and urban areas in the coalfield by applying the same principles of urban modernisation and planning. The pit township of Abram was chosen for one such planning 'experiment'. It was abundantly clear that tree planting, derelict land clearance, a new school and a couple of

small-scale light industries were totally insubstantial for the scale of economic and social problems faced by the coalfield. However, the coalfield political establishment supported these schemes as the way forward for coalfield modernisation. The schemes represented an illusion of modernisation in the absence of adequate and relevant job creation. One deficiency of these schemes, as the planners were at pains to point out, was a lack of resources to undertake the scale of economic and social 'engineering' required to transform declining pit communities.¹³⁹ Creativity was certainly running ahead of funding. But, it seems implausible that these schemes could have been effective in creating large-scale employment opportunities. They were sticking plaster solutions for a patient requiring major heart surgery.

Labour politicians in the coalfield shared a vision with the planners for coalfield modernisation. The growing problems of the coalfield were compounded by an unquestioning belief that modernisation of any kind represented 'progress'. This increased as the need to provide answers to the failure of industrial diversification became ever more pressing. It remained undiminished until mounting political pressure saw Labour politicians turning on the planners as scapegoats. Alan Fitch, under pressure in Wigan, was notable for the increasing ferocity of his attacks on Skelmersdale new town for diverting investment from the coalfield as the industrial diversification strategy ran into the quicksand.¹⁴⁰

Another highly symbolic example of how modernity was perceived as the saviour of the coalfield came with motorway building. The motorways were seen as vital to regional planning by linking together the main urban areas and the new towns in order to encourage new investment. It was believed that the motorways would afford "a great opportunity to extend the frontiers of prosperity and modernity in the region".¹⁴¹ Skelmersdale was dubbed the "motorway town".¹⁴² The motorways did little to improve the fortunes of the coalfield because they were intended to cut through it to link other urban centres and new towns.¹⁴³ Their overall effect on growth in the coalfield remains doubtful. Significantly, they failed to solve the coalfield's infrastructure problems because they did not remove transport obstacles involved in latitudinal movement across the coalfield. Indeed modernisation of infrastructure arguably made the situation in the coalfield worse because

the railway and tramway networks were dismantled during the 1950s and 1960s. These problems remain unresolved today.

The shift of policy toward regional and urban planning was a backward rather than progressive step for the South Lancashire coalfield because it ignored its immediate concerns and did little to alleviate its problems. By all accounts it made them worse. By the late 1960s and early 1970s attention was shifting in yet another direction. This time it was the growing problems of more general de-industrialisation in the region with the spotlight moving to inner city Manchester and Liverpool.¹⁴⁴ By the 1970s the coalfield had become just one largely forgotten problem in the midst of calamitous economic and social collapse on four fronts: the declining industrial areas; the failing new towns and overspill communities; economic and social upheaval in the inner cities; and the effects of de-industrialisation in previously less blighted areas of the North West.

The course of industrial change beyond the early 1970s had its own economic and political causes and consequences but it is worthwhile considering some outcomes immediately following industrial change in coal. By the 1970s large areas of the coalfield were areas of negligible economic activity well before the horrors of Thatcherism were visited upon them. Places such as Atherton saw half its jobs in coal and cotton disappear. Work which was available was elsewhere in the region. Previously vibrant industrial communities were beginning to fragment.¹⁴⁵ The re-scheduling of much of the South Lancashire coalfield as an 'intermediate' development area in 1972, following the Hunt Report, brought little respite to the climate of decline.¹⁴⁶

By the late 1970s both Fitch and McGuire had given up attempts to bring new investment to the coalfield. Both continued to come under constituency pressure as failure to attract new coalfield investment was twinned with disenchantment with the Labour Government of the late 1970s. On his retirement from politics Fitch admitted the failure to re-invigorate the coalfield had been the greatest disappointment of his political career.¹⁴⁷ McGuire attacked both Conservative and Labour Governments accusing them of giving South Lancashire "the dirty end of the stick" at every juncture as they prioritised other areas for assistance with lower levels of unemployment.¹⁴⁸ For both, the vision of coalfield modernisation lay in ruins.

Rising unemployment during the 1970s was testimony to failure. By the mid-1970s unemployment was averaging over 6 per cent; figures not seen on a permanent basis since the 1930s. By the turn of the decade rates of nearly 20 per cent were more typical, including those in Skelmersdale new town.¹⁴⁹ During the late 1960s and 1970s the South Lancashire coalfield was a "relatively poor performer" in a region with "intractable" problems of attracting new investment "entrenched at the bottom of the employment table". What efforts had been made by government to turn the situation around had failed.¹⁵⁰

On the question of the sustainability of new industrial growth during the 1950s and 1960s a number of high profile new projects remained. Both Heinz and Metal Box stayed, but at a price. The 1970s saw the attractions of cheap labour in labour intensive assembly and production turn in favour of cost-saving technological change to the extent that both these major employers halved their workforce.¹⁵¹ It was clear by the 1980s that there was an absence of large-scale manufacturing employment save for the St. Helens glass industry and a few firms remaining in Skelmersdale. Many of these closed during the 1980s with little replacement industrial activity. Aside from the glass industry and engineering industries on the fringes of the Manchester conurbation the whole of the South Lancashire coalfield became an industrial desert.¹⁵²

The price in unemployment and poverty was clear. By the 1980s unemployment among under 25s in Wigan Metropolitan district was 42 per cent with long-term unemployment (those out of work for six months or more) over 60 per cent. Average unemployment was over 20 per cent and among males above 25 per cent. In the seventeen worst unemployment 'blackspots' these figures were exceeded. In three of them unemployment rates were nearer 40 per cent. Fourteen of those localities had a recent history of mining activity. 73 per cent of families were on low incomes and nearly 70 per cent were dependent on some form of benefit or pension.¹⁵³ This was the tragic human legacy of years of coal contraction and failure to establish relevant substitute economic activity.

For the wastelands of South Lancashire the question of industrial diversification was no longer relevant as the political question turned to one of regeneration. Mining areas or ex-mining areas are not attractive to private investors. This was true in South Lancashire,

which more than most had always suffered from an 'image' problem. In an increasingly 'image' conscious age this was perceived as an obstacle to private investment in the North West generally, and the coalfield in particular. As domestic investment dried up the Thatcher government turned to foreign investment as a source of new economic activity. The 'image' question has been held responsible for dissuading foreign investment in the region. Aside from a few foreign firms and a concentration of American investment mainly in the St. Helens glass industry the coalfield has been a below average performer in attracting foreign investment against both national and regional criteria.¹⁵⁴ In 1979, Prime Minister, James Callaghan, referred to the 'image' question as the biggest obstacle holding back the South Lancashire coalfield.¹⁵⁵ 'Image' masked the real reason for lack of investment by private capital. It was only attracted to the coalfield during the immediate post-war period by cheap and 'available' labour but by the late twentieth century it was looking elsewhere for opportunities. In any case, private investment had become more demanding of its workforce in terms of skills and qualifications which the coalfield found difficult to match.

The outcome saw misguided attempts by local government at 'image' building initiatives. One aspect has been the growth of the 'heritage industry' as local government assumed "a strategic role for urban economic development" after re-organisation in 1974. The hope was that promotion of the coalfield through 'industrial tourism' would create direct jobs in leisure and help stimulate the profile of the area to attract new investment. These developments reflected similar initiatives in areas of Britain with a recent experience of de-industrialisation.¹⁵⁶ In South Lancashire this has seen the establishment of several 'heritage' sites in the coalfield under local authority auspices, including a working museum at the former Astley Green colliery.

Doubts have been expressed about the effectiveness and propriety of this trend. In South Lancashire it is interesting that Labour controlled authorities have been in the vanguard of promoting 'heritage'. Again, like the pre-occupation with land rehabilitation and 'planning' during the 1960s and 1970s it is another element of failure to attract relevant employment opportunities. In addition, local government re-organisation contributed to civic aggrandisement and 'image promotion' within the new metropolitan authorities. One example has been the way Wigan Metropolitan authority successfully oversaw the

transformation of Wigan into a commercial, leisure and retailing centre in contrast to districts of the borough with a recent history of coal mining which remain backwoods for employment with high levels of social deprivation.

In another sense, the yearning for modernity has produced a grasp for a past that disappeared so quickly and re-produced it as nostalgia in the 'heritage industry'. As one leading critic of the 'heritage industry' as noted "the past has been summoned to the rescue of the present".¹⁵⁷ The growth of the 'heritage industry' is thus both a substitute for economic regeneration in the absence of something more substantive and an emotional catharsis.

7.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has indicated that the consequences of industrial change in the coalfield amounted to a catalogue of failure. This was a failure of modernisation. From the inter-war period the coalfield did not feature prominently in regional or industrial policy. Mistaken assumptions and misconceptions evident from the inter-war years continued into the post-war period. Industrial re-location policy failed the coalfield even as parts of it were reluctantly scheduled for development status. Failure continued as the requisite level and type of investment did not materialise during the late 1950s and 1960s to arrest the effects of contraction in coal. The shift toward regional and urban planning during the 1960s brought an unmitigated disaster as the modernisation of the 1960s compounded and complicated the problems of decline. The main import of demographic and labour trends discernible from the inter-war period went unheeded. The key lessons of labour mobility were not read thoroughly enough. Contraction occurred against this backdrop in a highly damaging way thus hastening the pace of decline. The loss of over 30,000 jobs in coal during the 1950s and 1960s created the context of economic and social decline which modernisation failed to relieve.

The time delay of accumulated contraction during a period of relative economic prosperity pushed the full effects into the late 1960s and early 1970s. This helped conceal the fault

lines opening up in the coalfield during the 1960s. The words of Sir Joseph Hunt are most apposite. Speaking of the 'intermediate areas' he noted that:

“The absence of large-scale unemployment has masked the difficulties of these areas and the relative deprivation of their economic position, but it cannot be assumed that time is on their side”¹⁵⁸

By the late 1960s the fault lines were opening up into huge fissures. Specific sections of the coalfield community and specific areas felt contraction most keenly. The 'losers' of industrial change were many, but it was 'disabled' and older mineworkers who suffered most. They were direct victims of modernisation. Loss of mining jobs affected all parts of the coalfield at various times. In many areas this was twinned with decline in other staple industries. However, the consequences of industrial change in coal were most heavily visited upon central areas of the South Lancashire coalfield which revealed characteristics of a declining mining area well before the pit closures and de-industrialisation of the later twentieth century.

Other declining coalfields had similar experiences. Lancashire's experience during the 1960s was not unique.¹⁵⁹ However, this chapter has identified the broader failings of industrial and regional policy over a long period of time in its impact on the coalfield. It has also identified sections of the coalfield community worst affected by the prioritisation of industrial change in coal over consideration of its consequences. The most important contribution of this chapter has been to shed light on the role played by Labour in the coalfield and its allies in the NUMLA in contraction and modernisation. Admittedly, many developments described were outside their direct control or remit. Of more importance were attitudes and sentiments. They continued to support a failed policy of industrial diversification linked to re-scheduling of development status in the belief that this was the way forward for coalfield modernisation. At the same time, commitment to coal industry modernisation prevented them from pursuing a credible and effective campaign to secure these objectives. A commitment to coal industry modernisation thus encroached on a desire for coalfield modernisation in a most unhelpful way.

It has been argued in this chapter that this fundamental contradiction meant that the NUMLA and Labour ignored the consequences of industrial change until it was too late. Failure to become fully engaged combined with the continuing refusal of government to offer assistance. The campaign for development status became a red herring. Other diversions followed to cover failure over industrial diversification. These included flirtations with land rehabilitation and regional and urban planning. More recently, they have turned to re-generation schemes which have included the promotion of 'industrial tourism' - a doubtful venture which smacked of desperation over failure to raise employment levels.

It has been suggested in this chapter that attitudes toward coalfield modernisation by its political establishment resulted in a deficit between job displacement and job creation because support for the growth of modern light industry did not translate into tangible economic growth. In one sense Labour had no choice because this was all that was on offer from private capital, while structural economic change pushed light industry to the fore. However, both the NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield gave their blessing to this type of investment. They marvelled at its arrival during the 1950s as part of a socialist vision of post-war modernity involving industrial expansion of this kind but it remained just a vision.

There were benefits from coalfield modernisation which were demanded and enjoyed by the coalfield community. Land rehabilitation was of benefit to all. Younger workers and women were given new opportunities in new industrial sectors. The motorways and urban planning brought a better standard of living for some. Even the 'heritage industry' brought new opportunities for education and fulfilment. But, on the key test of creating new economic activity and employment there was failure during the post-war period. Failure has continued since. This must remain the most damning indictment. The NUMLA and Labour in the coalfield ignored the consequences of industrial change because of their attachment to coal industry modernisation and did little to prevent coalfield enervation through the attitudes they adopted towards its modernisation.

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¹² Parsons, W, The Political Economy of British Regional Policy, 1988, Routledge, p.4.

¹³ PRO, File POWE 37/65: Ministry of Fuel and Power: NCB's Plan for Coal 1949-1952: Report: Plan for Coal, Board of Trade comments on expected unemployment, distribution of industry and regional divisions 2 March 1951.

¹⁴ PRO, File COAL 30/83: NCB: Secretariat Dept: Closure of Collieries 1958 March-1958 September: Closure of Collieries and Coke Ovens: Memo with Report from Ministry of Fuel and Power to NCBHQ, Brief for the Minister of Power and Note of Meeting between Minister of Power and NCB 12 May 1958.

¹⁵ PRO, File POWE 37/323: NCB: Re-organisation and Development Programmes: Closure of High Cost Pits 1957-1958: Notes of meeting between Ministry of Fuel and Power, Board of Trade, Ministry of Labour and NCB at the Ministry of Power 16 May 1958.

¹⁶ Ministry of Fuel and Power: Regional Survey Report :North Western Coalfields: Lancashire and Cheshire, 1945, HMSO.

¹⁷ Coal Mining: Report of the Technical Advisory Committee, March 1945, Ministry of Fuel and Power, Command Paper 6610 (The Reid Report), HMSO. Plan for Coal: The National Coal Board's Proposals, October 1950, National Coal Board.

¹⁸ 'The Lancashire Coalfield: A Survey of Employment Prospects', July 1953.

¹⁹ The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, April 1967, LAMIDA, Manchester, p.23 and Table 8. Report from the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries, Session 1968-69, National Coal Board, Vol II, Minutes of Evidence, House of Commons, 20 October 1969, Evidence Taken 1 April 1969 paragraph 555: Question from Michael McGuire MP For Ince: A figure of 31,500 job losses in the Lancashire coalfield was given. This figure is the total of all mineworkers displaced as a result of colliery closures between 1945 and 1972 of which 25,300 occurred between 1959 and 1972. It does not include central administrative, clerical and

management personnel, losses from licensed private mines, open cast or ancillary operations in coking works and engineering workshops.

