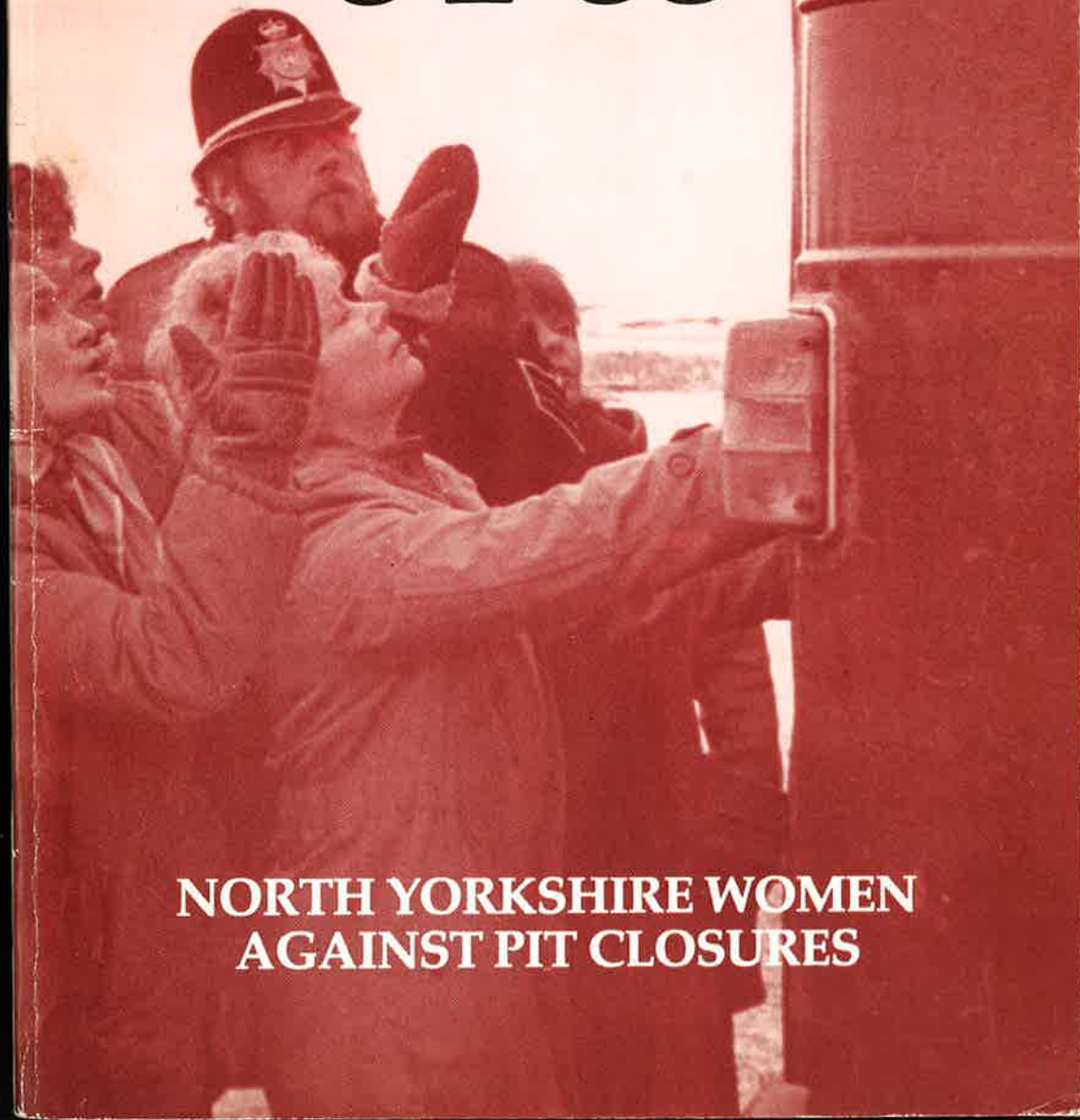


STRIKE 84-85



**NORTH YORKSHIRE WOMEN
AGAINST PIT CLOSURES**

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AGAINST PIT CLOSURES**

1985

— People's History of Yorkshire IX —

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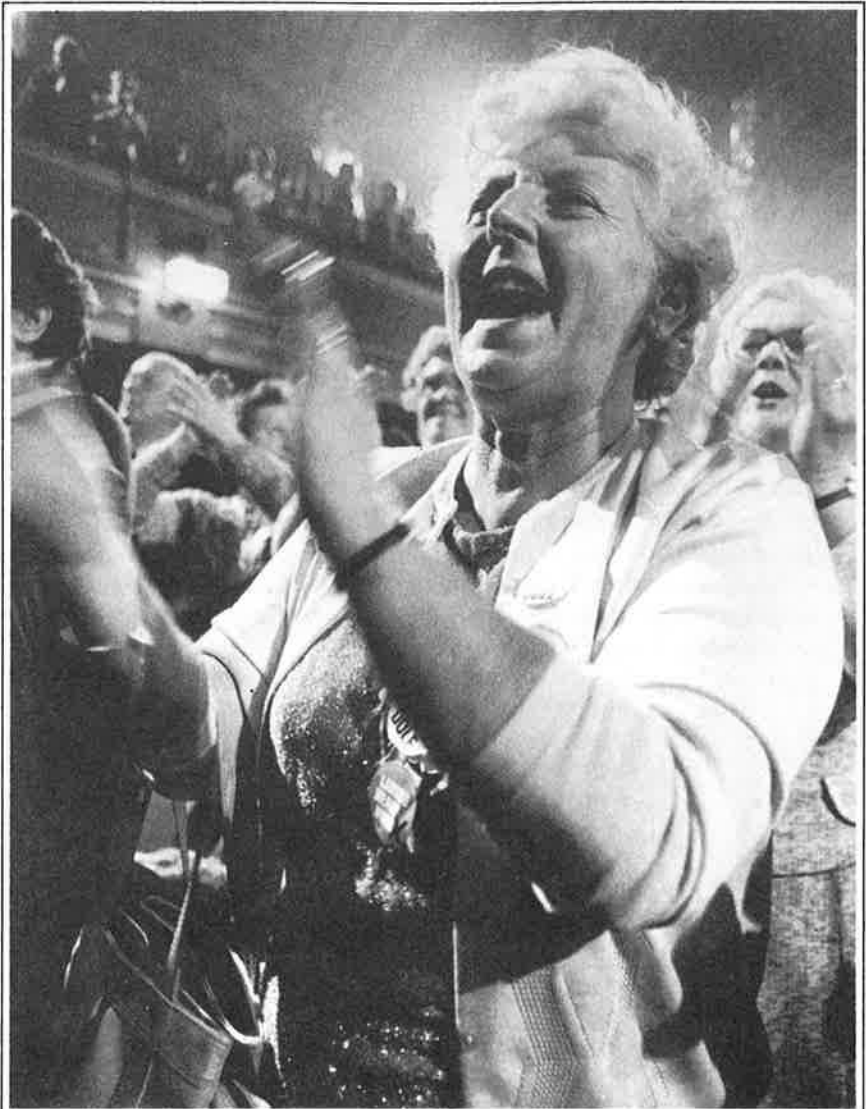
FOREWORD

The support and organisation of the women of the mining communities have been vital in sustaining the solidarity of the 1984-85 miners' strike. For the women involved, it has also been a turning-point in our own lives.

Everybody who has lived through the strike has a tale or two to tell, and the stories in this book are only a small section of the great wealth of stories, jokes, legends, poems and songs that have arisen in the mining communities.

This book has been written by women and men mainly from the North Yorkshire NUM area about our experiences, achievements and feelings during the strike.

"In the coalfields there is a new breed of women who are only as old as the strike, who have won the admiration of people the world over. They have fought not behind their men but shoulder to shoulder with them. When histories of the strike are written, all will agree that the women were glorious."



Martin Jenkinson

United we stand.

GETTING STARTED

About four weeks into the strike, it suddenly became clear that it was going to be a long one — and that if something wasn't done for the single miners, who were getting not a penny, they would simply starve. There were tales of lads fainting from hunger on picket lines, and following darts teams from pub to pub so they could get at the free sandwiches. Most of the first groups started up to help the single miners. After that, groups that had enough money coming in tried to do something for the families as well.

At the time of the first women's march in Barnsley, there were about eight groups from the area covered by the North Yorkshire NUM panel, and it seemed like a good idea for us all to get together. We got permission to use the Labour Club at Swillington, and we sent out letters to everybody we knew, with a tear-off slip asking them to reply. We only got about two replies, and we were in a panic, having no idea at all of how many were going to come.

Our first area meeting was on the 24th of June, and there were women there from Allerton Bywater, Kippax, Nevison (near Pontefract), Sherburn in Elmet, Allerton Bywater Workshops, Castleford, Methley, and Featherstone. About thirty five women came altogether.

Everybody was a bit wary at first — nobody knew quite what to expect, but the stories soon came flowing thick and fast, and everyone found they had more than enough to talk about. The meeting was a bit disorderly, because none of us had much experience of this sort of thing, but it was very friendly, and we exchanged ideas about fund-raising and financial problems.

We agreed to carry on meeting once a month, and we agreed that different women should take the chair so everybody could gain some experience.

Now there are thirty-four groups in our area. We still meet at Swillington once a month, and the meetings are even more disorderly! A number of groups have had splits and fall outs — not surprising when you consider the strain and pressure we are all under — but there is also a great closeness between us. We are now looking ahead beyond the strike, for having become active and involved, there will be no going back once the strike is over.

WHEN this strike began, it was only a matter of a few weeks before the women realised that it didn't just concern the men, it also concerned the women and our children. Maggie got a big shock. She expected the women to sit back begging for our men to go back to work. But we didn't. We stood up and shouted, "Don't dare threaten our miners' jobs! Don't dare threaten our mining communities! And don't dare threaten our children's futures!" Like the miners, we also joined ranks to show this uncaring Tory government that we are also a tough breed to deal with.

There isn't a pit village in this country where there isn't a women's support group of some kind. We've been on rallies together, raised money together, picketed together, and sometimes even cried together. But one thing we're determined to do is to stick together, for as long as this strike lasts.

Janine — Normanton

* * * * *

TWO weeks into the dispute, when we recognised that it wouldn't be easy, we started to get organised. First we put out a leaflet to all the miners' wives and took a room in the Odd Fellow, the only pub that would entertain us.

Forty five women came to the first meeting. The funny thing about this was although we had been living in the village for a year, some much longer, we had never come together before. One woman said that she thought that she was the only miners' wife in Sherburn.

Having come together though, we quickly got organised. I became secretary, Maxine was made chairperson and Pat the Treasurer. We decided that since there was nowhere to have a kitchen we would work to supply food parcels and to do this we would have to get invitations and go round speaking. As you might guess, at this stage most women were too shy to speak so the first job was to train them. We did this by getting them to do a small speech on any subject.

It's hard to realise it now but at that stage even going to a meeting was a new experience. As they said everyone talked a foreign language. The abbreviations of politics, ASTMS, NALGO, CP, SWP, got in the way and at first intimidated them.

Sheila — Sherburn

* * * * *

A CHURCH hall was booked and a meeting place arranged — the PMWSG had begun. From this first meeting a date was agreed when we would serve our first meal — pie and peas. Help was hard to come by — many people seemed frightened to get involved — quite eager to have that meal and any other services we could offer, but when we asked if they could spare an hour it was always "well..." This attitude could have really disheartened the best of us but there was always a minority of us who would not give in.



The early appeals were for food — the response was magnificent.



John Sturrock

The church hall was comfortable but with only 2 domestic cookers to serve up to 200 meals per day it was obvious that somewhere else had to be found. The Town Hall appeared to be the ideal place, and by now it was quite clear whatever the PMWSG decided to do — they did it, so after a couple of meetings with councillors, the Town Hall was ours. The facilities were far superior and it was much easier for our cooks, as the numbers to be fed were increasing daily.

Pontefract Miners' Wives Support Group

* * * * *

Nevison reported that they are still doing food parcels, and have organised a trip to Scarborough for kids. They also reported that new groups are starting up at Pontefract and Ackworth. Micklefield have just started up and are already doing 80 food parcels a week, and had organised a 12-hour darts marathon to raise funds. Normanton and Altofts are doing food parcels and street collections, raffles and craft sales. They reported they had been hassled by police for **rattling** their tins, but had been allowed to sit inside the Co-op to collect. Sharlston are trying to do 900 parcels a week; they are getting help from deputies and also running raffles. There is another group at Sharlston running the food kitchen. Castleford is supporting three full-time and one part-time food kitchens.

Toiletries: bulk-bought toiletries were available for people to take back to their groups. These included: White toilet rolls — 10p each. Sanitary towels (Lovmi) 20p a pack. S.T.s (Helen Harper extra thin) — 25p a pack. Tights (Kayser Bondor) 25p. Soap (Imperial Leather 200 gm) 30p.

Notes from NYWAPC — September 1984

* * * * *



Martin Jenkinson

There are 34 support groups in the North Yorkshire area, and most of them have their own banner and badges.

AFTER listening to a local support group giving a talk I decided that as I was 100% behind the strike and what it stands for, I would get together with some others and form our own Support Group. The miners of our village, Micklefield, work at half a dozen or more different pits, since our own pit was closed down. We made up our list, and found we had 94 miners and their families.

I was rather nervous at first, and wondered whether I would be able to talk to people, and collect money, but as the months have passed, my confidence has grown. I know that whatever the outcome of the strike, in future years I will look back with pride. Starting the Support Group was so new to everybody. Now it has formed a bond between us no one would have imagined could happen.

Lynne — Micklefield

* * * * *

FOOD, KITCHENS AND PARCELS

How do a husband and two kids manage to live on £11.95 a week? That is the basic DHSS money they are entitled to after the deduction of £16 'deemed strike pay', which of course they never receive. On top of this, families may get help with their housing costs, and will receive the interest payments if they have a mortgage. If the wife has a part-time job, the family may be able to keep their heads above water. The single miners get not a penny.

For many, a daily meal at the Food Kitchen is the only hot meal they get. Other families who cannot reach a food kitchen get a food parcel to the value of £4 — any more, and the DHSS would count it as 'income'.

There are eleven food kitchens in our area, four at Castleford, and one each at Knottingley, Kellington, Allerton Bywater, Pontefract, Sharlston, Ackworth, and Featherstone. There are twenty-four groups putting out food parcels, at Sherburn in Elmet, Kippax, Knottingley, Riccall, Nevison, Allerton Bywater Workshops, Methley, Selby, Mickfield, Normanton, Swillington, Thorpe Willoughby, Middleton, Whitwood, Nostell and Crofton, Morley Tingley and East Ardsley, Fairburn, Stanley, Outwood and Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, Featherstone, Goole, Walton and East Leeds.

Most groups aim to give out a parcel every week, but in practice many just work down their list and start again when everyone has had a parcel, which may work out at only once a fortnight. It all depends on how much money they have managed to raise that week. Some areas have two groups, one running the kitchens, the others doing a parcel service.



Shoulder to shoulder.

The Pontefract Kitchen



Kitchens were set up wherever we were allowed the use of a hall. Many had unsuitable facilities — in this one the washing up has to be done in large baby-baths.

THE success and popularity of the Pontefract kitchen, we believe, lies in the fact that we endeavour to provide a well balanced and varied diet. Fresh vegetables are served whenever possible but frozen ones are substituted at times because of the lack of cooking space. Tinned food is avoided as much as possible. All our food is bought locally and the retailers give generous discounts. Potatoes are bought daily from a local fish shop and as the proprietor 'tumbles' them considerable time is saved in their preparation. Eight or nine basic meals are served in loose rotation and an occasional 'treat' is given when funds permit. For example, we were able to serve Turkey with all the trimmings followed by mince-pie and cream as a Christmas lunch. A typical week's menu would be:

Monday	Liver & Onions, Cabbage, Mashed Potatoes Jam Sponge, Custard
Tuesday	Cornish Pasties, Carrots/Swede, Mashed Potatoes Rice Pudding
Wednesday	Fish/Tomato Sauce, Mushy Peas, Mashed Potatoes Treacle Sponge, Custard
Thursday	Sausage/Onion Sauce, Frozen Mixed Vegetables, Mashed Potatoes Jelly/Ice Cream
Friday	Mince, Cauliflower, Jacket Potatoes Rice Pudding

Tea, coffee, orange juice and bread is also provided.

The approximate cost of such a menu is £280 which would provide 1100 meals for about 25p each. Other 'hidden' items such as milk, margarine and sugar add a few more pence to each meal. The cost of detergents and cleaning materials is quite considerable and has to be taken into account.

We often receive compliments and it has been said that the Town Hall 'Soup' Kitchen is the best restaurant in Pontefract. Who knows maybe one day we'll get Egon Ronay recognition!

Gene — Pontefract

* * * * *

The Kellingley Kitchen

KELLINGLEY is the biggest pit in Yorkshire, with 2,000 men. Our kitchen does about 400 meals a day, more during school holidays. There's a great atmosphere, and it's really helped to bring the community together.

The women work the kitchen in two shifts. I come down with seven other girls for the morning shift, at about 7.20 a.m. Then the pickets start coming in for their breakfasts — we give them a fry-up with eggs, or sausages, beans or tomato, depending on what we've got.

When they've gone, we get cleaned up, and about 9 a.m. I go down to the shops for bread and milk. The others start preparing the veg for the dinners.

About 11 a.m. the lads come in to get their flasks filled up and have a hot drink before they go on local pickets.

Soon after that, people start coming in for their dinners — families with kids as well as pickets. We never turn anybody away. It's all a mad rush until about 1.30. Then the women sit down and have their lunches before they go off, and the afternoon shift arrives.

The six women on the afternoon shift come in about 1 o'clock. They help with the clearing up, and start preparing for teas.

The children often come in straight from school — sometimes they meet their parents down here — and we give them potatoes, fish or meat burger — something like that. We only have one large cooker and a fish fryer, so we can't go in for anything elaborate. In fact the kitchen is just a portakabin tacked onto the back of the club hall. We try to do meals that are cheap but nourishing — we don't have the cash or the kitchen-staff to do puddings, for example.

From about 5 p.m. the pickets come in — if we're still serving they'll have a dinner, and they'll have a hot drink and get their flasks filled. At 6.30 the women go home, and then the men take over. They wash up and clean and mop the tables, floor and stairs. It's quiet then until about 11 p.m. when the night pickets come in, and round about midnight the evening pickets come back.

As you can see, it's very hard work, but I must say, we do get a lot of



John Sturrock



Kitchens started up to provide meals for pickets, but soon became centres for the whole community.

help from the men. They help with the cleaning and washing up, with preparing the veg, and with all the carrying. My husband's always been quite good around the house, but there are other men who've done things in this strike they'd never done before. I don't know if they'll carry on after the strike, though. One of the men always says, "If ever I see another sausage after this strike's over, I shall throw it at my wife."

I work on the tea counter, and that's nice because I get to talk to all the lads when they come in. They laugh and joke, and it's wonderful to see their morale so high. They really make us feel they appreciate what we're doing, and that makes it all worth while.

I'd do it all over again.

Dot — Kellingley

* * * * *

THE French convoys brought us can after can of Serbian Bean Soup. Christ it was hot. The sort of stuff which needs three toilet rolls the next day. When we tried it and advertised what it was, to say the least it wasn't popular. I kept six tins back to throw at the police if they got too heavy but that still left twenty or more. In the end we threw in a load of carrots and potatoes and reckoned that it was Beef Barbecue. They still ask "When are you going to get more of that beef barbecue?" "Sorry love," we say, "It's too expensive."

Betty — Woolley

* * * * *

A LOT of the stuff has that Russian writing on the side. Even when you read it through the mirror it doesn't get any better. I just say to the lads, "If you know what it is pick it up." One of the lads said, "Throw it in, our lass'll find a way round this."

* * * * *



Food parcels have to be not more than £4 in value — above that the DHSS counts them as income.

Fund Raising

WOMEN'S support groups across the country have raised thousands and thousands of pounds to feed miners' families. At our first joint meeting, we discussed all the different things people did for fund-raising, and here are some of the things we came up with: jumble sales, coffee mornings, cake stalls, raffles, bingo, sponsored walks, sponsored bed-pushes, a sponsored crawl (NOT a pub crawl!) a sponsored strip (many layers of clothing!) getting pubs to donate bottles for raffles, and shops to donate prizes, going through the Yellow Pages, and writing off to local firms, trade unions, and other organisations, running market stalls, children's discos (also a good morale booster for miners' children), lotteries with pool numbers, an auction, appearing on 'Where There's Life', selling plant-cuttings, car-boot sales, social evenings, and sales of practically everything you can think of.

But the main source of income has been going out on the streets with our collecting tins, and asking the public to support us.

Marina — Leeds

* * * * *

Collecting

Shaking our tins in the freezing cold,
Saying "please make a donation",
A man walks towards us, brash and bold,
His eyes making an allegation.

"Bloody miners!" he bellowed, standing there,
"Why should I give to their kids?
Get them back working if you care,
And bow to the Coal Board's bids."

June — Belle Isle



Street collections are hard work, and you sometimes get a lot of abuse — but the supportive comments and donations make it worthwhile.

WE went down to Leeds to do some collecting, and I was standing apart from the other three, when this police officer came up and asked to see my permit. I explained that my friend had got the permits, but she wasn't there. Then he said I was shoving my bucket under people's noses forcing them to give — even though I was collecting with a tin. He asked me my friends' names, and I was a bit scared, so I said I didn't know. Then he got very nasty and got his black book out and said he was booking me for collecting with a tin that wasn't sealed (although it was in fact sealed, and he tried to prise the lid off), for obstruction, and for collecting without a permit. His whole manner was so nasty — he didn't give me a chance to explain anything. He just told us to move on, and he said, "I don't want to see you in this precinct again." I wasn't sure whether I was within my rights, so I looked for his number, but he wasn't wearing one.

A man came by just then and tried to put some money in our tin, and the policeman said to him, "This collection has now ceased." The man said, "If I want to put money in that tin I will do. You carry on lass."

Anne Marie — Middleton

* * * * *

WHEN we were in London we were invited to this house where they were having a party to raise money for the miners. It was £10 to enter and bring your own wine. When we got there the bottom floor was full and there was a sprinkling of people on the second. When we left all floors were jam packed. They raised £1300 in that one night by having a party.