²⁰ The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, LAMIDA, April 1967, Manchester, pp.40-44, Tables 9-11. Lancashire Evening Post 14 March 1994: Death of the Lancashire Coalfield 1947-1993. The Lancashire Miner No 9, January 1986: Lancashire Coalfield. 'The Lancashire Coalfield: A Survey of Employment Prospects', July 1953.

²¹ Census of England and Wales 1921: County of Lancaster, HMSO. Pullen, M.J., 'Changes in the Industrial Structure of Lancashire Since the Second World War', Unpublished MA(Econ) Thesis, Manchester University, 1961, p.44.

²² Pullen, M.J., 'Changes in the Industrial Structure of Lancashire since the Second World War', 1961, p.91.

²³ Colliery Guardian 25 July 1919, 18 June 1921, 15 July 1921. Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry in South Lancashire 1931 to 1971', 1971, Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Keele, Abstract, pp.19, 39.

²⁴ Ogden, B.P. 'The Changing Distribution of Coal Mining Industry in Lancashire', pp.39, 55-56.

²⁵ PRO, File COAL 30/84: Ministry of Fuel and Power: NCBHQ: Secretariat: Closure of Collieries: 1958 Sept-Dec Review of Collieries 25 November 1958: NCBNWD Chairman, Colonel Bolton, to NCBHQ Secretary 25 November 1958.

²⁶ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 240: 1964: NCBNWD Staff Department: Manpower: Residential Analysis of Mineworkers 7 April 1964.

²⁷ Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of Coal Mining Industry in Lancashire', pp.45, 48, Figure 17: Ogden's figures were based on Coal Board personnel management data from 1966. The deficiency of Ogden's analysis was that it did not offer a precise definition of what he felt constituted 'local recruitment'. It was based on percentages of miners travelling within mileage bands from collieries. Ogden's lowest band was 0-2 miles, suggesting a much tighter definition of the term 'recruited locally'. Similarly, the Coal Board was imprecise on this point, but within a 'few miles' of the pithead seems a fair definition of what constituted 'local'. I would argue that in

the context of the 1950s and 1960s 2.5 miles is a reasonable definition while I would accept that a tighter definition might be required for assessments of earlier historical periods.

²⁸ Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coalmining Industry', pp.33-34.

²⁹ The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, April 1967, LAMIDA, Manchester, pp. 20,23, Table 7.

³⁰ Burrows, E.M., 'Post-war Industrial Movement with particular reference to selected areas of the North West Region of the United Kingdom', 1968, MA (Econ) Thesis, Manchester University, Statistical Appendix.

³¹ PRO, File POWE 37/543: 1959-1960: Closure of Collieries: Policy: Consultations with the Ministry of Labour and Board of Trade on the NCB's closure programme: Report Dr.G.H.Daniel, Ministry of Power, on colliery closure concentration: 'St.Helens-Warrington-Cronton triangle' - specific concerns raised over the 'isolation' of Cronton colliery 8 July 1959. PRO, File POWE 37/544: 1960-61: Closure of Collieries: Policy: NCBNWD: Reports on individual collieries: Huddlesden colliery 6 October 1961.

³² PRO, File POWE 52/73: NCB Colliery Closure Programme covering 1965/66 (4th Quarter), 1966/67 and 1967/68 Half Yearly): Notes on North Western Division Colliery Closure Programme, 1966/68: Lancashire Coalfield: Reports on Chisnall Hall, Chanters, Ravenhead, Huncoat and Old Meadows Collieries 8 February 1966.

³³ PRO, File POWE 37/543: 1969-60: Closure of Collieries: Policy: Consultations with the Ministry of Labour and Board of Trade on the NCB's closure programme: Report by Dr.G.H.Daniel, Ministry of Power, on colliery closure concentration: 'St.Helens-Warrington-Cronton triangle' - specific concerns raised over the 'isolation' of Cronton colliery 8 July 1959. PRO, File POWE 37/544: 1960-61: Closure of Collieries: Policy: NCBNWD: Reports on individual collieries: Huddlesden colliery 6 October 1961. File POWE 52/73: NCB Colliery Closure Programme covering 1965/66 (4th Quarter), 1966/67 and 1967/68 Half Yearly): Notes on North Western Division Colliery Closure Programme, 1966/68: Lancashire Coalfield: Reports on Chisnall Hall, Chanters, Ravenhead, Huncoat and Old Meadows collieries 8 February 1966.

³⁴ 'Depressed Areas of the Sixties', Labour Research, January 1963.

³⁵ PRO, File POWE 37/598: 1961-1963: Distribution of Industry Committee: NCB Expectations of Pit Closures and Effects on Employment, NCB Industrial Relations Department notes of meeting with representatives of NCB, Ministry of Power, Board of Trade, Ministry of Labour and the Scottish Office at NCBHQ Hobart House 8 June 1962, Draft Memorandum for the Distribution of Industry Committee 2 July 1962.

³⁶ PRO, File COAL 31/98: NCB Chairman's Dept: 1960 May -1963 February: Colliery Closures NCBNWD: NCB: Finance Committee: Sandhole colliery East Lancashire Area: North Western Division: Proposed Closure 31 July 1961.

³⁷ PRO, File POWE 52/74: 1965-66: Report by Ministry of Power and Treasury Officials on Industrial Development and Alternative Employment: Board of Trade to the Ministry of Power: New Industrial Development in Coal Mining Areas 4 March 1965. PRO, File POWE 52/73: Notes on the North Western Division Colliery Closure Programme 1966/68: Lancashire Coalfield 8 February 1966.

³⁸ PRO, File POWE 52/281: 1967: Committee on the Redeployment of Industrial Resources (Peterson Committee): Working Group on Colliery Closures: Committee Papers, Minutes and Working Papers: Draft Report by the Working Group on Colliery Closures 6 January 1967. The estimate by the Committee that 1,573 mineworkers in Lancashire would be 'placed' within the industry from the remaining closures expected during the late 1960s and early 1970s was an accurate forecast. The Committee further estimated that the remaining closures would create 2,500 redundancies. This left a further 4,000 workers seeking retirement or finding alternative work outside the industry. PRO, File POWE 52/115: Factors Affecting Fuel Policy: 1967: Ministry of Power: Report: A Policy for Coal: Debate on Social Wastage 14 February 1967.

³⁹ Ministry of Labour Gazette 1966 and 1967: Monthly Summaries: Numbers Unemployed in Principal Towns and Development Area. Employment and Productivity Gazette 1968-1972 inclusive: Monthly Summaries: Numbers Unemployed in Principal Towns and Development Areas. Burnley Express 25 September 1963, 23 July 1967. Evening Post and Chronicle 23 September 1964, 24 September 1964. Padiham Advertiser 11 August 1967. St. Helens and District Reporter 21 January 1967. Swinton and Pendlebury Journal 28 February 1962. Salt, J.A., 'A Consideration of Some Post-war Unemployment Problems in the Merseyside and Manchester Conurbations', 1967, Unpublished Ph.D, University of Liverpool, pp.95-106. Specific

localities in the Manchester district included Farnworth, Pendlebury, Swinton, Walkden and Worsley.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Labour Gazette 1966 and 1967: Monthly Summaries: Numbers Unemployed in Principal Towns and Development Areas. Employment and Productivity Gazette 1968 – 1972 inclusive: Monthly Summaries: Numbers Unemployed in Principal Towns and Development Areas. Salt, J, 'A Consideration of Some Post-war Unemployment Problems in the Merseyside and Manchester Conurbations', 1967, pp.95-106.

⁴¹ Smith, D.M., 'Industrial Location and Regional Development - Some Recent Trends in North West England', Environment and Planning, Vol 1,1965,pp.188-189. Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coalmining Industry', 1971,p.119.

⁴² LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 39: NCBNWD: Deputy Chairman's Office: 1963 Jan "The Next Three Years": North West Divisional Conference Report, Old Boston Training Centre, Haydock 31 January 1963.

⁴³ PRO, File COAL 30/83: NCBHQ: Closures of Collieries and Coke Ovens: Brief for NCB representatives for meeting with Ministries concerned regarding effect on local employment of the Board's closure programme 12 May 1958.

⁴⁴ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 46: Deputy Chairman's Office: 1958 Dec-1959 Jan: Statements of Policy and notes of meetings held with the various unions in the Division regarding arrangements for closure: Notes of Joint Meetings between the divisional board and NUMLA executive, Grand Hotel, Manchester, 17 and 22 December 1958.

⁴⁵ NUMLA, ACM, 17 September 1960, 15 July 1961. Bolton Evening News 8 July 1961.

⁴⁶ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 46: Notes of Joint Meetings between the divisional board and NUMLA executive, 17 and 22 December 1958.

⁴⁷ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 39: 1963 Jan: "The Next Three Years": North West Divisional Conference Report, Old Boston Training Centre, Haydock, 31 January 1963.

⁴⁸ Leigh Tyldesley and Atherton Journal 14 September 1967.

⁴⁹ PRO, File POWE 52/115: Report: A Policy for Coal: Debate on Social Wastage 14 February 1967.

⁵⁰ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 46: Report of Meeting between Coal Board and NUMNEC, Hobart House, 12 December 1958, Notes of Joint Meetings between the divisional board and NUMLA executive 17 and 22 December 1958.

⁵¹ LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 46: Report of Meeting between Coal Board and NUMNEC, Hobart House, 12 December 1958, Notes of Joint Meetings between the divisional board and NUMLA executive, 17 and 22 December 1958.

⁵² NUMLA, ACM, 24 December 1958, 24 January 1959, 18 July 1959, 10 October 1959.

⁵³ NUMLA, ACM, 24 December 1958, 24 January 1959, 18 July 1959, 10 October 1959.

⁵⁴ Goodman, G, 'Redundancy in the Affluent Society', Fabian Tracts, No 340: Socialism in the 1960s Series, 1962, pp.8, 11-12.

⁵⁵ Bulmer, M, 'The Decline of Mining: a Case Study of Spennymoor' in Mining and Social Change: Durham County in the Twentieth Century, 1978, Croom Helm Ltd, pp.239-240, 245, 259, 250, 252. NUMNWA, Annual Conference Report, 1968: Bold colliery delegate. Avoidance of redundancy payments was an accusation made during the closure of number one pit at Sutton Manor and redundancies at Bold.

⁵⁶ Goodman, G, 'Redundancy in the Affluent Society', p.8.

⁵⁷ Wynn, H.W., 'A Plan for the Miners', March 1964, Pamphlet, NUM Derbyshire Area and a group of academics, Chesterfield, pp.17-21.

⁵⁸ Brown, J.C., 'Poverty in post-war Britain' in Understanding Post-war British Society, 1994, J.Obelkevich and P.Catterall (eds), Routledge, pp.119-120.

⁵⁹ Lancashire Life, April 1964, Vol 12, No 4, p.39: Article: J.Pratt 'The Pier-And All That': John Pratt takes a look at modern Wigan.

⁶⁰ Swinton and Pendlebury Journal 27 March 1960: letters to the editor, 13 November 1960: Discussion of housing and social conditions in the Swinton and Pendlebury areas particularly insanitary housing and an announcement by Swinton and Pendlebury Council of new housing schemes including those specifically for the elderly.

⁶¹ Challinor, R, The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners, 1972, Frank Graham, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, pp.243-244: Ruskin aborted his visit to Wigan in 1875, quickly returning to the railway station, horrified by what he found outside. Crick, B, George Orwell: A Life, 1981 Revised Edition, Secker and Warburg, pp.183-184. Orwell, G, The Road to Wigan Pier, 1989, Penguin edition in association with Secker and Warburg, First published 1937 Victor Gollanzc Ltd, Part I, *passim*. Pearce, 'Revisiting Orwell's Wigan Pier', Vol 82, No 267, No 2, July 1997, History, pp.426-428. Smith, T, 'Why the People of Wigan should feel proud to be associated with George Orwell', North West Labour History Issue No 22, 1997/98, pp.12-19. Heinemann, M, Britain's Coal: a Study of the Mining Crisis, 1944, Victor Gollanzc Ltd, Left Wing Book Club, pp.84-85: Heinemann drew attention to housing conditions of miners in which she refers to the Wallgate district of Wigan known locally as "the jungle" where miners lived in "overcrowded, insanitary and decaying" housing.

⁶² Evening Post and Chronicle 15 September 1967: Report on unemployment and social conditions on council estates in Hindley.

⁶³ Haq, M.T., 'The Policy concerning the Distribution of Industry in Great Britain', 1961, p.206.

⁶⁴ Gittus, E, 'Migration in Lancashire and Cheshire: A Sample Analysis of the National Register', Town Planning Review, Vol XXXII, No 2, July 1961, pp.144, 149-151.

⁶⁵ Pickett, K.G., 'Aspects of Migration in North West England 1960-61', Town Planning Review, Vol 38, No 3, 1967-68, pp.234, 236, 240, 242-243.

⁶⁶ White, P.H., 'Some Aspects of Urban Development by Colliery Companies 1919-1939', Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies, Vol 23, No 3, September 1955, p.272. Ashmore, O, The Industrial Archaeology of Lancashire, 1969, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, pp.117-120. Lancashire did not have a history of substantial colliery house building even during the big expansion in the inter-war period under 'welfarism'. Of over 12,000 colliery houses built in the British coalfields during the inter-war period only 453 were built in Lancashire compared with

4,515 in South Yorkshire. Most of the colliery house building in Lancashire during this period took place in Atherton and St. Helens. Post-1945 the only notable colliery house building schemes were in St. Helens, during the early years of nationalisation, and at Moston, east Manchester, to cater for the needs of Bradford colliery.

⁶⁷ Thomas, B, 'The Movement of Labour into South East England, 1920-1932', Economica, New Series, Vol 1, May 1934, p.233. Colliery Guardian: 'Notes from the Coalfields', 1927 and 1928 *passim*: Wigan Coal Company - one of the two largest colliery companies in the coalfield - purchased Manton colliery in the expanding Nottinghamshire coalfield as an hedge against decline and rationalisation, and in order to absorb mineworkers it was laying off in Lancashire. Although there were accusations of coercion by the company in collusion with Wigan Employment Exchange in moving miners and their families to Nottinghamshire, there was great difficulty adapting to the change of environment in Nottinghamshire by Lancashire miners even though social and working conditions were better than in Lancashire. Reports at the time note embarrassing episodes of miners and their families camped outside Wigan Employment Exchange after returning from Manton demanding re-settlement and work back in the Wigan area.

⁶⁸ Gildart, K, 'The Social and Political Development of the North Wales Miners 1945-1996', Unpublished D.Phil Thesis, 1998, University of York, p.204.

⁶⁹ Lancashire and Cheshire Colliery Tradesmen and Kindred Workers: NUM (Lancashire Tradesmen's Area): Minutes, Reports and Accounts: Executive Committee Minutes 1960: Minutes and Proceedings of the Executive Committee, Brook Chambers, Leigh, Lancashire 15 March 1960, Bolton Metropolitan Archives, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton, Call No FT/11/23: Emigration: Requests for pension and benefits continuation following emigration abroad. Emigration was an attractive option for those mineworkers with modern craft skills and coal-face experience. The New South Wales coalfield of Australia was one popular destination. St. Helens and District Reporter, 6 June 1964: Miners interviewed following the closure of Lea Green colliery.