Betty — Woolley

* * * * *

"I GAVE the milkman a fright today," confides Sheila. "I suddenly remembered he hadn't made a donation to the food collection. "That tray of eggs 'll do and that crate of orange juice and one of milk. Thanks!" The Mafia could learn a lot from Sheila.

Jean — Silkstone

* * * * *

FAMILY LIFE

Eleven months of hardship have tested families to the limit. Not all the marriages have survived, but many are now stronger and more equal than they were before.

The children have been a real credit to us — they have put up with so much and complained so little.

* * * * *

"THE best thing that's come out of this strike, is that there's a lot of marriages that are working one hundred per cent better now. Even if they were good before. The women aren't doormats any more."

Kim — Castleford

* * * * *

"I'VE had a rough marriage. What I had to put with. He used to knock hell out of me — he put me in hospital once or twice. I had to wait on him hand and foot. When he got back from work, his dinner had to be on the table or else. But since the strike's been on, it's all different. He cleans up now, washes up. I can go out, and when I come in he'll make a cup of tea for me. I can go and lie down for an hour. I couldn't wish for a better husband, and that's God's truth.

And yet before the strike, I sometimes wished him dead, I hated him so much.

I shall be sorry when the strike's over, if it's only for us own marriage.

Rose — Featherstone

* * * * *

"ONE thing this strike's learnt me — it's learnt me he's not too knackered to make love on a night."

"No, but I am."

* * * * *

HE said "I don't know what we'd do without our Rose, because how she's kept us together God only knows", and that's the first time I've heard him ever compliment me, in thirty five years of our marriage.

* * * * *

"OUR lass has got me washing up at home now — I never used to do it before."

* * * * *

"WE actually sit down and talk now. We never used to before."

* * * * *

"I'VE finally discovered where the vacuum cleaner switch is because of the strike."

* * * * *



Fathers had more time to spend with their children.

We've laughed, we've cried, we've sat thinking,
 "Oh now, this strike can't be sinking."
 We stand side by side
 My husband and I,
 When he goes to work
 His pride will reach to the sky.

Ann — Middleton

* * * * *

"WE went through one stage when I had one weekend at home in seven weeks."

* * * * *

WHY are they still on strike after six months without money — no dole, no tax return, no holiday pay — on strike long after any other section of industry would have collapsed — and after over 5,000 arrests.

The reason is, they don't really have any choice.

Miners live in communities where sons follow fathers who followed grandfathers. My sons work at a pit where men still work who worked with my dad. When you finish a pit you pull the plug on the life support of that area. Business fold, property values drop, the area where you live and grew up becomes a depressed area.

Jean — Kippax

* * * * *

MY baby is just a week younger than the strike. I hadn't been able to set much aside because of the overtime ban, so living on £9.20 a week for myself and my husband and the baby has been really hard. We get £6.85 Family Allowance, as well, but we're having to pay £3 a week for our electricity to stop it getting cut off.

It was worse when the baby was little and I had to buy special foods for her — we were spending £4-£5 a week just on those. Now she eats what we do, and I can bring her down to the Kitchen.

Christine — Pontefract

* * * * *

OUR gas bottle ran out just after Christmas, and we haven't been able to afford to replace it. Now we have no heat at all in the house. We sit down to watch the telly of an evening with a blanket and a hot-water bottle. When we get too cold, we go to bed."

Violet — Castleford

* * * * *



Coal picking became a harsh necessity during the strike and claimed several lives, including three children.

WE'VE got two young children and we were getting £11.95 a week Social Security. When the baby was born in December, that went up a bit, but we found we were spending much more just keeping the house warm.

We've just managed to get by, with a lot of help from Michelle's parents, and we get a weekly food parcel from the Support Group. We've had a few arguments — Michelle chucked me boots out into the garden once, she got so fed up — but we'll manage. We'll stick it out.

Martin & Michelle — Middleton

* * * * *

MY daughter gets £11.95 for herself and her husband and two kids, and her baby's due on Monday.

The worst thing is the January cold. She comes round here most days to keep warm — we get a fire going, though we've only wood to burn, and all the family come and toast themselves. But they've got no heat at all in the bedroom for the newborn baby, and that worries me.

Unemployed people can get a special heating allowance for children under 5, but if you're on strike you don't get it. It just goes to show, they're trying to break the strike by starving and freezing our kids. What a way to run a country.

Jean — Middleton

* * * * *

A Sad Tale of a Striker's Bride

It wor gunna be a Church weddin'
They said ah could 'ave owt ah liked
We'd chosen the bridesmaids, the flowers, the wine
Then what 'appened — they all went on strike.

Ah reckon we could've just waited —
To 'ave Christenin' first's no disgrace —
But ah'd set me 'eart on bein' married in white
An it wor gerrin' tight at the waist.

So we went to the Registry Office
With only us dads and us mams
But it does tek the shine off a weddin when t'talk
's about price of second-hand prams.

We'd 'oped we'd be gettin' a mortgage
We'd practically settled the sum,
But when the fund 'art 'e were'nt getting a wage
We 'as ter go live with 'is mum.

It isn't that ah'm not really grateful —
She's really a generous soul —
But when we're all sittin' an' watchin' TV
She'll be soakin' 'er feet in a bowl.

'Is dad lies on t'sofa, just snorin'
When 'e gets back 'ome from th' pub,
'e teks out 'is teeth, an' leaves 'em on t'sink —
Eee, it fair puts yer right off yer grub.

We couldn't afford gallivantin'
On t'money from t'DHSS,
An' soon a fun aht an'd got nowt that'd fit —
God! 'Ow I 'ate lookin' a mess.

Ah wish that ah could've afforded
To 'ave me 'air properly done,
But when we've paid out, well, there's just nothin' left —
This strikin' lark isn't much fun.

For 'im, life's not that much different —
'E pickets, instead of 'is job,
'E goes out ter t'meein' at t'workin' men's club
On Satdi, 'e draws a few bob.

For me, ah was really quite 'omesick,
Ah 'ad mornin' sickness as well,
An' as 'is mam only knew 'ow to cook chips
Ah kept passin' out at the smell.

There's only one thing that keeps me on the rails —
When ah go ter mi mam's at weekend
If ah couldn't rummage through my bottom drawer
Ah think ah would go round the bend.

'Cos 'onest, ah luv 'im, an' if — ah mean 'when' —
Them up there find a road to agree
We could work out us problems, before it's too late,
We might 'ave a chance, 'im an' me.

It ain't much of a start; with a fellow that's scared
That 'e might finish up on the dole,
And God knows, there must be an easier way
Than goin' down that mucky 'ole.

So ah'll wait for me dream 'ome till later,
Give 'im all the support that ah can,
'Cause when this lot's ower, ah'm glad ah can say
Well, leastways, ah married a man.

Jean — Kippax

* * * * *

TO put it delicately the bank was less than pleased that our lad wasn't honouring his financial repayments on the car, the second mortgage and the holiday loan scheme, so they wrote him a snotty letter. He telephoned:

"Hello. Is that the listening bank?"

"Yes."

"Well listen to this. As you know we're having a rough time, what with the strike and all that. But I want to be fair with everyone so each Friday night our lass and me sit down in the kitchen and write the name of everyone to who we owe money on bits of paper. There'll be about forty.

That done, our Linda folds them neatly and puts them in my father's hat.
The baby is encouraged to pick one out.

I'm phoning to say that if I get any more letters like the one I got this morning, your name's not going in the hat."

* * * * *

"THE only thing that would split my marriage now is if he decided to go back to work."

* * * * *

Divided Family

My family are miners
Standing tall with pride
Sadly we're divided
And tears I have to hide.

My father, husband, youngest son
They're miners through and through
My eldest son chose differently
A uniform of blue.

No, he's not a copper
That is not his scene,
He is in the Household Cavalry
An escort to our Queen.

From Barnsley to Knightsbridge
In one giant stride,
Forgetting his roots
While through London he rides.

Son against father,
Brother against brother,
I'm in the middle
As a wife and mother.

Maggie doesn't understand,
She doesn't feel our pain,
It's miners and their families
That have to take the strain.

Oh, Iron Lady with no heart,
Uncaring grocer's daughter,
This mining blood that's in our veins,
It's much thicker than water.

One day you'll understand, Son,
Why our family had to part,
Our opinions may be different,
But you're still in our hearts.

So, when this strike is at an end,
And the miners, they have won,
We'll be a family once again,
United with our son.

Ann — Worsborough

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Children

"ROBERT sings 'Arthur Scargill, Arthur Scargill, we'll report you ever more'. He says, 'when Daddy gets back to work, we'll be rich, won't we?'"

Kim — Featherstone

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MY little boy woke me up at 6.30 in the morning with a tooth out. "Shall I put it under my pillow?" he said, "Or is the tooth fairy out on strike?"

I told him to put it under his pillow, and the 'tooth fairy' managed to scrape together 30p.

Was that little boy happy!

Anne Marie — Middleton

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MY name is Christie Young, and I am 10 years old. My Dad is a miner at Wheldale pit. For the last 10 months he has been on strike. My Mum has gone to the kitchens and worked all the hours God has sent. Before the strike I was quite babyish, but now I have grown up.

Christie — Castleford

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"OUR daughter's twelve. She got a Christmas voucher from a support group to get herself a Christmas present, and she went and got one for me and for her Dad."

* * * * *

OUR eldest girl wanted a typewriter and a torch for Christmas. So it wasn't easy, but we got her this typewriter. Then a couple of weeks before Christmas, she suddenly said she didn't want a typewriter any more. We were really upset. We thought she'd changed her mind. I said, "Well, why don't you want a typewriter? You asked for it now." She said, "I know my Dad's on strike, so I'll just have a torch. And I'll have a typewriter for my birthday if he's back at work by then." She's just six-and-a-half. And now she's started saying "I'm going to eat up all my dinner while ever you're on strike, Dad."

Janet — Featherstone

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THROUGHOUT a meeting of the Support Group, in our living room, with everybody chatting busily about future plans, all my son was bothered about was the fact he couldn't find his spaceship and nobody had the time to look for it for him. He suddenly sat down and said "I didn't know the miners' strike was *this* important." Although funny at the time, I suppose we don't realise how this strike has affected our children.

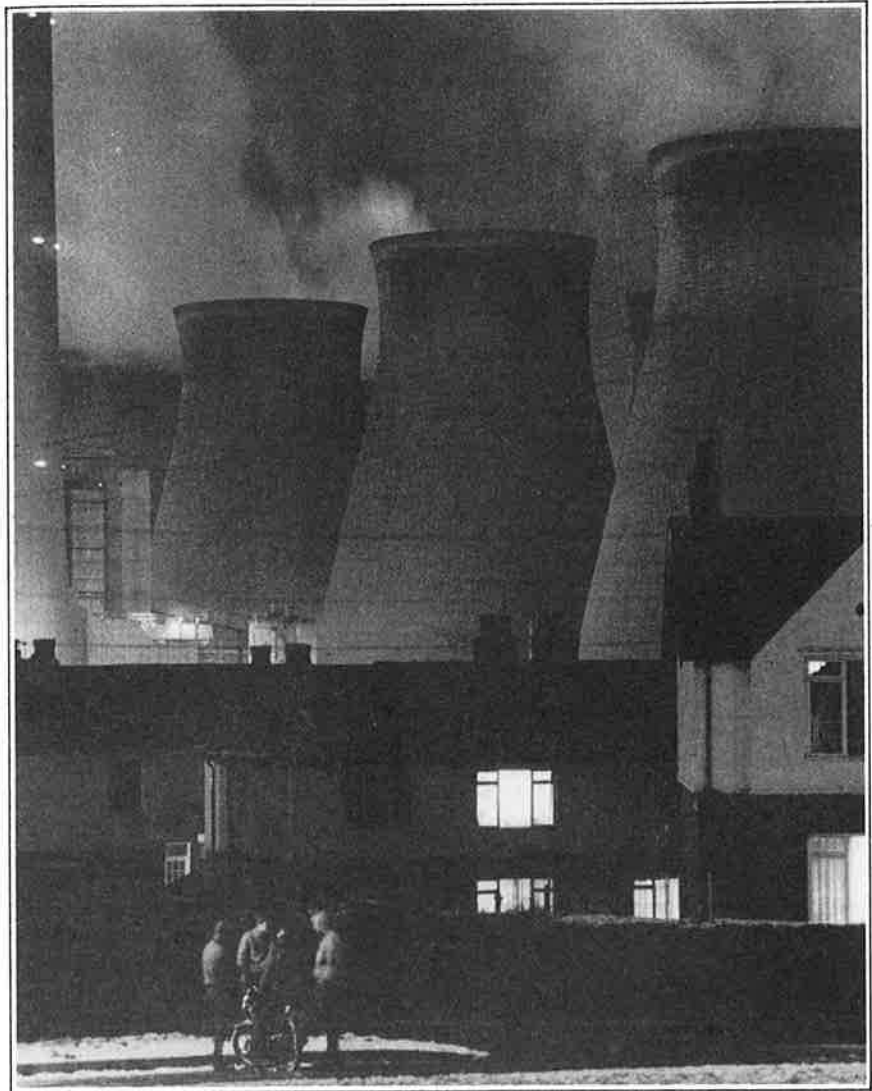
For our family the strike is *important*. It takes up most of our time now, as both my husband and myself are totally committed to the Support Group. Our day usually starts about 5.00 a.m. with Terry going picketing, the children are up as he goes out so once Robert is at school and Terry is back from picketing we have to decide what has to be done that day. Then one of us stays at home to look after Carly, our little girl, and the other one disappears for the rest of the day and often again at night when our meetings take place. This is now a way of life for us, some days we could do with a few extra hours in the day just to get the paperwork finished.

Our children have been affected and Robert has realised that the strike is *important*.

Linda — Pontefract

MINING COMMUNITIES

When the strike is over, and the hardship and suffering are things of the past, the friendships we formed, and the feeling of togetherness in the mining communities are the things that will stay with us.



Martin Jenkinson

Picket Joe Green died outside Ferrybridge power station on Friday 15th 1984.

AS a child living in a North Eastern Mining Village we, like so many families were forced to leave our family and friends because of the massive pit closures of the early 60s.

It was a frightening experience for us children, leaving all the people we knew and loved. The terrifying experience of starting new schools, of being lost in unfamiliar surroundings, longing to be back with familiar people and places.

When I look back it must have been much harder for my Mum and Dad, having to leave brothers and sisters, life long friends, some never to see again. Each year returning to find another part of the family had moved on and a little bit more of the village had died.

My parents' families are now scattered to the four corners of the world, each one in turn leaving to find a better future for their children. My mother always dreamed of a big reunion, it took her death to bring it about.

When the pit goes, the community goes, brother parts from brother, daughter from mother, grandchildren from grandparents, sometimes never to be together again.

I know the deep and lasting effect it has on children and families, not knowing where they belong. Which is why I will fight like a she cat for my children's future.

They belong here, and here is where they should stay. With a bright and rosy future.

That is why this strike is so important.

We let the pits close in the 60s.

We must not let them close in the 80s.

Lesley — Pontefract

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NEVISON is a very small place close to Pontefract. Nobody's ever heard of it. It has a very good community atmosphere — a lot of people are related, and the grandparents were all brought up together. So when the group started, everybody supported the idea. I'm the youngest in the group — I'm twenty-seven, and we've got a couple of pensioners and all ages in between.

We have 168 miners on our books but they each only get a parcel once a fortnight, because we can't raise enough money to do it weekly. We know everyone who comes for a parcel, and we all watch out for each other.

For all the heartache, I would't have missed this experience for the world. It's completely altered my attitude, and I've done things I would never have dreamed of before. The meeting I went to at Featherstone was the first time I'd been out without my husband. Now I've been on marches and rallies, I've been selling in pubs and clubs, and I've spoken at a Labour Party meeting in Leeds — I didn't want to do it, because I'm very shy, but I knew it had to be done.

Janet — Nevison

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I WANT to say how fantastic our village has been. There are about sixty miners in Whitwood, and the rest of the village has really rallied round to make sure they don't go without. It's a small village, with only two shops — one of which doesn't support us anyway — but they always come to our fund-raising events. In fact it's really brought the village together.

* * * * *

WHEN we moved to Sherburn-in-Elmet in June 1983 we counted ourselves lucky. We had a new house in a beautiful village close to the Selby coalfield and twenty minutes by car from Leeds. We had moved from Castleford to a village set among fields and farms.

The village people had mixed feelings about us. Some were friendly but a lot were cool and we soon discovered that the majority had not wanted miners living alongside them. In fact they got up a petition to try to stop the building of our estate. It appears that you had to live in Sherburn for twenty five years before you were accepted.

Ann — Sherburn

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WE had a big benefit concert with Alexis Sayle at one of the local clubs. We hadn't had a lot of support from them until then, but on the evening one of the stewardesses came up and said, "I've never had much to do with miners before, but having seen you all here together tonight, laughing and singing, even though you haven't got any money — it's really moved me."

Sandra — Selby

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MY daughter works for an Indian man on the market. He runs the heel bar. When I hurt my back he came to our house with two great big parcels of food he'd bought. There was a 12lb turkey, frozen chips and veg, fish, chocolate cake, steak and kidney pie, a big tin of biscuits, oh, and lots more I can't remember. It was fantastic — and I was surprised, because I didn't think he'd understand how we felt. I was a bit embarrassed to take it, it was so much. But he said, "I know if I'd been in the same position you'd have done the same for me."

Ethel — Castleford

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Having a good time together was an important part of the strike, for men and women alike.

After the summer rally, a number of groups started organising social evenings in a local club to which all the other groups were invited. These were a great success, with everyone singing and shouting and going a bit wild.

The Featherstone group soon acquired a bit of a reputation in our area for their social evenings. The Ladies v Pickets football match, played in pouring rain, was an occasion not to be forgotten (as one woman said —

"it was touch and pass, but more touch than pass"). Also the 1950s Rock 'n' Roll Night, and the Rock 'n' Roll Valentines Night.

The Sherburn group put on a fantastic social and cabaret as a send-off party for their chairperson, Maxine, when she left the group. The cabaret included a ballet-sequence by the Buxom Fairies (complete with wellingtons and frilly tutus) which nearly brought the house down, and a 'harem' sequence with Maxine dressed as Superman with a large red willy dangling down in front of her costume, performing strange 'rhythmic' dances with two ladies with balloon-sized bosoms.

* * * * *

WE have a scab in our street now. So when he comes back, we all stand in our back yards to greet him. We don't shout or swear, just stand there in silence. Well, a man from the Yorkshire Post heard about it, and came to the village. "Is there any violence?" he asked. When we said "No", he just jumped in his car and drove off again.

Margaret — Whitwood

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Martin Jenkinson

Police intrusion made Yorkshire villages seem like Northern Ireland.

MOST local councils in mining areas are Labour-controlled, but quite a large part of North Yorkshire and the Selby area come under the Tories. Miners' families in these areas have had it particularly hard, as they have

not had school meals for the children during holidays, or clothing grants. They have also been denied licences to collect in the streets, and have found it hard to get use of community buildings for meetings.

When they had the big debate on Channel 4 between McGregor and Arthur Scargill, they wanted to film Arthur in Selby. So we went along to try and book the local Community Centre. We had to meet with two Tory councillors. For two hours they kept us there pouring all sorts of insults onto the miners, such as "I know someone who's getting £30 a week picketing money and spending it all in the pub." I found it hard to keep my temper. In the end I said could we just have a decision about whether we could have the hall or not. "Oh," he said, "we can't make a decision about that. We haven't got a quorum."

Well then they got the Lady Mayoress to come along. She made a big fuss about the miners, but we explained that Channel 4 was putting it on, and that the Coal Board would also have a say. So in the end they agreed, but they said the toilet would be locked. There was a red plush chair and curtains and pictures on the walls of the small committee room we were supposed to be filming in, but these were all removed. They put some of those plastic chairs in instead.

They were terrified about a big crowd of miners, so they ordered all the shops to be closed from 1 p.m. (even though Arthur wasn't due to arrive till after 6) and all the pubs had to stay closed. In the event about 500 turned up, and there were more wives and children than there were miners. There was no trouble at all. A lot of people wrote into the papers saying how stupid it was to close the pubs and the shops. We found out then that there were quite a lot of people who supported us.

It was a great evening, and it really brought the Selby area together. We had never met as an area before because we couldn't get the use of a big enough hall.

Sandra — Selby

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A little girl in our village was sent home from school because she didn't have brown shoes, which are the regulation uniform. Kids' shoes are expensive, and all her mum could afford to buy her was a pair of those plastic 'jelly-bean' shoes for £1.99. She asked about a clothing grant for uniform, but the headmaster wasn't at all sympathetic — he just said, "It's your husband's fault if he chooses to be on strike." The girl wasn't allowed to go to school until she got the right shoes.

Margaret — Kellington

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"The vicar's been really great, letting us use the Church Hall for our kitchen. In fact when the strike's over we're going to do him a favour, and burn it down."

"How come?"

"Well, it's very old and dilapidated, and he could get a new one built

on the insurance."

"Have you mentioned this to the vicar?"

"Actually, he suggested it."

* * * * *

Christmas



Martin Jenkinson

The children had fewer presents, but more parties.

"ALTHOUGH it's been one of the poorest Christmases we've had, it's also been one of the most enjoyable, because we've all been together — it's been a real community Christmas."

Davey — Kellingley

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"THE kids had a great Christmas, even though they didn't get as much as usual. They all got a toy or a voucher, and we had a lovely party with a selection pack for each child from Santa Claus.

The Leeds Playhouse put on a special show of 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' for the kids, and the West Riding Bus Company put on a special bus. The kids had a wonderful time — it was a treat in a year which had been a bit short on treats."

Violet — Castleford

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The christmas party
 At Christmas we had two parties for the miners
 children I went. From 10 to 15 was a disco and
 it was great. I got a present from the Ledston
 Luck Family Support Group it was a make up
 bag with some make up in but I gave the
 make up to my mum. We had something to eat
 we had sausage rolls, port pie, buns, and
 jelly and icecream. We played some games
 like the best dancer you won Ghost
 buster books sweets. At ten o'clock it was
 time to go home but I enjoyed it.

Beverley (10) Kippax

ONE of the notes on a doll sent for Christmas to the Citizens' Advice Bureau read: 'My name is Tracey. Please love me. I know you need me.' Then a name. I couldn't wrap it up for crying.