⁷⁰ Burrows, E.M., 'Post-war Industrial Movement with particular reference to the North West Region of the United Kingdom', 1968, pp.74, 146-148, 183,201.

⁷¹ Burrows, E.M., 'Post-war Industrial Movement with particular reference to the North-West Region of the United Kingdom', 1968, pp.74, 146-148, 183,201,

⁷² Burrows, E.M., 'Post-war Industrial Movement with particular reference to the North-West Region of the United Kingdom', 1968, pp.74-75. Pullen, M.J., 'Changes in the Industrial Structure of Lancashire since the Second World War', 1961,p.110. In Ashton-in-Makerfield female employment grew by 149 per cent between 1950 and 1965 in a locality where over 4,000 mining jobs disappeared. Elsewhere values of 50-100 per cent were not untypical.

⁷³ Ogden, B.P., 'The Changing Distribution of the Coal Mining Industry', p.107. In Tyldesley 40 per cent all new jobs created during the post-war period were for woman including one new electrical assembly factory in which 85 per cent of new recruits were woman. The Heinz factory mainly recruited woman for its basic production processes.

⁷⁴ Law, C.M., 'Employment and Industrial Structure', in Understanding Post-war British Society, 1994,pp.81-82.

⁷⁵ Reeve, D.E., 'Trends in the Distribution of Employment in the North-West: An Analysis from 1971 to 1976', Working Paper Series No 7, North West Industry Research Unit, School of Geography, University of Manchester, 1978, pp.11, 14, Figures 4,7, 9, 14 and 16. The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, April 1967, p.46: Table 12. Pullen, M.J., 'Changes in the Industrial Structure of Lancashire Since the Second World War', 1961, pp.39-40.

⁷⁶ Massey, D, 'Geography and Class' in A Socialist Anatomy of Britain, 1985, D.Coates, G.Johnstone and R.Bush (eds), Polity Press, pp.78-79.

⁷⁷ Smith, D.M., The North West, 1969, Industrial Britain Series, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, p.102.

⁷⁸ Haq, M.T., 'The Policy concerning the Distribution of Industry in Great Britain', 1961,p.278. The four main growth sectors for male employment only contributed 18 per cent of new jobs as a result of re-location into the SLDA. This compared with 63 per cent of all new jobs in new sectors predominantly employing woman: artificial fibres, food and drink, garments and service industries.

⁷⁹ Haq, M.T., 'The Policy concerning the Distribution of Industry in Great Britain', 1961,p.204.

⁸⁰ Estall, R.C., 'This Changing World: Industrial Change in Lancashire and Merseyside', Geography, Vol XLVI, 1961,pp.56-59.

⁸¹ Haq, M.T., 'The Policy concerning the Distribution of Industry in Great Britain', 1961, p.293. Engineering firms which re-located to the North West brought 20 per cent of their management and skilled workers with them. The figure was higher for those re-locating within the region.

⁸² Estall, R.C., 'This Changing World: Industrial Change in Lancashire and Merseyside', p.58.

⁸³ I have benefited from discussions with members of my own family and friends who made the transition from mining to engineering during the 1950s and 1960s.

⁸⁴ Turton, B.J., 'The Railway Town: A Problem of Industrial Planning', Town Planning Review, Vol XXXII, No 2, July 1961,p.110.

⁸⁵ Phillips, C.B. and Smith, J.H., Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540, 1994, Longman, p.318.

⁸⁶ Salt, J, 'A Consideration of Some Post-war Unemployment Problems in the Merseyside and Manchester Conurbations', 1967,pp., 299-303,442-454. Ex-miners made up only one per cent of the 14,000 strong workforce at Ford's Halewood plant during the early 1960s.

⁸⁷ Salt, J, 'A Consideration of Some Post-war Unemployment Problems in the Merseyside and Manchester Conurbations', 1967,p.294. Burrows, E.M., 'Post-war Industrial Movement', 1968,p. 94.

⁸⁸ Phillips, C.B., and Smith, J.H., Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540, 1994,p.320. Smith, D, The NorthWest, 1969, pp.202-203.

⁸⁹ Newall, M, Roberts, J, Smith, J, A History of the Royal Ordnance Factory, Chorley, 1999, Carnegie Publishing Ltd, Lancaster, pp.29, 37,44,49,100,149-173. Burrows, E.M., 'Post-war Industrial Movement', 1968, p.91. At its peak of production during the war Second World War the Royal Ordnance Factory alone employed 35,000 workers. Its peacetime levels were somewhat less at 10-20,000 during the 1950s and 1960s. This later fell below 10,000 and more latterly below 5,000.

⁹⁰ The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, April 1967,pp.26-30.

⁹¹ Timmins, G, Made in Lancashire: A History of Regional Industrialisation, 1998, Manchester University Press, Manchester, p.310.

⁹² Metropolitan Borough of Wigan: Official Handbook, 1976, Council of the Metropolitan Borough of Wigan: The metropolitan borough established under local government re-organisation in 1974 covers the former Wigan County Borough and Leigh Municipal Borough along with over fifteen former urban and rural districts corresponding to the central area of the South Lancashire coalfield. Of 32 major employers in the metropolitan borough in 1976 16 had been established since 1945 of which 12 were established under development status between 1946 and 1959 but only 5 were manufacturing concerns. Of the 16 established since 1945 12 were in the tertiary sector. Three of the firms established prior to 1939 were large engineering concerns founded before the nineteenth century.

⁹³ The County Borough of Wigan: Official Handbook, 1971, Wigan Borough Council. Of 61 commercial and industrial firms in Wigan borough in 1971, 22 had been established before 1939, 17 under development status, between 1946 and 1959, and the remaining 22 since 1959. Of those 22 only three were in the manufacturing sector.

⁹⁴ The County Borough of Wigan: Official Handbook, 1971.

⁹⁵ Burrows, E.M., 'Post war Industrial Movement', 1968,pp.91,94: There was an average of over 17 unfilled vacancies in engineering for every unemployment worker in 1965 and a average of 28 unskilled workers chasing every unskilled vacancy in 1967.

⁹⁶ The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, April 1967,pp.46-47. Phillips, C.B. and Smith, J.H., Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540, 1994,p.317.

⁹⁷ Phillips, C.B. and Smith, J.H., Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540, 1994,pp.317,320. The Decline of Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, April 1967,p.20. North West England Centre for International Industry, n.d., Handbook, North West Industry Development Association, Manchester. International Directory of Company Histories: Vol III, 1991,St.James Press,pp.726-727. Barker, T.C., The Glassmakers: Pilkingtons: the rise of an international company, 1977,George Allen and Unwin.

⁹⁸ Phillips, C.B. and Smith, J.H., Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540, 1994,p.317.

⁹⁹ Burnley News 7 May 1959, 2 October 1965, 12 October 1965, 3 December 1965, 13 October 1967, 26 June 1968: New plant and employment expansion announcements by Lucas, Michelin, Northern Die-casting, Prestige, Rolls Royce (at Barnoldswick) and Volkes Filtration. Burnley Evening Star 16 January 1968: Expansion of Mullards electrical assembly plant with opening of new factory at Barrowford near Burnley.

¹⁰⁰ Parsons, W, The Political Economy of British Regional Policy, 1988, Chapter 5: Years of Misrule? Policy under the Conservatives, 1951-64. Scott, P, 'The Worst of Both Worlds: British Regional Policy, 1951-64', Business History, Vol 38, No 4, 1996. Scott, P, 'British Regional Policy 1945-51: A Lost Opportunity', Twentieth Century British History, Vol 8, No 1, 1997, pp. 381-382.

¹⁰¹ Scott, P, 'The Worst of Both Worlds', p.47.

¹⁰² "We are getting there": The Part the Industrial Estates are Playing in Bringing Prosperity to the Development Areas, March 1947, Brochure, Board of Trade with foreword by Sir Stafford Cripps President: North West Industrial Estates Ltd.

¹⁰³ Smith, D.M., The North West, 1969, pp.201-202. Phillips, C.B., and Smith, J.H., Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540, 1994, pp.317, 320.

¹⁰⁴ Wigan Observer 10 April 1959, 22 May 1959.

¹⁰⁵ Burrows, E.M., 'Post-war Industrial Movement', 1968, p.207. Haq, M.T., 'The Policy Concerning the Distribution of Industry in Great Britain', 1961, pp. 202, 281-282.

¹⁰⁶ Haq, M.T., 'The Policy Concerning the Distribution of Industry in Great Britain', 1961, p.186.

¹⁰⁷ Lloyd, P.E., 'The Impact of Development Area Policies on Merseyside 1949-1967' in Merseyside: Social and Economic Study, 1970, B.Lawton and C.M. Cunningham (eds), Longman, p.400.

¹⁰⁸ Lloyd, P.E., 'The Impact of Development Area Status on Merseyside 1949-1967', 1970, pp.374-410. The Intermediate Areas: Report of a Committee under Sir Joseph Hunt, April 1969, Command Paper 3998 (The Hunt Committee Report), HMSO. Merseyside's 'descheduling' in

1969 coincided with one of the most severe episodes of de-industrialisation in modern Britain with the collapse of waterside and related employment.

¹⁰⁹ Reeve, D.E., 'An Industrial Geography of Greater Manchester with particular reference to recent changes', Unpublished MA Thesis, 1974, Manchester University, pp.78-79.

¹¹⁰ The SLDC later became part of a re-named and expanded LAMIDA known as the North West Industrial Development Association (NWIDA).

¹¹¹ Industry in South Lancashire: An Industrial Handbook, 1959, SLDC and LAMIDA, J.Burrows and Co Ltd, Cheltenham and London. Industry in South Lancashire: An Industrial Handbook, 1973, SLDC of the North West Industrial Development Association (NWIDC), Manchester.

¹¹² The North West: A Regional Study, 1965, Department of Economic Affairs, HMSO, pp.34-35, 102.

¹¹³ St.Helens and District Reporter 26 February 1966: This development was more an acknowledgement that St.Helens was increasingly part of the Merseyside conurbation rather than industrial Lancashire. It was not an attempt to address its economic problems because there were no plans for additional assistance or economic expansion. No firms planned to re-locate as a result of its inclusion while development status only lasted until 1969 when the Merseyside Development Area was 'de-scheduled'.

¹¹⁴ LAMIDA, General Purposes Committee: The Coal Industry, Typescript Report, E.G.W.Allen Director, 25 November 1959, Reference B 302 (9), St.Helens Local Studies and Archives, Gamble Institute, Victoria Square, St.Helens.

¹¹⁵ The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, April 1967, p.25.

¹¹⁶ Burnley Express 7 January 1959. Dickinson, H, 'Lancashire Fights Back', Labour Monthly May 1959.

¹¹⁷ Burnley Express 11 April 1967.

¹¹⁸ Burnley Evening Star 3 January 1968.

¹¹⁹ LRO, No CC/NV/177:Lancashire County Council: Planning Department: Regional Development and Regional Study of the North West (P66) June 1964-Nov 1965: North East Lancashire: Notes for, and of meeting with, the North East Lancashire Development Committee 29 October 1964. Barr, J, 'What is Lancashire?' New Society 5 January 1967. Burns, J, 'Bucking Up Burnley' New Society 3 October 1968.

¹²⁰ Burnley Express 5 January 1968.

¹²¹ Hansard 756: 1967-68 Dec 11-Jan 19 Col 462: 13 December: Debate: Economic Problems (North West). Burnley Express 3 January 1967, 27 December 1967.

¹²² Metropolitan Borough of Wigan: Official Handbook, 1976. Three important new firms in the Wigan area were Peter Bland: fashion wear, Plessey: electrical assembly and Tupperware: plastic assembly.

¹²³ Leigh, Tyldesley and Atherton Journal 15 June 1967.

¹²⁴ Hansard Vol 695 1963-64 11 May 1964: Oral Answers to Questions: Harold Boardman to William Whitelaw Minister of Labour: Provision of employment for 'light work' men in the Atherton, Leigh and Tydesley areas.

¹²⁵ Wigan Observer 6 February 1970.

¹²⁶ Report from the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries: Session 1968-69: National Coal Board: Vol II, 20 October 1969, House of Commons 1 April 1969: Minutes of Evidence Cols 553-555: Mr.McGuire.

¹²⁷ The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, April 1967: Summary and Future Prospects. 'Money for Old wasteland' Economist 7 September 1968.

¹²⁸ Evening Post and Chronicle 9 April 1970. Wigan Observer 10 April 1970.

¹²⁹ Molyneux, J.K., 'The Rehabilitation of Derelict Land in the Wigan District of South Lancashire', MA Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1961: Chapter VI: Some Post-war Attitudes and Approaches to the General Problem of Dereliction. Lancashire Evening Post 1 February

1994: Extract from *Picture Post* article by Douglas McDonald Hastings 1939 entitled 'Wigan'.
Wigan Observer 16 August 1985: Detailing Alan Fitch's work with land re-habilitation and the
Groundwork Trust environmental initiative in South Lancashire.

¹³⁰ These Things Shall be: Notes on the Restoration of Britain After the War, November
1941, Pamphlet, From Series of Labour Party conferences on social reconstruction under chairman
Arthur Greenwood, Labour Party, W.C.A Gregory/Socialist Collection, Lancaster University
Library Call No 97 MVVP. "We are getting there" March 1947.

¹³¹ Parsons, W., The Political Economy of British Regional Policy, 1988, pp.152-153.
Jay, D, 'How much regional planning?' New Society 7 March 1963.

¹³² LRO, No CC/NV/162: Lancashire County Council: Planning Department: Economic Study of
the North West (P58/3) Nov 1964-Feb 1965. LRO, No CC/NV/177: Lancashire County
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¹³³ Evening Post and Chronicle 5 October 1964.

¹³⁴ 'The Road From Wigan Pier', Economist, 16 June 1962.

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¹⁴⁰ Wigan Observer 18 July 1969.

¹⁴¹ LRO, No CC/PLE/14: Lancashire County Council: The North West: A Regional Study 9 November 1965.

¹⁴² Industry in South Lancashire: An Industrial Handbook, 1973.

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¹⁴⁴ Lloyd, P.E., and Reeve, D.E., 'North West England 1971-1977: A Study in Industrial Decline and Economic Re-structuring', Regional Studies, Vol 16,No5, 1982,p.34.

¹⁴⁵ Grimshaw, P.N., 'Atherton in the 'Sixties': Land-Use Changes in South Lancashire', Town and Country Planning, Vol 35, Aug-Sept 1967, pp.408-411. Jones, J.A., 'Atherton: A Study in Industrial Growth', 1966, Unpublished BA (Hons) dissertation, University College, Dublin, 1966, pp.50-52, 60-61.