Barbara — Wistow

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WE decided to form a support group just before Christmas, to put on a Christmas party for the striking miners' children. To raise the necessary funds we had jumble sales, raffles etc. But the most successful venture was the bed push.

The men got dressed up mainly in women's clothing — 'Hilda Ogden' style. The women dressed up in overalls and pit helmets and blackened their faces. The bed was decorated with balloons, ribbons and streamers. We were sponsored to complete 10 laps around our village. We all had a lot of laughs, which are in short supply at the moment, and the money rolled in.

We had a very successful Christmas party. The children had a great time, and the support group has gone from strength to strength.

We now distribute food parcels fortnightly, we hold fund-raising evenings regularly. And we have found out who our true friends are.

Pauline — Whitwood

PICKET LINES

Everyone who has been on a picket line has a tale to tell — some funny, some frightening. At first the men were a bit surprised to see women going down on picket lines — in fact I think we were a bit surprised at it ourselves.



Picket huts expressed a new architectural inventiveness.

A FRIEND and I from the Labour Party took part in an all-women's picket by miners' wives outside Calverton colliery in Nottinghamshire. It was a lovely evening, and we gathered on the pavement in a jovial mood, sang a few songs, shouted a few slogans, and joked with the half-dozen police officers present. Most of the women had no experience of picketing, and went partly out of curiosity, partly out of a desire to show our menfolk our support.

The atmosphere was relaxed and jovial until police reinforcements arrived. They at once surrounded the picket and told the women to move to a different part of the pavement. Women who questioned this or who resisted being pushed were arrested. Women who intervened when their friends were arrested got arrested too. Having surrounded us and got us where they wanted us, the police started to tighten the circle, pushing us into a smaller and smaller space. At this point, quite a number of women panicked, and tried to stop themselves being herded together. They were arrested too. Many women did not know why they

were being arrested: "Why me?" yelled one young miner's wife as she was being dragged away. "I've fancied you all evening," the arresting officer told her. Another woman, charged with using foul and abusive language, was told by a police officer: "Call yourself a woman — I wouldn't even piss on you."

The women were dragged to the police van with a brutality quite out of proportion to their size or any resistance they were offering. One woman in her mid forties who offered no resistance was dragged by two officers, one of whom had his arm around her throat. "Let her walk" said one of the officers. "No, let's drag her," said the other. They did drag her, face downwards, so her knees and the tops of her feet in open sandals were all battered and grazed. She blacked out, and had to be taken to hospital.

All the time the police taunted us with jibes about Arthur Scargill, about the massive overtime they were being paid (this to families who have been living well below the official breadline for four months now) and provocations such as "Go on, hit me then" (chin aggressively thrust forward) and no end of 'tarts' and 'slags'.

All the women arrested were photographed with a polaroid camera — there was no application to a magistrate — those who refused simply had their heads yanked up by their hair. They were locked in individual wire cages in a tall windowless van of the type normally used for transporting dangerous criminals. They were held there for up to two hours. Some women requested to go to the toilet — there was one in the adjacent building. They were told: "Shut up or I'll shut you up." Eventually they were offered a milk bottle.

At about 11 p.m. the police van left Calverton for Hucknall Police Station. It was quite dark inside, and the women locked in their individual cages were shaken and bruised as the van raced at high speed down the winding country roads, swerving and braking sharply. By now they were very frightened and confused.

At Hucknall Police Station things did not get any better. Women were at last allowed to go to the toilet, but they were escorted by male police officers — this made it very difficult for some women to take advantage of the relief offered. Besides which, the toilet, which was in an open corridor, was filthy, apparently did not flush and was caked with excrement.

At the police station, a number of the women asked to make a phone call, which they believed to be their right. They were refused. In some cases, the police did in fact contact the woman's husband, but they did not tell the women husbands had been contacted; nor were women told that husbands and friends had contacted the station to enquire after them. This was very distressing, especially for women with children, who did not know what arrangements if any had been made for their children to be looked after. One woman who had a sixteen week old baby said: "I've always thought the police were supposed to care about people, but when I told them I wanted to speak to my husband because I was

worried about my baby, they just laughed and said if I really cared about the baby I wouldn't have gone on the picket line."

By 11.30, the NUM had contacted a solicitor, who contacted Hucknall Police Station. The police however would not let her see the detained women, or even let her know their names. The women were taken one by one for questioning. In addition to the usual questions, they were asked very detailed questions about their family circumstances, HP and mortgage commitments and their 'attitudes'. Interspersed with the questions, were all sorts of 'humorous' remarks such as "Did you know Arthur Scargill's just had three tons of coal delivered to his house." "What do you think of this new Jaguar Arthur Scargill's just bought himself" and "We're hoping this strike is going to go on — the overtime's great — we'll be having two holidays abroad this year."

By about 2 a.m. most of the women had been interviewed, and were locked up in individual cells — these are the cells normally kept for drunks and vagrants, and were filthy, with mattresses and blankets stinking of urine, and some with traces of excrement. They were given a cup of tea — their first refreshment during this ordeal.

Some women were fingerprinted, without a warrant, during their interview. Others were woken up periodically through the night to ask them whether they had 'changed their minds' and would consent to be fingerprinted.

At 6 a.m. they were woken up and offered breakfast — it had obviously been kept hot under a grill or in an oven, and was so dried out that some women could not bring themselves to eat it. They were told they would appear in court at 10 a.m. Then it was changed to 2 p.m. Then to 4 p.m. Then to 5 p.m. Finally, at twenty minutes to five, they were allowed to see a solicitor. In court, before a single magistrate, the usual notorious bail conditions were imposed, and at last the weary bewildered women were allowed to go home.

From all the catalogue of horrors they experienced, perhaps the most horrific thing was that they were not isolated incidents where individual policemen overstepped the mark, and where it would be appropriate to make a complaint — but every encounter with every officer, from the rough handling, to the constant taunts about 'overtime', to the disregard for privacy, comfort or basic legal rights — all these seemed part of a total pattern. A systematic attempt to bully and degrade.

Sequel

All the women except one who were arrested that day were found guilty in the Magistrates' Court, even the two who had ended up in hospital. But instead of being fined, they were given unconditional discharges, and had costs of £100 awarded against them.

That meant that it would be unwise to appeal, so the police case was

upheld and the women penalised indirectly, through costs, rather than directly through a fine.

The woman with the young baby was released without being charged at all, having been held in police custody for almost twelve hours.

Marina — Leeds

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WE started going picketing and that itself was strange. Initially the men wanted to protect us. This was resented because the women wanted to be treated like equals and so we would push past them and get onto the front line. After doing this on a few occasions attitudes changed. As we got out of the bus it wasn't "Here's Cappy's wife", it was first names, "Hello Sheila, hello Pat." We had won a battle of the sexes and the feeling was great. We weren't taking a back seat, we were there side by side.

Sheila — Sherburn

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WOMEN from the PMSG joined the picket at "Prince of Wales" on Wednesday 14th and witnessed the worst police violence ever seen in our community.

500 West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police in full riot gear charged into the peaceful picket and 13 arrests were made — all are now on strict bail conditions and curfew. 3 men were badly beaten up. The women were spared nothing. They were chased for over two miles and some had to hide in a rubbish skip.

The women's answer to this attack is to make their presence on local picket lines a regular feature and to campaign even harder for broad support from other workers to win this strike.

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Scabs bussed in at 5 a.m. — women join men to picket.

AT one time we had it really rough. I was getting near the edge of my tether.

A bloke came up to me and said, "If you want any petrol bombs, say the word and I can supply them."

"No thanks," I said.

The next day the police were very heavy. Dogs, horses, everything. At one point they were truncheoning a 56 year old man. I went up, all five feet two of me. "Stop it," I screamed, "Leave him alone."

"Shut your mouth," said one of the coppers, "or you'll be next."

I was scared I can tell you. I was sobbing and shaking. I kept thinking "Oh why didn't I take up his offer of bombs."

Then I stopped. "What's happening to me?"

* * * * *

ONE car load of women always reckon to be strippers when they get stopped on a picketing trip into Nottingham. What the police make of this excuse is anybody's guess. Edna's fifty five.

* * * * *

THEY started moving coal at Allerton Bywater after Christmas. They said it was for pensioners and hospitals but they had no dispensation from the Union.

The regular pickets had had no success in stopping the lorries, so one Tuesday morning nine of us women decided to go down, before our regular coffee morning.

Six of us were allowed to go on the official picket gate. The police tried to stop us, but some of us are NUM members.

We stood right in the road, and we managed to stop the lorries and talk



Leeds Other Paper

Women canteen workers and cleaners are also full NUM members.

to the drivers, which was more than the men had succeeded in doing. One driver — he was a Welshman — said he would support us, and he said he would talk to his mates and try to get them to back us too. It was a real morale booster for the men to see the lorries stopping.

But it didn't last long. Next day the lorries all came back, and this time they didn't even stop at the gate. Maybe they thought we wouldn't be there.

Cathy — Allerton Bywater

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Ledston Luck Picket's Song

(Men of Harlech)

Dedicated to Karl Curry (Secretary), Joseph Harrison (Secretary),
Graham Dodd (Treasurer) and Keith Parker (Delegate)

Men of Ledston Luck now hurry
Follow Harrison and Curry
Graham's got the cash don't worry
Pickets all unite.

Maggie Thatcher's mounted spacemen
Are no match for Parker's facemen
Tho they battle and they chase men
They will lose the fight.

As the strike goes longer
Our resolve grows stronger
Maggie thought she'd starve us back
But she could not be wronger,

Tho' we wish that we were earning
Arthur's lads are not for turning
Here's the lesson we are learning
Unity is might.



Martin Jenkinson

AT Wistow the police spend a lot of time guarding a leek field. When we're a little bored we send a car down the lane and they send one after it. When it reaches the end it turns and comes back. Then we send another. It goes on like this all day. We keep the bastards guessing.

* * * * *

THEY reckon that a car load was going through Derby to picket at Shirebrook. A young copper stopped them:

"Now, sir, where are you going?"

"Mablethorpe. Our wives are on holiday in Mablethorpe."

"But sir, it's five thirty in the morning."

"It's a long way."

"Can I look in the boot?"

As the boot was opened our lad slowly emerged from out of the bits of old rope, car jacks and spanners to say:

"I've been in here well over an hour and I still can't find that bloody knocking."

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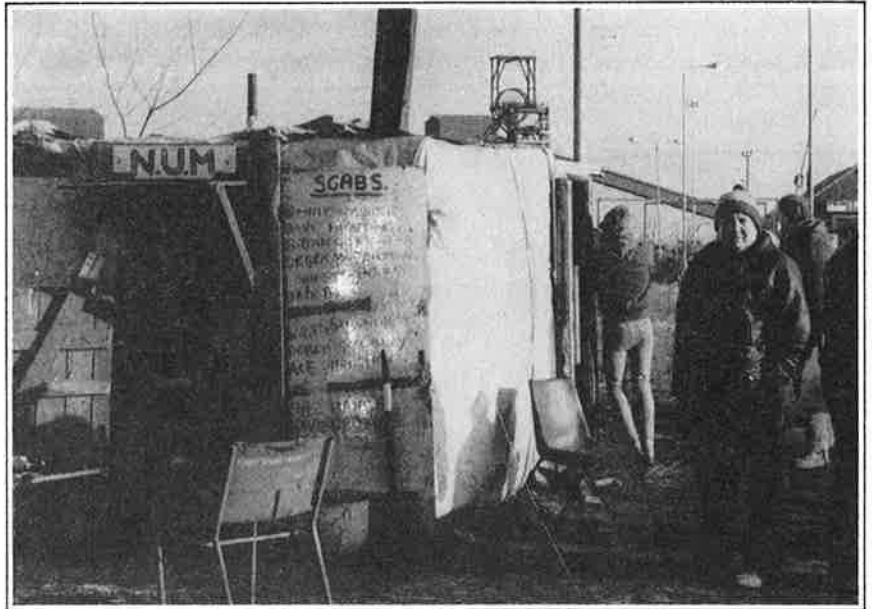
SCABS

Through until the summer, the strike had been absolutely solid in our area, and men (and women) had concentrated their picketing energies in Notts.