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¹⁴⁷ Evening Post and Chronicle, 11 January 1978, 13 May 1983. Wigan Observer, 25 November 1982.

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¹⁵¹ Lloyd, P.E., and Shutt, J, 'Recession and Restructuring in the North West Region', 1983, pp.44-46. Independent 11 March 1999: Article: 'Brown's Triumph Fails to Thrill North': Report on reception and implications of 1999 budget in Labour's 'heartlands' including a report from Heinz Kitt Green plant. Employment at Heinz peaked at 4,000 during the 1960s. By the late 1970s it had halved to 2,500. Today it is barely 1,700 but with the exception of Pilkingtons at St.Helens remains the largest single employer in the former South Lancashire coalfield.

¹⁵² Major Companies: North West England, 1984, Bound Typescript, North West Industrial Development Association (NWIDA), Manchester, Chorley Central Library. Economic Development Review:1985, 1986, Typescript Report, Wigan Metropolitan Council, Department of Technical Services, The History Shop, Wigan Heritage Services. Major Employment Changes in Greater Manchester in 1980, 1981, Typescript Report, Greater Manchester County

Planning Department, Policy Background Paper 81/5, Greater Manchester Council, The History Shop, Wigan Heritage Services. In 1984, with the exception of Skelmersdale new town, there were only eight industrial sites in the whole South Lancashire coalfield employing over 1,000 people, of which five were connected with the St.Helens glass industry. There were 13 firms employing over 500 of which two were connected with glass. The total number of firms employing over 100 stood at 60. These were serving a population in excess of three-quarters of a million.

¹⁵³ Economic Development Review: 1985, 1986. Wigan's Council Estates, July 1985.

¹⁵⁴ North West England: Centre for International Industry, n.d., North West Industrial Development Association, Manchester. Of nearly 600 foreign owned businesses in the North West only 28 are located in the coalfield of which more than half are American and nearly a third connected with the St.Helens glass industry.

¹⁵⁵ Wigan Observer 26 April 1979.

¹⁵⁶ Urry, J, 'Holiday-Making in Britain Since 1945', Contemporary Record: The Journal of Contemporary British History, Vol 5, Summer 1991, No 1,p.42: Urry cites the document 'I've Never Been to Wigan, but I Know What its Like', n.d., Economic Development, Wigan.

¹⁵⁷ Hewison, R, The Heritage Industry, 1987, Methuen, pp.16-21.

¹⁵⁸ The Intermediate Areas, Command Paper 3998, April 1969. Wigan Observer 25 April 1969.

¹⁵⁹ Knight, E.M., 'Men Leaving Mining: West Cumberland 1966-67', January 1968, University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Department of Geography, Papers on Migration and Mobility in Northern England, No 6. Sewel, J, Colliery Closures and Social Change: A Study of a South Wales Mining Valley, 1975, University of Wales, Board of Celtic Studies, Social Science Monographs No 1, Cardiff. Ryhope: A Pit Closes: A Study of Re-deployment, 1970, Department of Employment and Productivity and the National Coal Board. Bulmer, M, 'The Decline of Mining: A Case Study of Spennymoor', 1978.

CONCLUSION

As this thesis has shown industrial change in the Lancashire coalfield during the post-war period was impelled by the notion of modernity. This, above all else, influenced government economic and political priorities. The desire for modernity was affected by two sentiments. Firstly, a socialist interpretation of Britain's industrial dispensation prioritised the need to modernise and rationalise the economy through the application of science, technology and planning. This was manifested in ideas on post-war reconstruction. Later it informed Labour's preparations for government through the role it assigned to economic modernisation and planning in its political agenda for the 1960s. In government from 1964 Labour initiated a fuel policy and further coal contraction through the accelerated colliery closure programme - conceived and planned at the highest level of government. Secondly, the post-war debate over Britain's putative 'decline' adversely affected perspectives against coal because the industry was perceived as central to the notion of British economic obsolescence. For coal these twin developments brought a requirement to transform itself into a modern industry and also play a key role in wider economic modernisation. The collapse in coal consumption taking place from the late 1950s hastened this process. Critically for coal both the economic and political imperatives of post-war governments, which these sentiment informed, brought the challenge of alternative fuels and the emergence of a 'multi-fuel' economy supported by both the main political parties.

It has been demonstrated in this thesis that modernisation of the coal industry had the overwhelming support of a wide spectrum of industrial and political opinion both nationally and in the Lancashire coalfield. Importantly, the position adopted by the NUM in endorsing industrial change was crucial to the successful delivery of a modernised coal industry. Indeed, Lord Robens paid tribute to the "statesmanship and foresight of the union leadership" in ensuring the transition of the industry.¹ Significantly, in Lancashire, both the NUMLA and Labour Party sustained high levels of support for industrial change in coal through the twin processes of modernisation and rationalisation. Industrial change was also underpinned in Lancashire by an understanding between both sides of the industry that modernisation was the key to ensuring the future viability of coal and the success of public

ownership. The NUMLA leadership demonstrated through the position it adopted on many aspects of industrial change that it supported the process. These leaders were fixated by industrial change to the extent that the two senior, and ideologically opposed, officials came to epitomise this obsession: Joe Gormley and Jim Hammond. They were the principal NUMLA figures most closely associated with industrial change from the late 1950s. Gormley saw industrial change as a way of bringing improvement to those union members remaining in the industry, while Hammond's ideological prescriptions meant that he saw in modernity a method of improving economy and society in the service of 'working class' 'progress'. In their different ways both were implacably devoted to industrial change. Throughout the 1960s this was evidenced through their actions particularly seen in Gormley's sophism and Hammond's caution and judiciousness alongside his bluster.

Findings from this thesis have demonstrated that in Lancashire, NUMLA-Labour Party hegemony was influential in that their strategies facilitated the successful management of scepticism about industrial change. Both the NUMLA and Labour Party were able to convincingly show that only through a programme of modernisation and rationalisation was the transition to a viable industry attainable. Moreover, it was the Labour Party - traditional political custodians of the coalfield - who it was argued should oversee the task. However, to a large degree modernisation of both the coal industry and the coalfield was deployed during the early 1960s in order to underpin Labour's political ambitions. Industrial change was thus accompanied by a high degree of manipulation of opinion in order to ensure the success of industrial change and underpin electoral support for Labour. Manipulation resulted from the strength of the desire to see modernisation succeed. Modernity was itself of value in achieving this task as both the discourse and symbolism of modernisation were deployed to powerful effect as were the more substantive benefits of working in a modernised coal industry.

The degree of success was facilitated by the inherent weakness of opposition to industrial change. While it was clear that industrial change had its opponents among a small but assertive group of union branches and officials on the left, they were completely overwhelmed by the strength of NUMLA-Labour Party hegemony. They were unable to mobilise widespread support against industrial change. However, more importantly, the

main source of weakness of opposition was the inability of the left to reconcile its vocal opposition to the outcomes of industrial change with its ideological commitment to the modernisation of coal.

In any case, it is clear from the examination of reaction and response to industrial change that for a vast majority of mineworkers in Lancashire there was little likelihood that industrial change would meet with opposition. On the contrary, during the late 1950s and early 1960s the 'rank-and-file' welcomed both the modernisation of the coal industry and the coalfield as part of the delivery of a longer-term commitment by the NUM and the Labour Party. Industrial change only emerged as an issue for the 'rank-and-file' where it was confronted with the negative outcomes of rationalisation. During the early 1960s these included an increase in the tempo of colliery closures and issues relating to specific closures. Similarly, 'rank-and-file' patience was tested by the negative consequences of colliery closures such as transfers, loss of status and travel-to-work issues or from the modernisation of work practices such as the introduction of more widespread shiftwork. However, the grievances and tensions produced by industrial change did not translate into significant industrial or political protest largely because of the intervention of countervailing processes which nullified the potential for collective action.

It has been argued in this thesis that industrial change was a force for division amongst the 'rank-and-file' not for unity. For example, colliery closures and the outcomes which resulted undermined the cohesion of the 'rank-and-file' because grievances, as typically articulated, were specific to place and time. The NUMLA leadership skilfully exploited this.² Similarly, industrial change was marked by the way in which the leadership exploited the divergent experiences of mineworkers by attaining beneficial outcomes for the minority who remained at successful modernised collieries in contrast to those at threatened collieries or forced to leave the industry. Clearly, Joe Gormley will be remembered for his selective attention to the needs of his members in this way. Gormley thus became adept at appropriating the opportunities which accrued from industrial change. Occasions for the development of collective action became even more limited after 1965 under the ACP as the 'new realities' facing coal tended to accentuate divisions within the 'rank-and-file'. It translated into a 'fight' for coal's survival which pre-occupied all those connected with the industry in Lancashire. Furthermore, loyalty to Labour and the

NUMLA leadership's need to proclaim its loyalty to a Labour Government worked against the articulation of significant criticism.

However, as the analysis of the experience of industrial change has shown, the process in the Lancashire coalfield did have a considerable impact in the way it influenced the growing mood of industrial militancy during the late 1960s. It also brought about a degree of political change. Events in the Lancashire coalfield during 1967-68 were the most significant during the progress of industrial change. They reflected rising tensions in the industry. Indeed, Lord Robens used dramatic language to characterise the atmosphere of the time describing this as an "unnerving experience" and of having "walked a dangerous path" such was the anger over further coal contraction.³ It was certainly the return of Labour to government and its fuel and further coal contraction policy which were the catalysts for this climate of hostility. However, in Lancashire it was the specific character of industrial change which was influential in producing such a profound reaction amongst the 'rank-and-file'. Again, it was the manner of contraction which did most to produce anger. This was seen through the circumstances accompanying the closure of specific 'high-profile' collieries, premature closures and the rapid collapse in the absorption possibilities for 'displaced' mineworkers in Lancashire. However, it was the belated experience of contraction in the North East Lancashire and St. Helens districts of the coalfield which witnessed the strongest reaction against industrial change. Later, reaction to industrial change was evident in a more general shift of sentiment in the coalfield in support of militant industrial action based on an retrospective assessment of the experience of the process combined with the prospect of the return of more settled conditions for the industry. Similarly, the events of the late 1960s saw divisions occurring for the first time in the consensus on industrial change among leading NUMLA officials raising the spectre of factionalism. Furthermore, the experience fostered a growing critique of the Labour Party in the coalfield from the 1960s over its stewardship of public ownership in coal and its attitude towards industrial change. This presaged a new decade in which NUMLA-Labour Party hegemony came under greater critical gaze. Industrial change thus left indelible marks on the industrial and political life of the coalfield.

The changes also produced a legacy for the coalfield through the consequential economic and social enervation. Longstanding and entrenched government and official

misconceptions about the Lancashire coalfield gratuitously contributed to this outcome. However, again, it was attitudes and sentiments toward modernity which were significant in producing negative consequences. One important sentiment was how the NUMLA and the Labour in the coalfield sought to interpret industrial change. The overriding commitment of both to modernisation of coal obviated their full engagement with the urgent need to tackle a rapidly deteriorating situation. Another was Labour's position on industrial diversification also supported by the NUMLA. It could be plausibly argued that although putting into practice notions of modernity through industrial diversification was inadequate and poorly conceived it was nevertheless genuinely held. But, during the 1960s this gave way to a fashioning of the modernisation agenda to meet Labour's political objectives. In the same way, policies on coalfield rejuvenation and urban planning came to be seen by Labour's detractors as attempts to camouflage policy failures because of an absence of tangible progress in bringing new investment to meet contraction in coal. Certainly in the way in which modernity came to be practised criticism of Labour was justified because for all its rhetoric of modernity the desire for new and relevant economic and social opportunities in the coalfield remained unfulfilled.

As a concept modernity had a long pedigree amongst all shades of the British left as a elixir of working class misery brought about by the industrial dispensation. Industrial change in coal was a process which held the genuine and longstanding commitment of both the Labour Party and organised labour in the industry. In fact, industrial change in coal was distinctive for the way in which it actively engaged coal industry trade unions. In as much as it transformed the coal industry into an efficient and modern industry it was a great success. Yet, it did so much harm to a majority of union members. For the Labour Party it proclaimed a better tomorrow but instead brought the seeds of economic and social impoverishment. The durability of the notion of modernity was accompanied by a consistent and fundamental incongruity between the vision, its implications and deleterious outcomes which resulted. That remained the central dilemma for the left. Modernity was intended to re-create but in the final analysis it gave birth to so many orphans.

¹ NUM, Annual Conference Report, 1969: Address by Lord Robens

² Turner, R.L., 'Post-war Pit Closures: The Politics of De-Industrialisation', Political Quarterly, Vol 156, No 2, April-June 1985, p.164-174. A.J.Richards Miners on Strike: Class Solidarity and Division in Britain, 1996, Berg, Oxford, pp.45-53, 85-93: Chapter 2: The Limits of Solidarity: Industrial Decline and the Undermining of Community, Chapter 4: The Problems of Strike Action: The Divisiveness of Pit Closures. The notion that colliery closures produce division rather than unity is one that has gained currency through analysis of the more recent events of the 1980s.

³ NUM, Annual Conference Report, 1969: Address by Lord Robens.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: BIOGRAPHICAL

JAMES ANDERTON OBE

Born in 1904 at Platt Bridge near Wigan Lancashire. Came from a mining family. Studied mining engineering at Wigan Mining and Technical College. Joined Pearson Knowles Coal Company which became part of Wigan Coal Corporation after statutory re-organisation in 1930. Assistant manager, then manager at Maypole colliery. Later became manager of Mains colliery and Ince Moss colliery becoming agent-manager of Clock Face colliery, St.Helens, in 1942. At nationalisation in 1947 became assistant agent, then agent, for a group of collieries in the St.Helens district. Became Production Manager then Area General Manager for St.Helens district in 1952. Celebrated inventor of the Anderton Shearer-Loader, a coal-getting and loading machine in 1952; the most important technological development in post-war coal mining. Joined the NCB Scottish Division as manager-agent with special responsibility for colliery production. Appointed deputy chairman of the Scottish Division in 1958. Returned to Lancashire in 1961 to take over as divisional chairman following the retirement of Colonel Bolton, a post he held until retirement in 1967. One of Britain's leading mining technologists. Holder of the highest order in mining engineering - The medal of the Institute of Mining Engineers - only one of 23 ever struck and one of only four living holders during the 1960s. New NCBNWD headquarters at Lowton, near Warrington, named in his honour.

Sources: Colliery Guardian 20 October 1960, 6 January 1967, 10 February 1967, 3 March 1967, 5 May 1967. Manchester Guardian 5 February 1963. St.Helens and District Reporter 22 August 1964. Wigan Evening Post 31 March 1988. Jackson, M.P., The Price of Coal, 1974, Croom Helm Ltd, p.74.