In August the first scabs in our area turned up, at Allerton Bywater and Selby. They met with massive pickets, and the kind of police presence in our area which until then had been mainly seen in Notts. A lot of miners who had never picketed before were so outraged that they became more active in the strike, and started picketing their own collieries. And women who had never picketed before went down to their local picket lines.

One thing a lot of people remarked on was that most of the scabs who went back first were 'outsiders' in the mining community — either they lived away from other miners, or they came from a different area, or they just didn't have friends at their pit. Some of them were people who had been defended by the Union in disciplinary and other cases.

Women found that those who had had the loudest mouths to complain in the kitchens and when they were given parcels, were among the first to go back. It was very demoralising for some groups to find that the very people they had been struggling to help, crossing picket lines and abusing them.



Rolls of Dishonour appeared outside picket huts.

It was found that many of the first scabs had been helped by the union prior to the strike, some with disciplinary charges or appeals — this intensified bitterness against them.

"THERE'S three gone in at Ledston Luck today. I feel so ASHAMED."

* * * * *

IT'S late January and eleven out of 1500 have gone back at our pit. There's only two out of 1400 in the pit down the way. Four of them are young lads, not very bright, one sweeps the shop up and another looks after the pit cat. Two are COSA. One other's an electrician, like me, so I know him well. He's a real Tory. Most of the others are misfits. In fact if you had asked who would scab most of us could have named them. There's only one who has surprised us. He's really surprised us.

Steve — Pontefract

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A BLOKE contacted our group, and asked for help with his electricity bill. He said if he didn't pay them some money, they'd cut him off. Well, money was a bit tight, but we scraped together all we could get at, we gave him £50. The very next Monday he was back at work.

We asked if we could have our money back, but he said, "I've got more important things to pay off before I start giving money to the likes of you." That's the type of people these scabs are.

Sheila — Kippax

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YOU have to do a lot of running about delivering the parcels. One time I took a parcel nineteen miles to a striker in Stanley, had his wife take it from me at the front door and then learnt, when I got back, that he had gone back to work. That's the type of people you are dealing with. They're real scabs.

Sheila — Sherburn

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THERE was a family that used to come into our kitchen regularly, and then they stopped coming for a while. Then just before Christmas she rang and asked if it would be alright for their kids to come to our party. I said, of course, and I asked them why they'd not been in the kitchen. She said they had felt so embarrassed because their uncle was scabbing, and she was afraid they would get picked on. I said "They're not responsible for what their uncle is doing."

Kim — Castleford

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ONE of our members came up to us in the lane. She was in tears. She said "I'm not coming to the group anymore". Janet said, "What's the matter, is it owt we can help you with?" She explained her husband was going back to work. She didn't want him to, but he had just decided. "I can't come up to the club, and play raffles and bingo with the others. I won't be one of you anymore." She was heartbroken.

Well, he went into work that day, and the manager came up to him and

said, "You know what you're doing don't you?" He said "Yes".

"And is your wife fully behind you?"

"Well, no, we haven't really talked it over."

So the manager said, "Unless your wife's fully behind you, it'll never work out."

So that night they had a talk, and she told him how she felt, and he said, "Right, well I'll not go back no more."

Rita — Featherstone

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WHEN we first heard that my brother-in-law had gone back, my husband rang him up straight away, but he denied it. He said "I'll go back when everyone goes back," so we left it at that, and I told everyone it wasn't true he was going back. Then four weeks later we got to hear that he definitely was going back to work.

He'd lied to my husband, and that really hurt him, because they were big mates. When he found out it was true, he just buried his head in his hands. Next day his other brother, who's in COSA, came round, and they said, "Well, what are we going to do about him?" In their hearts they wanted to go and beat hell out of him, but they went and talked to their Mam and Dad. Though they knew he'd got it coming to them, they made the brothers promise that they wouldn't hurt him, and they kept their promise. But my husband says that now as far as he's concerned he



Organising socials, dances, and pantomimes — having fun together — kept morale up.

doesn't even breathe any more — he'll never have owt to do with him again.

This lad that's gone back is the youngest, and his sister, who's next to him, has taken his side. (Her husband doesn't work at the pit). So she never has anything to do with us now. The other day she crossed the road to avoid me. It's split the family.

The thing about him is that he's really brainy. He joined the pit at eighteen, too late for an apprentice course. The union fought for him to get on that apprentice course, and after that they fought for him to go on another course, and they got him on that. That's why they can't forgive him.

Janet — Featherstone

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ONE of the first scabs back at Kellingley was a fitter. They hadn't got anything for him to fit so they put him on cleaning out the lavatories and the showers. He didn't complain until he got his pay chit. When he discovered that he was paid at the lower rate he was mad, phoned through to the union to complain and demanded that they do something about it.

Alan — Pontefract

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TO A FORMER FRIEND

Aye lad — a thowt a knew yer — an a nivver thowt a'd see
The day when tha'd go thro' them gates — and turn thi back on me.

The lines an' lines o' bobbies — tried ter keep us all i' place
But as the bus rushed by us all — a recognised yer face.

Ave worked wi' you for all these years — a thowt you were mi mate
Ave watched yer back while workin' — now a watch it thro' the gate.

Wi've shared us jobs, wi've shared us snap, wi've shared us soap in t' bath
But there'll be no more sharin — in the bitter aftermath.

'Cos Coal Board bowt yer heart an' soul — wi't promised bonus pay
It's all a 'Con' — 'Cos't brass is what thi' owed us anyway.

I 'ope yer think it's worth it — Cos this strike 'as got to end
An' tha mun look ter them th'as joined
When next tha needs a friend

Jean — Kippax

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WE use the club at Sherburn for a lot of our organisation. Throughout the strike they've been erecting a church next door and last week they erected a notice board outside. Fern went off to the vicar. "It's about this church. We see that you've named it St Joseph the Worker. Well, me and the lads want a guarantee that he won't scab."

Ken — Stillingfleet

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WHEN Normanton and Altofts Support Group formed over 7 months ago, we had no idea of the tremendous support we would receive from our community, from shops and local businesses, from the ordinary citizens of Normanton and Altofts, and especially from the pensioners, who have donated ever since our group formed.

In the General Strike of 1926, the miners had no support groups, free school meals for their children, or social security. And remember that only by true working class people sticking together is there such a scheme as social security in operation today — even though we don't receive much of it.

Janine — Normanton

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ONE of the first scabs to go back at one of the Yorkshire pits was a really simple lad who had been brought up by an old lady who was now in her eighties. He was lucky to get a job but a colliery can always carry someone like that. After all, he'd grown up in the village.

When the NCB sent out the letters threatening people the old lady got really scared and forced him to go back to work. He, poor sod, didn't understand what was going off. They reckon that every morning he'd crouch in the corner of the bus whimpering like a little dog.

The Secretary called the lads together. "You'll know that — he mentioned his name — is going back. Well, unlike the others, he doesn't understand what all this is about. We have to have a policy on him and I propose that both now and after this lot is over he's treated no differently to what he's always been."

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THE LAW

The British policemen are wonderful, and the British legal system is the fairest in the world. That's what you probably believe, and that's what most of US believed, until we learnt from our own experience that the official version of events is not always right. Now we know that there's something very seriously wrong with justice in this country, and we're frightened not only for ourselves, but for the future of our country.



Martin Jenkinson

Community policing will never be the same again.

What we have found is this:

Policemen sometimes turn a peaceful if noisy gathering into a situation of violent conflict, in order to make arrests.

Police officers sometimes kick and punch people in their custody.

Not all policemen wear numbers on their uniforms.

Policemen ask people questions about their political beliefs, and they seem to regard people with beliefs different to theirs as being criminals or potential criminals.

Complaints against the police are very seldom upheld.

Policemen sometimes tell lies in court, and magistrates usually believe them.

Magistrates have granted restrictive conditions of bail to people arrested in picketing situations without hearing the rights and wrongs of individual cases.

Magistrates and police officers have suddenly discovered new laws and powers no one ever knew they had.

High Court judges always seem to reach decisions which favour the government.

Most of us now have a very different view of the police to what we had at the beginning of the strike. It's not just a matter, as some senior officers seem to hope, of rebuilding friendly relations with an individual local bobby. We know now that you can become a criminal in Britain just for fighting for a future for your kids and defending your community, and that the police aren't just there to help old ladies cross the road and stop the corner shop getting robbed. That's a lesson that we and our children will never forget.

I WAS arrested at Bickershaw. When they got me to the police reception van, they really laid into me. I was covered in bruises, and my lip was split. I was wearing these new ice-blue jeans, and a couple of days later I noticed they had strange black marks all over them. Then I realised it was black boot polish.

Alan — Wakefield

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AFTER they arrested me they took me into the pit yard at Babbington, and I was a bit cheeky answering their questions, like. So then they really laid into me. There were four of them, and they had me down on the ground, and kept on kicking me. In the end I just curled up in a ball and begged them to stop — I just couldn't take any more.

Les — Allerton Bywater

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I SHALL never forget the way the police behaved after that big demo in Mansfield. At the end of the march, when most people had dispersed, some trouble started — I suppose they tried to arrest somebody — and suddenly there were hundreds of police pouring out, and police horses riding down the middle of the street. The police just went berserk. My wife was sitting on the grass, and there was a young lad sitting next to her, eating an ice-cream. Next thing she knew, a policeman charged past, hit him over the head with a truncheon, and arrested him.

Two lads who'd been hit were lying on the ground, and they wouldn't let a first-aid man through to attend to them. They formed a ring around them, and when one bloke tried to take a photo they smashed the camera out of his hand. Someone was trying to take a photo through the window of a bus, and they even ran onto the bus and snatched the camera and destroyed the film.

I'd never have believed the police could behave like that and get away with it, but these stories have become commonplace since the strike.

Don — Castleford

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ONCE we went down to Notts, we got trapped in this car park — the police blocked the road and we couldn't get out. Then they went around smashing all the car windscreens, and if there were lads inside the cars, they were braying them through the broken window. Me and my mate went and hid up on the railway embankment, we were that scared. I said "The car's mendable, I'm not."

Alan — Wakefield

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AT Silverwood, the police broke up the picket and started chasing us through the woods with dogs. They got us cornered in a steep-sided gulley like a railway embankment with one end blocked off, and they let the dogs loose. One of the police dogs went mad and started biting the lads — we had no choice but to club and kick it to death. It upset me, because I like animals.

Brian — Kippax

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MY husband was arrested on the picket line at Kellingley — he was charged with 'abusive language'. They knocked him about a bit at the police station, then he was sent to Armley jail. He was in there for four days, and we only got him out because we wrote to our MP. I felt awful while he was in jail — really drained and hopeless. We went to visit him in Armley, and we were treated like rubbish — they made sarcastic remarks and wouldn't give us any information. I was so worried it made me poorly, and I was upset for the kids. When he went for trial all the charges were dropped — they couldn't get the officers who'd arrested him to identify him.

It's made me very angry. I don't feel I can trust the police anymore. He'd never ever been in trouble with the law before, and we'd brought our kids up to respect coppers.

What I want to know is — on whose authority was he sent to jail? It seems as though the police aren't answerable to anybody any more.

Janet — Nevinson

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TERRY and me went for a walk in the week before Christmas. We had heard that a small seam of coal had been found on the railway embankment but he hadn't been down to look. When we got there we found that two policemen had crept up when the diggers weren't there and were emptying the buckets and other containers into which the fuel had been gathered.

Lynda — Pontefract

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"ONE morning I was on my own and this young copper was going to arrest me for unlawful assembly."

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MY little girl always draws the same picture — a tree with a house and a fence round it and flowers in the garden. But one day — not long after my husband got knocked about by the police — she drew a picture with a pit-head and a van with scabs and police with riot-shields and batons. What really shook me was — it had the same tree in it.

Janet — Nevison



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IF you remember, at the beginning of the strike, they were arresting people for shouting "SCAB!" Well, they arrested my mate Jimmy. He's only right little, and he said to the officer:

"Are you telling me you can arrest somebody for what they think?"

"No, of course not," said the officer.

"Well, I think you're a bastard."

Alan — Wakefield

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"YES," I said, "Scargill is a bastard. But he's *our* bastard."

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TED Scott, the secretary of Stillingfleet, was in court later in the day to face charges on his own account but at this point he was there as a witness in the trial of nine miners. The defence lawyer led off:

"Now, Mr Scott, you were arrested on the same day as the accused and taken to York."

"Yes."

"You were placed in a cell with some of them. Can you indicate which."

"Yes. Him on the end with the long blonde hair," Ted said, pointing to a lad about 26 years old.

"Did the police in any way single this man out for special treatment?"

"Yes, they took him out three times."

"Now, can you think of any reason they might do that?"

"Well, I thought it was because he was so good looking. They only took me out once."

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The brush is mightier than the baton.

Over 6,000 pickets have been sufficiently injured to need hospital treatment. This compares with 1,300 for the police.

WE got this invitation to speak to the Hull Corporation about the strike, did Ken and me. We started off early but when we got to the council offices it was clear that we were going to get VIP treatment. A place had been reserved for us in the official car park and when we walked into the Mayor's Parlour we were introduced by a bloke who stood by the door shouting our names.

We met the Mayor and senior members of the corporation and were just settling down to a meal when a uniformed official entered carrying an official looking envelope on a silver tray. He handed it to the chief officer, who read it. With an "excuse me, I must make an urgent telephone call," he exited.

Five minutes later he returned:

"A most interesting telephone call. It was the Hull police saying that they had heard that two striking miners had got into the Guild Hall and were wondering if we needed any help."

Robin — Stillingfleet

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A STRIKING miner who is serving a prison sentence was told to move coal and coke for the prison boiler. "No way can I do that, I'm a striking miner." He didn't. He lost his remission.

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THERE was about twenty of us arrested down at Babbington, and when they got us down to the police cells, there was that much confusion, the police didn't know who was who. When they called out one lad's name, for him to come forward, somebody shouted out "I'm Spartacus." And then all the other lads shouted "I'm Spartacus." Every time they tried to find out who was who, we all shouted "I'm Spartacus."

The police didn't know if they were coming or going.

Mark — Stillingfleet

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We went down to picket at Kellingley on Wednesday, and it was my birthday. The coppers were very friendly with us that day. When I told one of them it was my birthday, he went back to their van where they brew up their tea, and came back with a little slice of fruit-cake which he presented to me.

Marlene — Belle Isle

OUT AND ABOUT

Marches and rallies have been great morale boosters.

The first big women's rally in Barnsley in May was the starting point for many of us, and for those who were there it will remain one of the high points of the strike. By the time of the national rally in London on August 11th there were about twenty groups in our area, and we organised nine coach-loads to go down. It was an uplifting experience, but also a very exhausting one — especially for those who weren't used to this kind of thing, and had come in high heels.

The National Women's March was the first time some of us had ever been out of Yorkshire. For others, the strike opened up possibilities of travel even further afield.



Martin Jenkinson

Barnsley

FOR me the national women's demonstration at Barnsley in May was a day of real decision. Julie, my thirteen-year-old, was going to march with the jazz band at the Sherburn Gala — it was its first time out — and all my mothering instincts told me I ought to be there. But my feelings against pit closures told me I must go to Barnsley.

"Get to t'back, get to t'back, get to t'back," chanted some women mischievously grinning at the Barnsley NUM official, Derek 'Chocker'

Reeves, as he tried to join the front ranks of the march. He shrugged his shoulders and joined the large party of miners, carrying NUM banners, waiting to take their places at the back of the queue. The *Women Against Pit Closures* group in Barnsley had organised a national rally and there was no doubt about the order of priorities.

Groups of women lined up in random order, greeted friends and exchanged stories. Kent and South Wales and some women from Notts mingled with the Yorkshire women — smiles and comradeship — young and old. I doubt if there is another single issue upon which you could have united these women but the strength of their commitment to this common cause was unshakeable.

A whistle blew and we set off led by a Barnsley girls jazz band. My thoughts went out to my daughter in her new uniform at the Sherburn Gala.

The march was to start from that car park just up from the Miners' Offices and at the back of the church. As we turned the corner just up by the new police station we walked into hundreds of people. There were stickers and placards saying 'Victory to the Miners' everywhere. Some of the banners were really beautiful, you could recognise that a lot of time and thought had gone into them.

Crowds lined the street corners, people waving and applauding. Behind our group the women from South Wales kept bursting into song, making some of us feel alternately elated and tearful — familiar tunes sung in unfamiliar language but recognisable as songs of working people.

As we filed up the stairs into the Civic Hall all you could see were thousands of heads and above them banners waving from side to side. The colours were magnificent. Many of the T-shirts carried slogans which mentioned specific pits. It was as if the women were saying "this is the pit I'm from and I'm proud of it."

As people started to file onto the platform the hall filled with women chanting, "We will win, we will win, we will win."

The chairperson was Ann Hunter. Clearly overawed by the situation, she nevertheless gave a heartfelt speech to thank the women for their contribution to the movement so far. Lorraine Bowler was next — married to a miner — she had never spoken on a platform before but spoke clearly and sincerely and got a laugh from the audience talking about the rows over who minds the kids and who goes picketing. Things will never be quite the same after this: "He'd rather do a month on nights than mind the kids!"

The next speaker was a woman from Hatfield — Maureen Douglass. Used to speaking, she gave a reasoned political analysis of the emergence of the women's support groups.

Bravely, she mentioned the fact that some of our male comrades have a lot to learn about emancipation, they still call after women in the street and make embarrassing gestures.

Each speaker had to wait for the audience to recover and the women's voices rang round and round in the hall. It is not often that the National President of the NUM is unable to make himself heard — but Arthur Scargill had to wait a full ten minutes before the crescendo of singing and chanting began to subside. As he was speaking spontaneous singing broke out from the floor a few times and he had to pause and wait. He was clearly overwhelmed by the emotional tensions in the hall but, even so, treated the audience to one of his fine performances as an orator, to the obvious enjoyment of both platform and audience.

At about three thirty the rally ended and I made my way back to the car. There was a lot to remember. I knew that I had seen something remarkable and it had given me more strength than I knew I had. Things would never be the same again.

Sheila, Jean — Sherburn, Silkstone

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FIFTY-FOUR of us went down to London from Selby for the big women's march and rally on August 11th. Our bus was sponsored by COHSE and NUPE. It was a very hot day, and one of the girls fainted from standing and waiting in the narrow street where we assembled. As she fell, she hit her head, and ended up in hospital.

It was fantastic walking through the streets of London, singing and shouting. Some people were throwing black rosettes and black ribbons. One policeman seemed to be deliberately treading on them. We had been told the march would be about two miles, but it turned out to be more like five. Next day we had blisters on our feet and we were hoarse from all the singing. We got split up and lost and found again, and we went to look for our friend in hospital, but she'd discharged herself. We were shattered, but it was a great morale booster.

Sandra — Selby

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Martin Jenkinson

The London March on August 11 was a great morale booster, but hard on the feet.

SOME of the women were coming in with blisters as big as dustbin lids.

Nurse on the First Aid Tent

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Manchester

OUR group only started just before Christmas, so we didn't go on any of the big women's rallies.

The first rally we went on as a group was in Manchester on January 19th. It was great.

There was a lass behind us singing through a megaphone 'We're Arthur Scargill's barmy army' and other songs, which we all joined in.

As soon as we opened us mouths, everybody knew we were from Yorkshire, and they were really friendly. After that, we went collecting on the streets, and we raised £42. I noticed we got a lot of support from coloured people. But one woman was very posh and snooty — the type that has a gold lamé shopping bag. "Support the miners? Will I hell!" she said.

Mind you, it was a big morale booster to see all the support we were getting from ordinary people all over. In fact there was even a message scrawled in the ladies' toilet in Manchester: 'Lesbians support the miners'.

Sandra, Barbara, Brenda and Margaret — Wildwood

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London

THEY asked some of us women to go down to London and address a number of meetings. We were excited and terrified at the same time. Most of us had never spoken before and to put it mildly, we were scared stiff.

We were given a great welcome. People couldn't have been kinder. Ken Livingstone let us use his office for the day. One time we were so tired that two of us took off our shoes and sat on the pavement edge sharing a piece of bread and cheese. A man came up, read our badges, asked if we were miners' wives, and went into a pub and came out with two pints. The Londoners we met couldn't have been kinder.

Well, one big meeting was the Sunday morning at the GLC. Audrey Wise's daughter, Valerie, was in the chair and the hall was packed. We fielded a mixed team of women but I for one was totally unprepared for the ordeal. Nevertheless we got stuck in, read through our notes, delivered our speeches, and sat back to field the questions. Most of us are better at answering back than making set speeches.

The first speaker was the type who wasn't there to find out something but to tell the gathering what he knew. He was probably a lecturer of some sort. Well what with his alternative economic strategy and his alternative plan for coal, we were totally lost. When he sat down I for one

hadn't a clue what he was on about and felt a bit ignorant and at the same time was angry at him for sending up such a complicated question.

The chair got us out of a spot by recognising our difficulty and straight way asking for another question. The second one was easy, it was about facts not theories, and so were the majority which followed it. As our confidence grew I became determined to give him an answer.