COLONEL G.G.H. BOLTON MBE CBE MC

Born in 1896 at Burnley, Lancashire. Scion of the North-East Lancashire coal owning family of George Hargreaves. Joined the family business in 1912. Studied mining engineering at Wigan Mining and Technical College. During the First World War was a 2nd Lieutenant in the East Lancashire Regiment. Decorated with the Military Cross in 1916. Later regimental adjutant and colonel at the age of 25. Pursued a military career after the end of the war as commander of territorial units 1920-1928. Returned to the family business in 1928 as its managing director. Oversaw compulsory re-organisation and merger of the company in 1932 to form the largest mining operation in North-East Lancashire - George Hargreaves and Co Ltd. In 1935 became an executive officer with Lancashire Associated Collieries Ltd. At nationalisation in 1947 became NCBNWD marketing director and in 1949 deputy chairman. Became divisional chairman in 1951, a post he held until retirement in 1961. Held various high offices in Lancashire including Deputy Lieutenant. Involved with the scout movement and Knights of St. John. MBE in 1945 and CBE in 1960.

Sources: Colliery Guardian 20 October 1960.

June 1960.

Wigan Examiner 6 January 1960, 18

JAMES, 'JIMMY', DOWD

Born 21 September 1921 at Wigan, Lancashire into a mining family. Discouraged by family from going into the coal industry. Unable to find work after leaving school at 14. Spent most of the 1930s on the dole including spells on direct work schemes. Eventually obtained a job in a shop then later in a cotton mill. Father was a miner, trade unionist and ILP member who encouraged him to join the ILP and despise the Labour Party. Served in the army during the Second World War where he came under the influence of Marxists who had fought in the Spanish Civil War. Joined the CPGB in 1943. After demobilisation returned to his job in the mill. Due to marriage and having a large family saw mining as a more lucrative job. Started in the coal industry at Bickershaw colliery in 1951 where he eventually found work on the 'face'. Became involved with the union at Bickershaw where he unsuccessfully contested the post of branch secretary in an attempt to remove a

leadership he believed was "too close to management". At one point sacked then reinstated over an issue of job demarcation. Moved to Bold colliery in 1955 as he saw better prospects in the St.Helens district of the coalfield. Continued to live in Wigan and travel to work at Bold where he took an interest in trade union affairs becoming a member of the union branch committee. Led a number of successful disputes against management during the late 1950s. Opposed Gormley at Bold. Achieved some prominence during the 1960-61 ballot-rigging affair as a staunch supporter of Jim Hammond against Joe Gormley. Involved in confrontations with Gormley supporters. An interview with the Daily Express in 1961, in which he denounced Gormley as corrupt, nearly resulted in his expulsion from the NUMLA. Continuing activism with the CPGB included support for Mick Weaver at by-elections and general elections in Wigan. An increasingly influential figure on the left of the NUMLA throughout the 1960s. Elected branch secretary at Bold in 1963. By the late 1960s and early 1970s recognised as the leading figure on the left within the NUMLA able to enjoy widespread support at union branches in the St.Helens and Wigan districts. Associated with the Miners' Forum during the late 1960s - a left wing caucus designed to increase democracy within the NUM and make it more accountable to members. The Forum was opposed by the NUM leadership. Consolidated his power base in the St.Helens and Wigan districts through his chairmanship of Wigan Trades Council with CPGB support. Constantly at loggerheads with the NUMNWA leadership. Mobilised support for Mick McGahey against Gormley in the 1972 campaign for the NUM presidency. Chairman of the strike liaison committee in Lancashire 1972 in which he was involved in leading mass picketing and demonstrations. Advocate of direct action against the Conservative Government. Delegate to the Lancashire Federation of Trade Councils.

Sources: NUMNWA Week-End Conference Report 7- 8 December 1963. NUMNWA, Special Conference Report, 22 October 1969. Evening Post and Chronicle 22 February 1970, 3 March 1970, 9 April 1970, 16 November 1971. Wigan Examiner 6 June 1958. Wigan Observer 30 May 1969, 10 April 1970. Brown, D, 'The Labour Movement in Wigan', 1969, pp.171, 181, 189. Taped Interview with Jimmy Dowd, Reference C/14/85, St.Helens Oral History Collection, St.Helens Metropolitan Archives and Local Studies, Gamble Institute, Victoria Square, St.Helens.

EARNEST ALAN FITCH

Born 10 March 1915 in South Wales. Son of a Methodist minister. Spent early childhood moving from parish to parish with his father. At 11 sent to Kingswood School, Bath, for the sons of Methodist ministers. In 1932 returned to live with his family, then resident in Rochdale, Lancashire. An interest in politics at school led to early political activity in local Labour Party politics. A youthful first secretary of Wardle Labour Party in 1935 then vice-chairman of the former Royton constituency Labour Party from 1936. Encountered difficulty finding work but eventually found a job as a shipping clerk with the Manchester Shipping Company. Increasing involvement in local politics led to his sacking by the Managing Director of Manchester Shipping. Spent some years on the dole. Unsuccessfully contested local council seats at Wardle in 1936 and Rochdale central in 1938. During the Second World War left Rochdale for work in the Lancashire coalfield. Worked underground at Golborne colliery and later Astley Green colliery. Continued as a Labour Party activist. Also became a NUMLA official with a seat on the union executive representing Atherton and Tyldesley panel of branches. Member of Leigh Co-operative Society. Member of Newton Labour Party. Secretary of Culcheth Trades and Labour Council. Nominated as NUMLA-sponsored candidate for Wigan at the 1958 by-election which he won with a large majority. Subsequently held the seat for Labour at the 1959, 1964, 1966 and 1970 general elections with handsome majorities. A Labour Party moderate from the right and a 'revisionist'. Strong multilateralist in the disarmament debate. One of 45 signatories to the Campaign for Democratic Socialism in 1961. Keenly pro-Common Market. A Gaitskellite who was said to have been highly regarded by Hugh Gaitskell. Widely tipped for a post in a future Labour government headed by Gaitskell. Hopes of high political office effectively ended with the death of Gaitskell. Did not feature in Harold Wilson's plans but still seen as a trusted party loyalist. Given the post of assistant Labour whip (1964-1966) and junior minister as Lord Commissioner of the Treasury (1966-1969). Vice-Chamberlain HM Household (1969-1970). An opposition whip (1970-1971) but resigned over Labour's position on the Common Market. Member of the Speaker's Panel of Chairmen (1971-1978). A senior Labour MP at Westminster and in the North-West chairing the Mining Parliamentary Group of Labour MPs and executive member and later chairman of the Lancashire and Cheshire Regional Council of Labour

(later styled the North West Regional Council of Labour). Served on the Select Committee on the Nationalised Industries for all five sessions (1959-1964). Also served on three other parliamentary committees: Children and Young Persons Bill; Criminal Justice Bill; Libraries and Museums Bill. Chairman of the SELDA. Member of the Fabian Society. Continued association with the Methodist Church. Friend and associate of Jack and Bessie Braddock.

Sources: NUMLA, ECM, 15 July 1963, 16 November 1963. Evening Post and Chronicle 14 August 1963, 5 October 1964, 9 April 1970, 13 May 1983. Rochdale Observer 30 May 1959. Wigan Observer 16 May 1958, 16 August 1985. The Times: House of Commons, 1959, The Times, p.107. Braddock, J and B, The Braddocks, 1963, McDonald. Who Was Who 1981-1990, 1991, A and C Black. Haseler, S, The Gaitskellites: Revisionism in the British Labour Party 1951-1964, 1983, Macmillan and Co, pp.216-217, 228-229. Howell, D, British Social Democracy: A Study in Decay and Development, 1980, Croom Helm Ltd, pp.234-235. Pimlott, B, Harold Wilson, Harper Collins, 1992, p.262. Muller, W.D., The 'Kept Men'? The First Century of Trade Union Representation in the British House of Commons, 1977, Harvester Press Ltd, Sussex, p.111.

JOSEPH 'JOE' GORMLEY BARON OBE

Born 5 July 1917 at Ashton - in- Makerfield, Lancashire, into a mining family. Entered the coal industry aged 14 in 1932 at Wood colliery, Haydock. Later moved to Stones colliery, Garswood (a village between St.Helens and Wigan) and then to Old Boston colliery, Haydock in 1938. In 1946 moved to Lyme colliery, Haydock. Worked in various grades in the collieries and involved with the union at branch level. Completed mining qualifications on a part-time basis during the early 1950s becoming a qualified deputy. Considered emigration to Australia but left Lancashire in 1953 to work at Glebe colliery, Fenton, in the North Staffordshire coalfield as a deputy. Also served on the union branch committee. Returned to Lancashire in 1954 to work at Bold colliery, St.Helens where in 1956 he was elected to represent the colliery on the NUMLA executive. Thereafter, made rapid progress within the NUM being elected to the NUMNEC in 1957 and to the post of NUMLA General Secretary in 1961 after a bitterly fought contest with Jim Hammond. Briefly held

the presidency of Bold colliery branch in 1960-61. Took an early interest in Labour politics through the local Labour Clubs. Became chairman of Ashton-in-Makerfield Labour Party and Secretary of Ashton Central Labour Club. Elected as a ward Labour councillor in Ashton-in-Makerfield in 1951 and again in 1954, serving until 1961, including leadership of the council Labour group. Also served as a Justice of the Peace. Unsuccessfully contested the Labour Party candidature for the Burnley constituency to fight the 1959 by-election. Elected to the Labour Party NEC in 1963 serving until 1973. Member and former chairman of the International and Organisation Committees of the Labour Party. Unsuccessfully contested the post of NUM General Secretary in 1968. Elected NUM president in 1971. Awarded OBE in 1969. Created Baron Gormley of Ashton-in-Makerfield in 1982.

Sources: NUMLA, Special Conference Report, 1 September 1959. NUMLA, ACM, 15 October 1960, 10 November 1960, 12 November 1960. NUMLA, ECM, 22 September 1960, 22 October 1960, 10 November 1960. Bolton Evening News 24 October 1960, 28 October 1960, 12 November 1960. Burnley Express 16 September 1959, 19 September 1959, 23 September 1959. Gormley, J, Battered Cherub: The Autobiography of Joe Gormley, 1982, Hamish Hamilton, *passim*. The Annual Obituary 1992, 1993, St. James Press, Detroit, pp.398-402. Who Was Who 1991-95, 1996, A and C Black. Files on Individuals: Joe Gormley, Press Cuttings, National Museum of Labour History Archive, Manchester.

EDWIN, 'TEDDY', HALL

Born at Hindley Green, Lancashire, in 1895 into a mining family. Youngest of eight children. Father died while still a child. In 1908, aged 13, went to work as a surface haulage lad then later underground at Abram Coal Company. Worked in every grade in a number of collieries. In 1921, aged 26, became secretary of Leigh Trades and Labour Council. In 1932 appointed checkweighman and in 1935 branch secretary at Bedford colliery. Appointed to the joint (with Lancashire coal owners) Lancashire District Wages Board. Became a LCMF delegate to the MFGB. In 1942 elected full-time miners' agent for St. Helens and in the same year vice-president of the LCMF. Became the youngest president of the LCMF in 1944. Emerged as a leading figure on the right opposed to the

growing influence of Communism within the LCMF. In 1945 elected to post of NUMLA General Secretary as Peter Pemberton's successor. In 1947 nominated to serve on the NUMNEC. Elected to NUM Business Committee in 1948. His vigour, strong personality and diminutive size earned him the sobriquet "the pocket dynamo". His authoritarian style brought fear and respect from many but loathing from others. Sought a strategy of co-operation and partnership with the NCBNWD under public ownership. First Lancashire miner to hold a seat on the TUC General Council 1957-1960. Active involvement with disabled miners. Provided an extension of the Lancashire miners' convalescent home at Blackpool to include bungalows to cater for paraplegic miners and a new paraplegic centre at Platt Bridge near Wigan. Later career dogged by ill health. Retired in September 1960 but worked on a part-time basis on disablement and welfare issues. One of his retirement gifts was a Bermuda cruise paid for by the NUMLA from which he was recalled to answer and arbitrate in the ballot-rigging affair of 1960-61. Attended the NUMLA annual conference in Blackpool in May 1961 but taken ill during the conference and died 7 July 1961. Member of Social Insurance Committee of the TUC. Worked with the International Labour Organisation 1954-1960. Member of the Railway Staff National Tribunal (The Guillebaud Committee), the Cotton Council and Mining Qualifications Board. Strong connections with the Labour Party. Contemporary and associate of Tom Brown, miner, LCMF official and Labour MP for Ince 1942-1964.

Sources: NUM Annual Conference Reports 1947, 1948, 1957. NUMLA, ACM, 17 September 1960, 15 July 1961. LCMF Monthly Conference Report 11 May 1935. Coal News: North Western Edition and Pit Prop August 1961. The Times 10 July 1961. Bolton Journal and Guardian 14 January 1944. Bolton Evening News 8 July 1961. Manchester Guardian 19 September 1960. Howell, D, The Politics of the NUM: A Lancashire View, 1989, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp.10-11.

JAMES, 'JIM', HAMMOND

Born 7 August 1907 at Wigan, Lancashire. Went to work in coal mining at 14 years of age at Victoria colliery, Standish near Wigan. Sacked and 'blacklisted' by Wigan Coal Corporation in 1933 because of industrial and political activism. Worked briefly in a

factory where he was again dismissed for activism. After a spell on the dole travelled widely abroad as an itinerant worker. Lived for a time in the Soviet Union. Returned to Lancashire on the outbreak of war. Taken on again in coal mining during the Second World War working underground at Garswood Hall colliery. Quickly became involved again with industrial and political activity. Earned a reputation as a formidable and respected negotiator through the LCMF branch production committee. Joined the CPGB in 1942. In the same year he was elected full-time miners' agent for Wigan registering a vote twice as high as either of his rivals on the right: Edwin Hall and Laurence Plover. Held the vice-presidency of the NUMLA in 1944. In 1945 unsuccessfully contested the post of General Secretary of the NUMLA following the retirement of Peter Pemberton losing to Edwin Hall. Held the NUMLA presidency for two years between 1946 and 1948 and again in 1952-53. NUMNEC member 1945-1947. Emerged as the key figure in the NUMLA after the General Secretary during the late 1940s and 1950s. Standard-bearer for the left in the NUMLA. Instrumental in settling a serious and protracted dispute in the early years of public ownership in the Lancashire coalfield over concessionary coal. Representative of NUMNEC mission to the Dutch Trade Union Congress. Visited Dutch state mines to obtain information and ideas on colliery modernisation, working conditions and practices. Rising prominence in the NUMLA matched by his growing influence in the CPGB both nationally and within the North West. A major influence, together with his wife Phyllis, in re-organising the CPGB in Lancashire during the late 1940s and early 1950s during a relatively fruitful period for the party in the North West. Unexpectedly left the CPGB in 1954 (disputed) and thereafter worked for the return of a Labour government although maintaining left wing principles. NUMLA nomination for NUM national presidency in 1959 which he unsuccessfully contested coming a poor seventh, being knocked out in the first round of voting. Again, in 1960 he unsuccessfully contested the post of General Secretary against Joe Gormley. Continued to play a leading role in NUMLA affairs during the 1960s as the senior full-time miners' agent through *ad hoc* responsibilities and special assignments. Retired in September 1967 having held the NUMLA presidency from 1962 until 1966. Interested in 'working class' education. Gave his name to a university scholarship offered to the best A Level student in the Wigan local authority area from a deep mining family.

Sources: CPGB, Lancashire and Cheshire News: Bulletin of the Lancashire Division of the CPGB, 5 September 1942, 10 October 1942, 26 December 1942, Call No CP/LOC/NW/3/3: 1942. The Bulletin (incorporating Lancashire and Cheshire News), 8 March 1952, 27 September 1952, Call No CP/LOC/NW/3/13: 1952, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester. NUM Annual Conference Report, 1947. NUMNEC Minutes 13 April 1959, 1 July 1960. NUMLA, Special Conference Reports 7 February 1952, 29 October 1960. NUMLA, ACM, 15 October 1960, 10 November 1960, 12 November 1960. NUMLA, ECM, 22 September 1952, 22 September 1960, 22 October 1960, 10 November 1960. NUMNWA, ACM, 16 September 1967. LCMF, ECM, 11 April 1942, 25 April 1942. Bolton Evening News 24 October 1960, 28 October 1960, 12 November 1960. Liverpool Echo 9 August 1967. Wigan Examiner 11 December 1959. Wigan Observer 4 April 1980, 17 April 1986.

MICHAEL THOMAS FRANCIS McGUIRE

Born in Ireland 3 May 1926 but emigrated with parents to Lancashire when only four months old. Brought up in Eccleston Park between St.Helens and Prescot. Went to work underground age 14. Worked through the grades to become 'face' worker. Rose to prominence in the NUMLA through the branch committee at Sutton Manor colliery. Also rising prominence within St.Helens Labour Party and Trades Council having joined the Labour Party in 1951. Supported Labour candidates at general and municipal elections. Gained a reputation within the NUMLA for his robustness on pit level and industrial issues but associated with the right of the Labour Party where he obtained the support of the party 'machine' in St.Helens. Strong opponent of unilateralists within NUMLA on the disarmament issue. Full-time NUMLA branch secretary at Sutton Manor 1957-1964. NUMLA Executive Committee member for Sutton Manor colliery. Nominated by the NUMLA to fight the Ince seat at the 1964 general election on the retirement of Tom Brown. Held the seat for Labour at the 1964, 1966 and 1970 general elections. Prominent pro-Common Market MP. During early 1970s became Labour vice-chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Union British Group and member of the Council of Europe.

Sources: NUMNEC Minutes, 17 September 1964: General Election. NUMLA, Annual Conference Report, 1959. NUMLA, ACM, 21 March 1959, 18 July 1959.

NUMLA, ECM, 18 July 1960. Evening Post and Chronicle 1 June 1983, 3 February 1984. Wigan Evening Post 14 June 1985, 17 June 1985. Wigan Observer 27 March 1987. Who's Who 1970, 1970, A and C Black Ltd. Who's Who 2001, 2001, A and C Black Ltd.

MICK WEAVER

Born in County Mayo, Ireland, in 1918. Family emigrated to England and settled in Bolton, Lancashire. Went to work in the Lancashire coalfield at Mosley Common colliery eventually securing a job as a chargeman. Joined CPGB in 1942 becoming a member of the party's Lancashire and Cheshire Division Executive Committee and NEC in 1959. Member of CPGB Mining Advisory Committee. Unsuccessfully contested the Wigan parliamentary seat for the CPGB at the 1958 by-election and 1959, 1964 and 1966 general elections. NUMLA branch secretary at Mosley Common then joint secretary of Mosley Common and Boothstown branch from 1961. A NUMLA executive committee member representing the Boothstown and Mosley Common panel of branches. Delegate to the Farnworth and Walkden Trades Council. Unsuccessfully contested the vice-presidency of the NUMLA in 1960 and the post of full-time miners' agent in 1965. Involved in unsuccessful attempts to save Mosley Common colliery from closure. Left the coal industry in 1968 following closure and employed as a bus driver.

Sources: The Times: House of Commons, 1959, The Times. Mick Weaver: Nomination for National School, CPGB, 1950, Uncatalogued Papers, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester. Evening Post and Chronicle 5 October 1964, 25 March 1966. Leigh Journal 18 February 1965. Wigan Examiner 9 October 1959. Wigan Observer 3 June 1958. CPGB Prosopographical Database (under development), Gidon Cohen, Research Assistant, Department of Government, Manchester University. Conversations with Mr. W. Kelly, current NUMLA General Secretary.

SYDNEY GEORGE, 'SID', VINCENT

Born 11 May 1921 at Leigh, Lancashire. Went to work underground aged 14 as a haulage lad for Manchester Collieries Ltd at its Astley Green colliery. Rather unusually for a

Lancashire miner spent all his working life at the same colliery. Raised in a devout Roman Catholic household. Lived in Leigh until he was married when he moved to Tyldesley. Began his union career at Astley Green colliery in 1952 as a part-time, then later, full-time branch official. From 1957 he represented the Atherton and Tyldesley panel on the Executive Committee of the NUMLA. Seen as rising figure in the NUMLA throughout the 1960s taking an increasingly prominent role in union affairs. Represented the NUMLA on the Conciliation Board and Disputes and Concessionary Coal Committees. In 1964 unsuccessfully contested the presidency of the NUMLA and the post of full-time miners' agent. A year later he was successfully elected full-time miners' agent. Close associate of Joe Gormley who groomed him as his successor. Widely seen as a Gormley protégé. Gormley's campaign manager in 1968 for his unsuccessful bid for the post of NUM General Secretary and again in 1971 for his successful bid for the NUM presidency. President of the NUMNWA 1968-1971. Elected as Joe Gormley's successor to the post of NUMLA General Secretary in September 1971 defeating Bernard Donaghy after three months as acting General Secretary following Gormley's successful accession to the NUM presidency.

Sources: NUMNWA, Annual Conference Reports, 1970, 1971, 1972. NUMNWA, ACM, 18 September 1971. Coal News: North Western Edition October 1971. Guardian 15 February 1992. Leigh Reporter 18 February 1965. Leigh Journal 6 February 1992. Taped Interview with Sid Vincent, University of Wales Swansea, Library and Information Services, South Wales Miners' Library, Tape I.D. No AUD/148.

**APPENDIX TWO: NEW COLLIERIES, MAJOR
COLLIERY RE-CONSTRUCTIONS AND COLLIERY CLOSURES
IN THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD, 1945-1972.**

New Collieries (2 in total)

COLLIERY	LOCATION	<u>DISTRICT</u>
Agecroft	Pendlebury	Manchester
Parkide	Newton-le-Willows	St.Helens

Major Re-construction Schemes (13 in total)

COLLIERY	LOCATION	DISTRICT
Astley Green	Tyldesley	Manchester
Bank Hall	Burnley	North East Lancashire
Bickershaw*	Abram	Wigan
Bold	St.Helens	St.Helens
Clock Face	St.Helens	St.Helens
Cronton	Whiston	St.Helens
Golborne	Golborne	St.Helens
Hapton Valley	Padiham	North East Lancashire
Mosley Common	Boothstown	Manchester
Parsonage*	Leigh	Wigan
Sutton Manor	St.Helens	St.Helens
• Thorney Bank	Accrington	North East Lancashire
Bradford	East Manchester	Manchester

***Bickershaw and Parsonage were developed as one joint re-construction project.**

- Thorney Bank was a new drift development**

Colliery Closures between vesting date and the 1958 'Special Colliery Review' / 1959 Revised Plan for Coal, 1947-1958 in the Lancashire coalfield (NCB operated collieries only and excluding licensed collieries) (17 in total)

COLLIERY	LOCATION	DISTRICT	WORKFORCE AT CLOSURE	MONTH AND YEAR OF CLOSURE
Emelay	Bacup	North East Lancashire	5	Oct 1947
Moorfield	Accrington	North East Lancashire	326	Jan 1949
Townley Demesne*	Burnley	North East Lancashire	Not Known	March 1948
Ladyshore	Farnworth	Manchester	236	June 1949
Moston	Moston, Manchester	Manchester	658	June 1950
• Old Boston	Haydock	Wigan	746	June 1952
Nabb	Bacup	North East Lancashire	27	March 1954
John	Standish	Wigan	374	April 1954
Clifton	Burnley	North East Lancashire	219	Dec 1955
Long Lane	Ashton-in-Makerfield	Wigan	539	April 1955
Woodpark	Oldham	Manchester	385	March 1955
Gin	Tyldesley	Manchester	502	Sept 1955
Alexandra	Wigan	Wigan	189	June 1955
Oak	Oldham	Manchester	384	July 1956
Victoria	Standish	Wigan	434	June 1958
Calder	Padiham	North East Lancashire	166	July 1958
Garswood Hall	Ashton-in-Makerfield	Wigan	910	August 1958

The majority of closures detailed during this period resulted from 'exhaustion' according to the Coal Board's definition.

*Townley Demesne was later re-developed as part of Salterford

- Old Boston was closed on safety grounds following an underground fire

Collieries closed between 1959 and 1965 as scheduled under the 1959 Revised Plan for Coal (24 in total)

COLLIERY	LOCATION	DISTRICT	WORKFORCE AT CLOSURE	MONTH AND YEAR OF CLOSURE
Maypole*	Abram	Wigan	1,337	March 1959
Howe Bridge	Atherton	Wigan	357	Sept 1959
Wood End	Burnley	North East Lancashire	80	April 1959
Ashton Moss	Ashton-under-Lyne	Manchester	503	Sept 1959
• Salterford	Burnley	North East Lancashire	226	Dec 1959
Welch Whittle	Chorley	Wigan	485	Dec 1959
Deane	Bolton	Manchester	134	Oct 1960
Fence	Brierfield	North East Lancashire	85	July 1960
Landgate	Ashton-in-Makerfield	Wigan	250	Sept 1960
Park	Ashton-in-Makerfield	Wigan	750	June 1960
Reedley	Burnley	North East Lancashire	245	May 1960
Giants Hall	Standish	Wigan	445	Jan 1961
Hoddlesden	Darwen	North East Lancashire	99	Sept 1961
Standish Hall	Standish	Wigan	402	July 1961
Wheatsheaf	Pendlebury	Manchester	505	June 1961
Newtown	Pendlebury	Manchester	476	March 1961
Ince Moss	Ince-in-Makerfield	Wigan	503	Nov 1962
Scaitcliffe	Accrington	North East Lancashire	64	June 1962
Wigan Junction	Abram	Wigan	302	May 1962
Grime Bridge	Waterford	North East Lancashire	63	Nov 1963
Brackley	Little Hulton	Manchester	715	May 1964
Lyme	Haydock	Wigan	482	March 1964
Lea Green	St.Helens	St.Helens	632	Aug 1964
Copy	Burnley	North East Lancashire	157	March 1964
Nook	Tyldesley	Manchester	1,091	Aug 1965

* Maypole was a closure under the 1958 'Special Colliery Review' but included in the 1959 Revised Plan for Coal.

- Salterford was a new drift development which was closed in a two-stage abandonment of its two pits with the first closed in 1956 with the loss of 205 jobs. The second pit closed in December 1959 as noted above. The colliery incorporated the workings of Townley Demesne closed in March 1948.

Collieries closed under the 'Review of the Revised Plan' 1961-1963 (5 in total)

COLLIERY	LOCATION	DISTRICT	WORKFORCE AT CLOSURE	MONTH AND YEAR OF CLOSURE
Dairy	Aspull	Wigan	363	Sept 1962
Sandhole	Walkden	Manchester	1,043	Sept 1962
Gibfield	Atherton	Manchester	654	Aug 1963
Robin Hill	Standish	Wigan	430	Nov 1963
Cleworth Hall	Tyldesley	Manchester	535	Jan 1963

Other Colliery Closures during the 1959-1965 period (1 in total)

COLLIERY	LOCATION	DISTRICT	WORKFORCE AT CLOSURE	MONTH AND YEAR OF CLOSURE
Mains	Abram	Wigan	581	June 1960

Collieries scheduled for closure under the 1959 Revised Plan but reprieved until closure under the ACP (4 in total).

COLLIERY	LOCATION	DISTRICT	WORKFORCE AT CLOSURE	MONTH AND YEAR OF CLOSURE
Fir Trees	Padiham	North East Lancashire	42	March 1966
Bedford	Leigh	Wigan	436	Oct 1967
Ravenhead	St.Helens	St.Helens	506	Oct 1968
Old Meadows	Bacup	North East Lancashire	49	March 1969

Fir Trees was closed as a Phase one ACP closure while Ravenhead and Old Meadows were closed under Phase two. Bedford was originally a Phase two closure but brought forward to Phase one.

Collieries closed as scheduled under the ACP announcement November 1965 (9 in total)

COLLIERY	LOCATION	DISTRICT	WORK-FORCE AT CLOSURE	MONTH AND YEAR OF CLOSURE
Ellerbeck*	Chorley	Wigan	269	Aug 1965
Albert*	Abram	Wigan	436	Nov 1965
Clock Face	St.Helens	St.Helens	638	March 1966
Chanters	Atherton	Manchester	693	June 1966
Chisnall Hall	Chorley	Wigan	617	March 1967
Summersales	Wigan	Wigan	197	March 1966
Hill Top	Bacup	North East Lancashire	136	Jan 1966
Deerplay	Bacup	North East	212	April 1968
Wood	Haydock	St.Helens	505	June 1971

* Ellerbeck was more accurately a closure under the 'Review of the Revised Plan' 1961-1963 which won a reprieve until August 1965. Similarly Albert colliery was closed in August 1965 but both were included as part of the ACP announcement in November 1965.

With the exception of Deerplay and Wood all closures were scheduled for Phase one. Deerplay and Wood were Phase two closures although Deerplay was closed prematurely.

Collieries closed between 1965 and 1972 not scheduled for closure in the ACP announcement in November 1965 (6 in total)

COLLIERY	LOCATION	DISTRICT	WORKFORCE AT CLOSURE	MONTH AND YEAR OF CLOSURE
Bradford	East Manchester	Manchester	1,556	Sept 1968
Huncoat	Accrington	North East Lancashire	508	Feb 1968
Mosley Common	Boothstown	Manchester	2,781	Feb 1968
Thorney Bank	Accrington	North East Lancashire	387	July 1968
Astley Green	Tyldesley	Manchester	1,382	April 1970
Bank Hall	Burnley	North East Lancashire	722	March 1971

Collieries still in operation 1 January 1972 (9 in total)

COLLIERY	LOCATION	DISTRICT
Agecroft	Pendlebury	Manchester
Parkside	Newton-le-Willows	St.Helens
Bold	St.Helens	St.Helens
Cronton	Whiston	St.Helens
Golborne	Golborne	St.Helens
Sutton Manor	St.Helens	St.Helens
Bickershaw	Leigh	Wigan
Parsonage	Leigh	Wigan
Hapton Valley	Padiham	North East Lancashire

Notes and Sources

1. Notes

- (a) It should be noted that the figures shown for the workforce at collieries after 1959 are less than the post-war peak of their workforces. In many cases this is considerably less since the peak figure was often as high as 30 per cent above the workforce at closure. Final closure often followed a period of pit-level concentration or phased closure with transfers to receiving pits and workers leaving the industry altogether.
- (b) The NCBNWD areas underwent considerable change between 1945 and 1972 consequently districts in which individual collieries were located often altered. Similarly, contiguous districts within the coalfield meant that many locations had collieries in one or more district.

2.Sources

PRO, File COAL 30/85: NCB: Closure of Collieries 1958 December-1960 August: General Purposes Committee: Colliery Closures: North Western Division. PRO, File POWE 37/544: Programme of Closures 1961: North Western Division. PRO, File No POWE 52/72: Lives of Individual Collieries: Accelerated Colliery Closures, Lord Robens to Ministry of Power 27 August 1965. PRO, File POWE 52/73: Closure Programme Covering 1965/66,1966/67 and 1967/68: NCB to Ministry of Power 8 February 1965: Notes on the North Western Colliery Closure Programme: Lancashire Coalfield for Ministry of Power: Brief prior to meeting 29 April 1966. LRO, Deposit No NC.acc.7950 No 5: NCBHQ to NCBNWD 6 March 1959 re: National Plan Review 1959 and reply NCBNWD to NCBHQ Colonel Bolton, NCBNWD Chairman to Sir James Bowman, NCB Chairman. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 203: NCBNWD: Report: The Manpower Implications of Possible Closures of Certain Collieries 29 April 1962. LRO, No 223: 1963 Jan: National Plan: Sept 1962 Review. LRO, No NC.acc.7950 No 264: Area 3 (St.Helens) Area General Manager: 1958: Report on the results of the following collieries: Clock Face, Cronton, Garswood Hall, Lea Green. NCB Report and Accounts for 1959 Vol II; Accounts and Statistical Tables, Summary of Major Capital Schemes: 1959: North Western Division, HMSO. The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire, Lancashire and Merseyside Development

Association (LAMIDA), April 1967, Manchester pp.40-44: Tables 9-11. Iron and Coal Trades Review 28 July 1960: Article: Re-construction Projects in North East Lancashire. Lancashire Evening Post 14 March 1994: Death of the Lancashire Coalfield 1947-1993. Manchester Evening News 18 November 1965. The Lancashire Miner No 9, January 1986: Lancashire Coalfield. Guide to the Coalfields, 1948, Colliery Guardian. Lancashire and Merseyside Development Association (LAMIDA), General Purposes Committee: 'The Coal Industry', 25 November 1959, E.G.W. Allen, Director LAMIDA, Unpublished Typescript, Reference No B 30(2) P, St.Helens Metropolitan Archives and Local Studies, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton Call No B.622.33 Lan.

APPENDIX THREE: MAPS

MAP A: GENERAL COALFIELD AREA MAP

Legend: NEL - North East Lancashire Coalfield

SL - South Lancashire Coalfield

MAP B: MANCHESTER

Legend: Collieries (in red)

AG - Agecroft

BR - Bradford

NE - Newtown

WH - Wheatsheaf

Legend: Locations (in blue)

MA - Manchester

MO - Moston

RO - Royton

PE - Pendlebury

SAL - Salford

SW - Swinton

Map C: CENTRAL AREAS OF THE SOUTH LANCASHIRE COALFIELD INCLUDING PARTS OF THE 'WIGAN COALFIELD'

Collieries (in red)

AG - Astley Green

BE - Bedford
BI - Bickershaw
BRA - Brackley
DE - Deane
CH - Cleworth Hall
GO - Golborne
MA - Maypole
MAI - Mains
MC - Mosley Common
PA - Parsonage
SA - Sandhole

Locations (in blue)

AB - Abram
AT - Atherton
BO - Bolton
BOO - Boothstown
CU - Culcheth
ELL - Ellenbrook
FA - Farnworth
GO - Golborne
HI - Hindley
HG - Hindley Green
LE - Leigh
LH - Little Hulton
PL - Plank Lane
PB - Platt Bridge
TY - Tyldesley
WA - Walkden
WE - Westhoughton
WO - Worsley

MAP D: ST.HELENS AND AREAS BORDERING THE 'WIGAN COALFIELD'

Collieries (in red)

BOL - Bold

CF - Clock Face

CR - Cronton

LG - Lea Green

LY - Lyme

OB - Old Boston

PA - Parkside

RA - Ravenhead

SM - Sutton Manor

STO - Stones

WO - Wood

Locations (in blue)

EP - Eccleston Park

HA - Halewood

HAY - Haydock

NW - Newton or Newton -Le-Willows

PR - Prescot

ST - St.Helens

WA - Warrington

MAP E: WIGAN AND PARTS OF THE 'WIGAN COALFIELD'

Collieries (in red)

CHA - Chisnall Hall

EL - Ellerbeck
GH - Garswood Hall
IM - Ince Moss
VI - Victoria
WW - Welch Whittle

Locations (in blue)

AM - Ashton - in - Makerfield
CH - Chorley
GA - Garswood
IM - Ince - in - Makerfield
KG - Kitt Green
NH - Norley Hall
SK - Skelmersdale
ST - Standish
WI - Wigan
WM - Worsley Mesnes

MAP F: NORTH EAST LANCASHIRE

Collieries (in red)

BH - Bank Hall
DER - Deerplay
FT - Fir Trees
HY - Hapton Valley (at two points on the map)
HI - Hill Top
HU - Huncoat
OM - Old Meadows
RE - Reedley
SALT - Salterford
TB - Thorney Bank

Locations (in blue)

AC - Accrington

BU - Burnley

FP - Forest of Pendle

FR - Forest of Rossendale

SI - Simonstone

Notes and References:

1. Notes

- (a) Collieries and locations detailed are only those quoted in the main text of the thesis and appendices.
- (b) Copying of these maps was undertaken on Friday 20 April 2001 under the supervision of Ken Harrison, map librarian, Lancaster University library in accordance with the library's copyright agreement. In particular, it should be noted that two different maps, as detailed above, were used for the two segments of the coalfield in respect of the Liverpool and Manchester maps.

2. References

Guide to the Coalfields, Colliery Guardian, 1968.

Ordnance Survey Maps:

Blackburn and Burnley, Fully revised 1958, Published 1961.

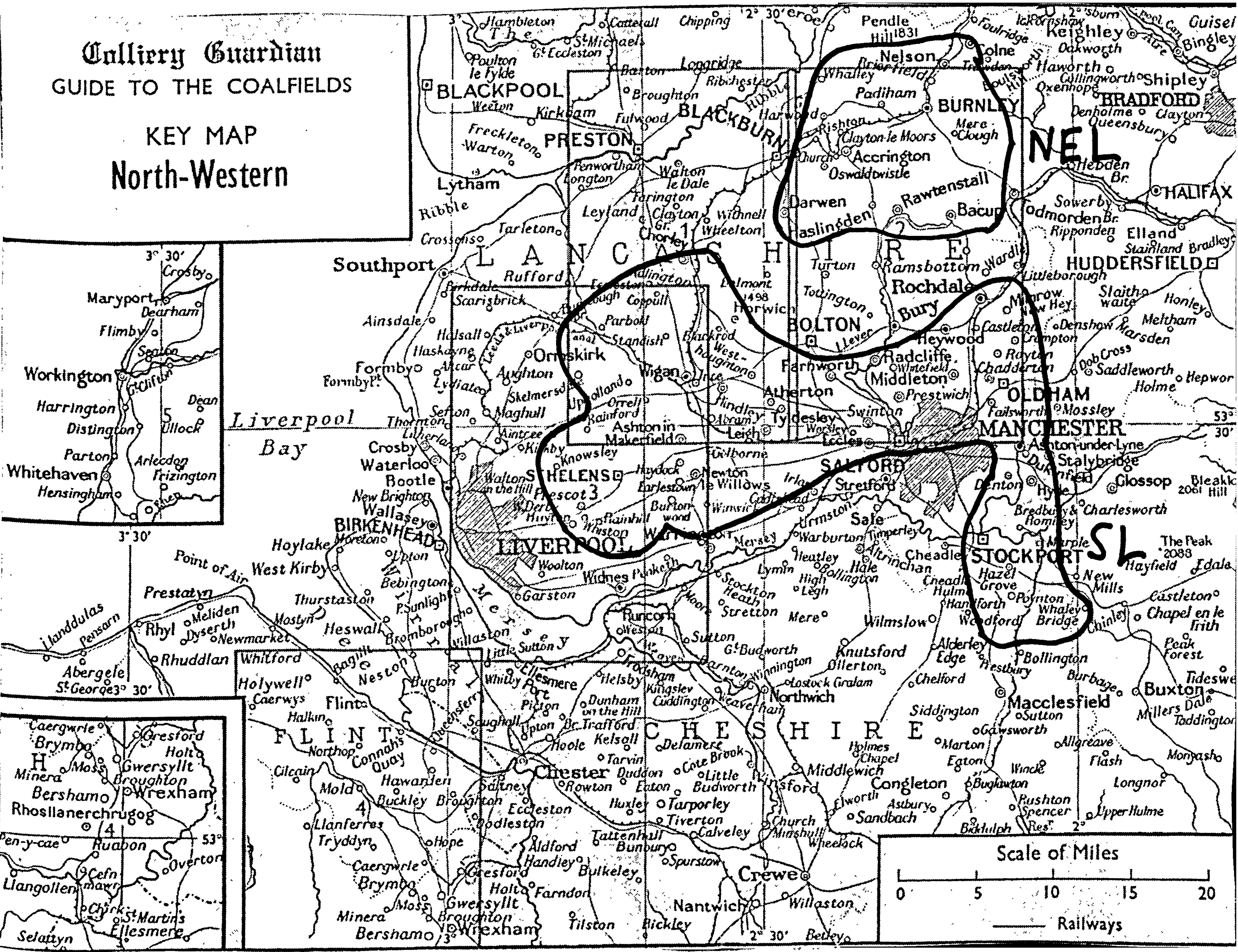
Liverpool, June 1963 and September 1963, Fully Revised 1964.

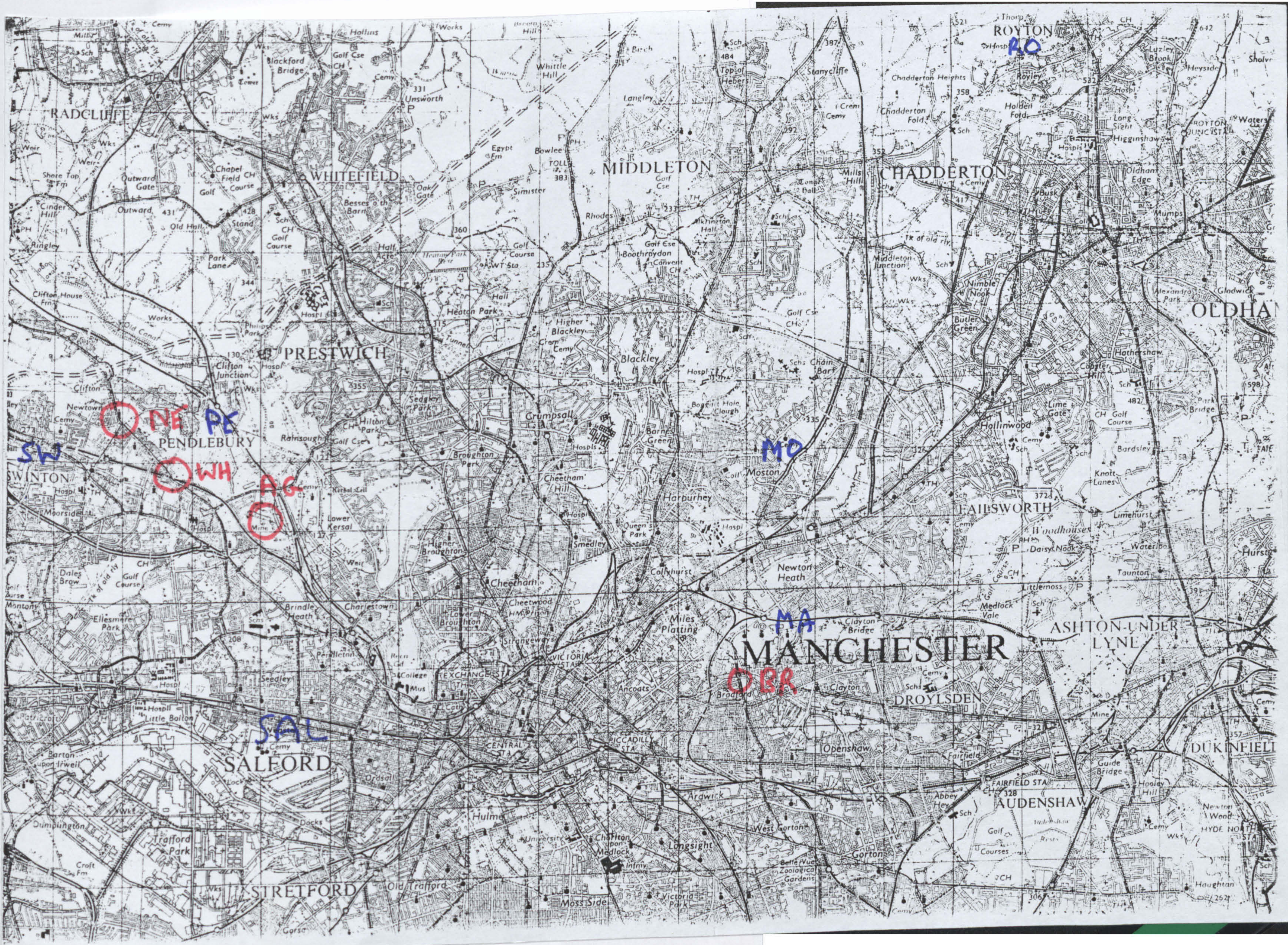
Liverpool, Fully Revised 1964, 1966 and Re-issued 1968.

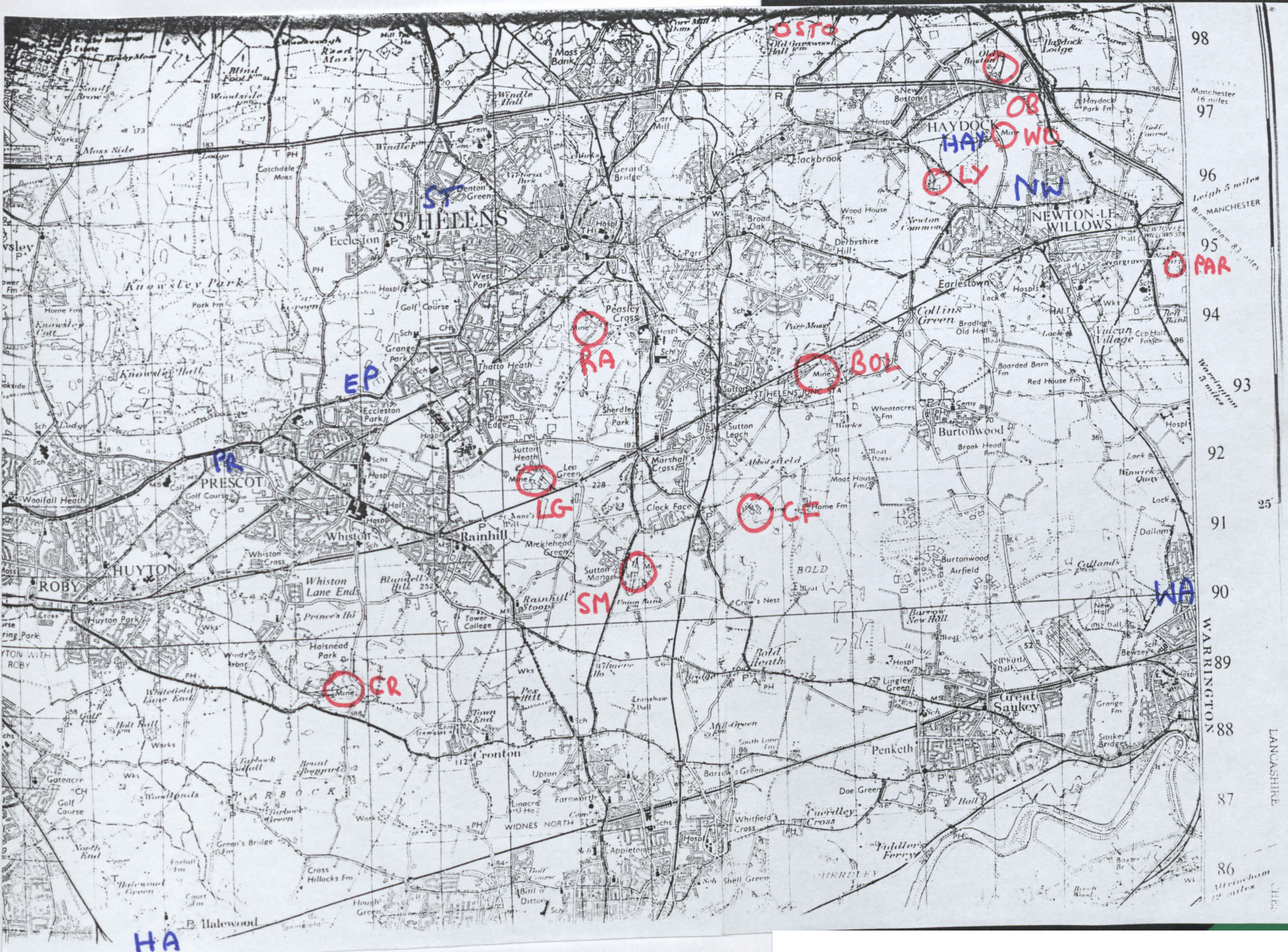
Manchester, Fully Revised 1958-59, Major Roads Revised 1964.

Manchester, Fully Revised 1966, Major Roads Revised 1968.

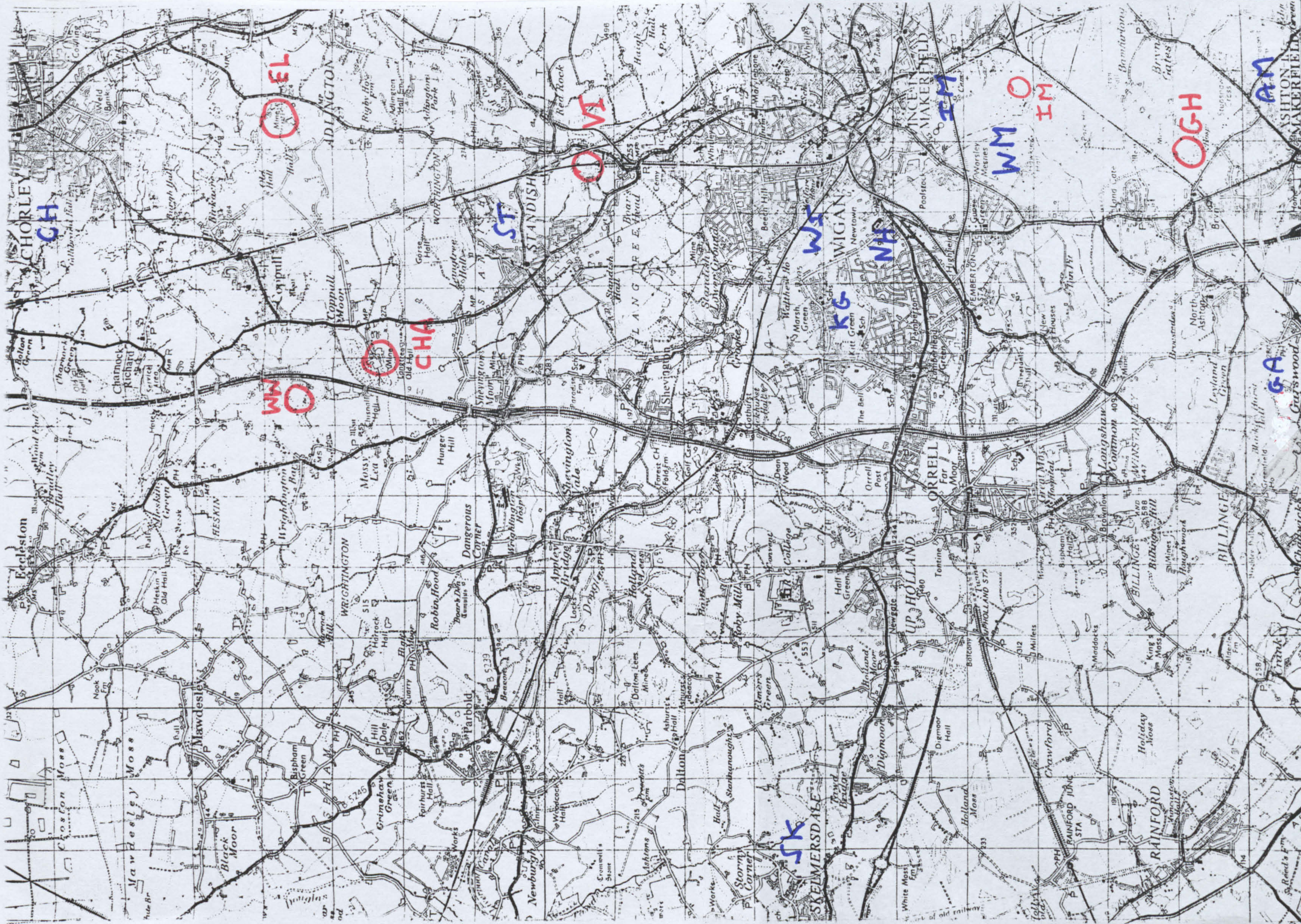
Colliery Guardian
GUIDE TO THE COALFIELDS
KEY MAP
North-Western







98
 Manchester 16 miles
 97
 96
 Leigh 5 miles
 MANCHESTER
 95
 PAR
 94
 93
 92
 91
 25
 90
 WARRINGTON
 89
 88
 87
 86
 Warrington 12 miles
 LANCASTHIRE
 CHELSEA



TEXTUAL CONVENTIONS

Coalfield Areas, Districts and Divisions - This thesis is concerned with the Lancashire coalfield which formed part of the North Western Division of the National Coal Board (NCBNWD) following nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947. In 1967 after re-organisation of the National Coal Board, the NCBNWD ceased to exist and the Lancashire coalfield henceforth came under the control of the Northern Division of the National Coal Board with a sub-divisional management team responsible for the Lancashire coalfield styled as the National Coal Board Lancashire Area (NCBLA).

Following nationalisation in 1947 the Lancashire coalfield was divided into four administrative/geographical areas each with its own management structure: No 1 (Manchester), No 2 (Wigan), No 3 (St. Helens) and No 4 (Burnley) together with respective management teams responsible for sub-areas covering groups of collieries. In 1961 the four Areas were re-organised into two: East and West Lancashire together with revised sub-areas. The Burnley Area was often more accurately known as the North East Lancashire Area (denoting the spatial extent of the exposed coalfield in the area) and is the style preferred in this thesis.

The terms 'Area' and 'District' are used interchangeably throughout the thesis. However, in terms of the post-nationalisation administrative structure of the coalfield the term 'Area' had a specific meaning as noted above whereas the term 'district' has a less specific intention meaning simply 'in the vicinity of'.

Colliery, Mine, Pits - Both the term 'colliery' and 'pit' are used interchangeably throughout the thesis. However, it should be noted that a 'colliery' frequently consisted on a number of 'pits' or shafts at each colliery site. In Lancashire the term 'mine' does not mean a colliery or pit, it denotes a seam of coal or an underground district where coal was mined.

Miner, Mineworker, Pitman - These terms are used interchangeably throughout the thesis. The term 'pitman' is used because this was common parlance in the Lancashire coalfield.

Ministry of Fuel and Power – From 1959 this department was known as the Ministry of Power

Names of Individuals – Informal names are used throughout for union officials as this was the norm in discourse between officials and mineworkers except when reported in printed minutes of conferences and meetings.

National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the National Union of Mineworkers Lancashire Area (NUMLA) – The NUM in the Lancashire coalfield was known as the National Union of Mineworkers Lancashire Area (NUMLA) from its formation in 1944 until September 1963. It superseded the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation (LCMF). From September 1963 the NUMLA adopted the style National Union of Mineworkers North Western Area (NUMNWA) although it remained colloquially known as the 'Lancashire Area'.

GLOSSARY

Black-Face Meeting - An underground meeting of union officials, miners and frequently management typically to discuss specific pit level or wider industrial or political issues.

Chargeman - A leading miner or foreman in charge of a team of miners and responsible for a section of operations underground.

Checkweighman - An official elected by miners charged with the task of checking the weight of coal produced by miners to ensure proper payment of piecework wages for the tonnage of coal produced. Because this job frequently involved negotiation with colliery owners and management the checkweighman came to wield considerable authority and power as did the Checkweigh and Pick Sharpening Societies at collieries. The checkweighman and checkweigh societies were thus closely associated with the development of trade unionism in coal.

Concentration - 1. In a wider sense the process of transforming coal into a smaller more efficient industry with operations 'concentrated' in new or re-constructed collieries 2. In a more specific sense a form of colliery level rationalisation in which the least productive and more costly working faces, seams or underground districts are abandoned in favour of 'concentrating' resources (human, material and technical) on the potentially more productive underground operations.

Deputy - An overseer in a colliery with particular responsibility for discipline and safety and the preparation and clearance of working sections before and after coal getting.

Fillers - Underground mineworker, usually a younger miner engaged in filling tubs of coal at the face.

Green Labour - School leavers or adults without previous coalmining experience recruited into the industry.

Haulage Lad - A pit lad responsible for the movement of tubs of coal away from the 'face' underground or on the surface

National Power Loading Agreement (NPLA), 1966 - An agreement signed within the coal industry which introduced wages re-structuring. Seen as one of the most significant milestones in the history of the industry because it ended centuries of traditional piecework payments for hundreds of grades of mineworkers replacing it with "re-categorised grades based on skills and responsibilities".¹

Panel - 1. A section or 'panel' of coal underground. 2. A group of union branches in a specific geographical area or a branch representing a large colliery with a representative on the NUMLA executive and under the authority of a miners' agent e.g., the Atherton and Tyldesley panel representing a group of colliery branches or the Mosley Common panel representing a large colliery.

Pit-bank - Specifically the area surrounding the top of a mine shaft. In its broader context denotes the location where important mass meetings of miners often took place.

Pit-Brow Lass - A woman or girl surface worker.

Pit Lad - A young mineworker recruited from school at the age of 14, later 15, before upgrading, usually at 21.

Power-loading - An integrated method of coal-cutting, loading and conveying. Equipment and working methods designed for this purpose.

Remploy - Government employment agency established after the Second World War with the task of re-training ex-servicemen. Later its remit was extended to include the training and re-training of 'disabled' workers.

'Spencerism' - A term associated with George Spencer, a right-wing Labour MP during the 1920s who enunciated ideas on industrial co-operation rather than confrontation in the coal

industry. Spencer formed a 'non-political' union initially in the Nottinghamshire coalfield and the model was followed in a number of coalfields during the late 1920s and 1930s.

Vesting Date - The date when the coal industry was nationalised - 1 January 1947.

Wakes - Annual holidays taken in June/July (two weeks) and September (one week) by industrial workers in northern England.

¹ Allen, V, The Militancy of British Miners, The Moor Press, Shipley, p.87.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

ACM - Area Conference Minutes.

ACP (ACCP) - Accelerated Colliery Closure Programme

AEF - Amalgamated Union of Engineers and Foundrymen

UKAEA - United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

BEA - British Electricity Authority

BP - British Petroleum

CEB - Central Electricity Board

CEBNW - Central Electricity Board: North West

CEGB - Central Electricity Generating Board

CPGB - Communist Party of Great Britain

ECM - Executive Committee Minutes

HMSO - Her Majesty's Stationery Office

JIC - Joint Investigation Committee

ILP - Independent Labour Party

LCMF- Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation

LRO - Lancashire Record Office

MFGB - Miners' Federation of Great Britain

NACODS - National Association of Colliery Overmen Deputies and Shotfirers

NCB - National Coal Board

NCBLA - National Coal Board Lancashire Area

NCBNWD - National Coal Board North Western Division

NCBHQ - National Coal Board Headquarters

NEC - National Executive Committee

NELDA - North East Lancashire Development Association

NWIDA - North West Industrial Development Association

NWIDC - North West Industrial Development Committee

NPLA - National Power Loading Agreement

NUM - National Union of Mineworkers

NUMNEC - National Union of Mineworkers National Executive Committee

NUMLA - National Union of Mineworkers Lancashire Area

NUMNWA - National Union of Mineworkers North Western Area

NUR - National Union of Railwaymen

PPS - Parliamentary Private Secretary

PRO - Public Record Office

SELDA - South Lancashire Development Association

SELDC - South Lancashire Development Committee

TGWU - Transport and General Workers

TUC - Trade Union Congress

UDC - Urban District Council

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I have benefited from discussions with Mr William Kelly the current NUMLA General Secretary, regarding issues of detail and of personalities. I have also benefited from his accounts of the closure of Sandhole colliery where Mr Kelly was an underground mineworker and union branch official during the early 1960s.

I have benefited from discussions with members of my own family and friends who made the transition between mining and engineering during the 1950s and 1960s.