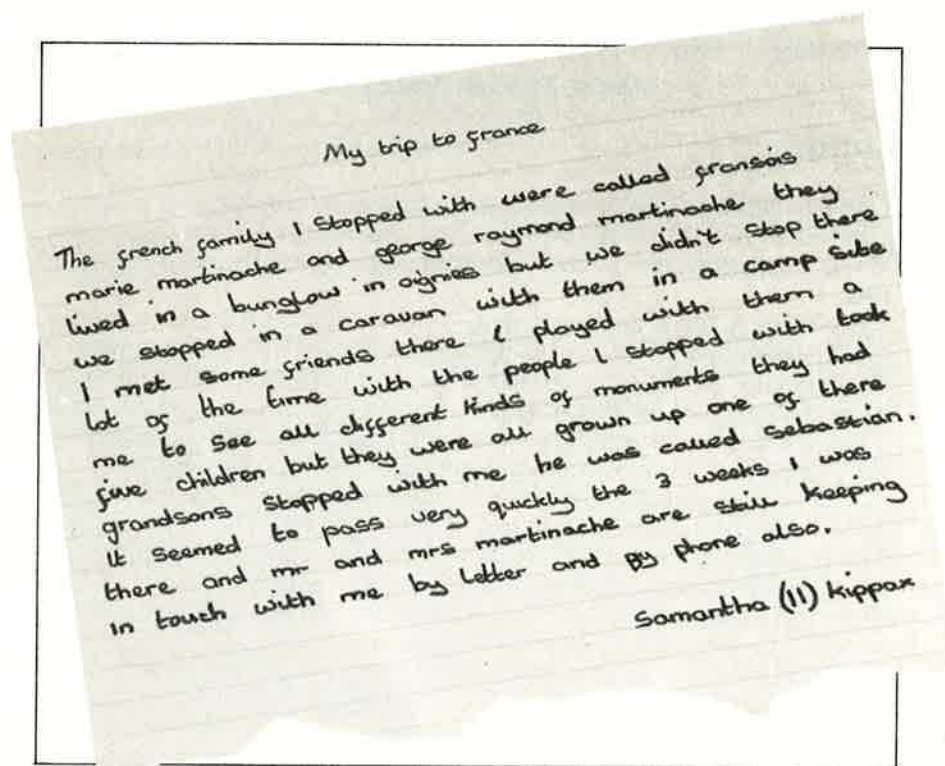
Just as ——— was about to ask for a final question I touched her arm and said "Hang on love, I'd like to answer the first questioner."

I singled him out in the audience and spoke directly to him:

"Now flower, I'd like to get this straight. We're miners' wives. That doesn't mean that we're simple, only that we're not used to many of the phrases you used. I, for one, admit to not knowing a lot of the words and most of the concepts. But this I promise you: I've had three months up to now on the picket lines and my political education is being acquired at a gallop. Stick around and I'll come back in a year's time and answer all your questions."

Betty — Woolley

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Canada

THE Canada fund raising trip was no holiday. I set off from home for Heathrow at three o'clock on Saturday morning, and arrived in North America 16 hours later in the middle of the afternoon, tired out. They immediately flew me off to one meeting, gave me a coffee and a bun before rushing me on to another. By the time I reached the Sudbury banquet, a sort of social with heaps of food, I had passed through the eating barrier and didn't even fancy a bun. After that it was a 600 miles airplane journey with another stranger waiting to meet me — still no food — before a meeting and a car journey back to Toronto. This went on day after day. In one period I went forty hours with only three hours sleep. One day I flew 1700 miles to address one meeting.

They swear differently out there to what we do here. It's all 'Goddamn' and 'Son of a bitch'.

Well, on the fifth day having travelled 8000 miles and addressed fourteen meetings I was slouched on a chair in an outer office of some trade unionist. He was on the phone to another full-time official in another district. It was all "Yep, yep, yep, son-of-a-bitch, yep." Then I distinctly heard him say, "Keep the Goddamn son-of-a-bitch tired and hungry and you've got a fireball on your hands."

Ken — Stillingfleet

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Bradford

WHEN we heard that we had been invited to Munster, Germany, with the kids, early in the New Year, we panicked a bit because we had nothing to wear. Roberta, a black lass from Bradford, and like us a bit on the large side as you might say, reckoned that she could kit us out. She'd got some lovely clothes and what with trying them on and generally fooling about we were so late that we decided to stay overnight. Well, all three of us had to get into one bed. Two went to the top and I slept so that my feet came up between their heads.

What a night. We were all heavyweights. I was just dropping off to sleep when I heard Mary whisper, "Now we'll see what Sheila does with her teeth." I didn't sleep after that.

Sheila — Sherburn

NATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANISATION

We are determined that after the strike is over, the gains and achievements of the women will not be lost. Many of us have decided to keep our local groups going, to campaign for improvements in health, education, and other community facilities. The National Women Against Pit Closures organisation has helped to co-ordinate the big rallies and marches, and sponsored the Christmas appeal. It has also brought us together and given us the feeling of belonging to a movement bigger than our community-based groups, and we hope we will be able to build on this after the strike.

I HAVE spoken to other women and it is obvious that we are all of the same mind. We know that the support groups which have been formed since the strike began must carry on after it is over, for the strength and solidarity which has emerged can be used to the benefit of others. The voices of the women of the mining communities must be raised in defence of people who face similar situations. Their power must be applied to bring about the changes which will benefit the working classes.

At the present it is most important to secure the support we desperately need. We can get it by reaching the people who have chosen not to give us whole hearted support. We must make them see that a victory for us is a victory for them; for their jobs, their communities and their country. We all, as working class people, owe it to the memory of those who fought in the past to give us the homes and benefits we have had until recently, to fight a government who, by their actions and policies, seem intent to keep us underfoot, underpaid and underprivileged. Support and solidarity is now as urgent as never before.

Pat — Sherburn

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First National Conference

THE first National Conference for Women Against Pit Closures was held at Northern College near Barnsley in June, and I went down to represent our area and find out what was going on with other women's groups.

I was a bit apprehensive at first, I didn't know what to expect. There were lots of other women arriving from all over, and I suppose they felt the same. It was the first time for everybody.

That evening we had a social, and had a good chance to meet and talk to the others. We met up with some Welsh women, also some Geordies and Scots. There were two there from Leicester as well. I was a bit choked up

when I learnt they had only thirty men on strike down there — they call them the Dirty Thirty — and I thought of what they have to put up with. We all linked arms and sang our heads off. It was great.

They really looked after us well — the rooms were clean and comfortable and the food was good, especially the breakfast.

Next morning we had a big meeting to discuss plans for the National Rally in August. It was such a good atmosphere at the meeting, sitting there with all those women from different places, and all planning for the same thing.

It's the first time I've been away without my husband in six years of marriage. But he's 100% behind what I'm doing. He just said, "You go and enjoy yourself." And I did.

Rita — Featherstone

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The social at the first National Women's Conference — the atmosphere was exuberant, with songs, poems, stories, and plans for the future from women right across the country.

The Second National Conference

ME and Sheila were elected to go as delegates to the second National Women's Conference, which was held in Chesterfield on November 10th and 11th. It was a great weekend, meeting all the women from other groups right across the country. We had such a lot to talk about. We slept in a cricket pavilion, with guards on the gates to keep the press away.

On the Sunday we had a big meeting at which we hammered out the aims of the National Women's Organisation. These are:

- 1) To ensure victory to the NUM in their present struggle to prevent pit closures and protect mining communities for the future;
- 2) To further strengthen the organisation of women's groups which has been built up during the 1984 miners' strike;
- 3) To establish a national women's organisation in all areas;
- 4) To develop a relationship between the NUM and the women's organisation at all levels;
- 5) To campaign on issues that affect mining communities, particularly peace, jobs, health and education;
- 6) To promote working class education for women;
- 7) To publicise all the activities of the National Women's Organisation at all levels.

Kim — Castleford

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The National Appeal

ONE of our worst fears was Christmas. How was Santa to visit our children? Who was going to tell them maybe Santa had lost his way? Was Margaret Thatcher going to be responsible for taking away the magic of Christmas and making Santa redundant? (Not even Santa's safe from her chopping block.)

This is an urgent appeal for a huge Christmas bonus for the striking miners and their families. A little money goes a long way.

£300 will provide a Christmas dinner for 200.

£50 will finance a Christmas party in a Miners' Welfare Hall.

£10 will buy a turkey.

£5 will buy a toy.

£2 will fill a stocking for a miner's child.

Please send your donation now!

The response to this appeal was magnificent. From the bottom of our hearts we thank each and every one of you for your wonderful contributions, which made us all realise even more so that we weren't alone and you truly cared.

Up to 31st January £394,678 was raised by the Christmas National Appeal and money was still coming in.

WIDER PERSPECTIVES

In the coal fields there is new brand of women, who are only as old as the strike, who have won the admiration of people the world over. They have fought, not behind their men, but shoulder to shoulder with them. When histories of the strike are written all will agree that "The Women were glorious".

Personal

DURING the first weeks of the strike I was working as a manageress in a cafe in the Ridings in Wakefield. At this time the buses were also on strike. It was taking me about two hours to get to work because I had to go from Pontefract to Leeds and from there catch a train to Wakefield.

One Monday morning a reporter from Radio Leeds came in and asked me to give an interview about how the strikes were affecting trade. Well, I didn't want to give an interview and sent him away but after half an hour he returned and talked me around to saying something.

Well, I explained that things had been a bit slack but when he said "I expect you're against the strikes" I answered, "No I'm not. Both of them are just and I can put up with a bit of inconvenience."

Half an hour after he left the manager from the main restaurant in Leeds turned up unexpectedly. He'd heard the broadcast and was not pleased at all. It seems that I was not required to express opinions that might reflect on the business. I said I was sorry but I was asked a straight question and had given a straight answer. He said he understood and then reached in his pocket and pulled out a typed redundancy notice. It appears I was not being sacked for what I had said about the strike but because trade was slack and someone had to go.

I hadn't been there long enough to take the case to an industrial tribunal so I took a fortnight's money and left.

Betty — Pontefract

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I SUFFER from agoraphobia, and I'd been virtually housebound for thirteen years before the strike started. I couldn't even go to the shop on my own. My husband and son are both miners, so when the kitchen started up in the Church Hall at Hightown they persuaded me to volunteer. I was a bit nervous about the idea, but I came down and did a bit of washing up and got talking to the other women, and it did me a world of good.

Since then I've hardly missed a day and I really enjoy it. It's a marvellous atmosphere, everyone is so friendly. Whenever anyone's got to go to the shops I always volunteer — at first people who didn't know me couldn't understand why. I've been to psychologists and psychiatrists

and even spent money trying to find a cure, but this strike is the only thing that's done it. The only way I can explain it is — it's like being reborn. I know that I've got to keep active after the strike. I've already joined the Labour Party, and we're going to start a women's section.

Pat — Castleford

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SOLIDARIETA' CON I MINATORI INGLESII

Da otto mesi, nonostante intimidazioni e limitazioni dei diritti sindacali, i minatori inglesi scioperano contro l'intransigenza del Governo Thatcher e dell'Ente Minerario Britannico, che intendono chiudere 20 miniere e licenziare decine di migliaia di lavoratori.

Questa lunga lotta per l'occupazione che, ha prodotto situazioni di vera indigenza tra i minatori, ha bisogno - anche nel caso auspicato del raggiungimento di un accordo - della concreta solidarieta di lavoratori e democratici.

Le forze sociali e politiche democratiche, i Comitati per la Pace che, insieme a singoli cittadini, hanno dato vita al "COMITATO PADOVANO DI SOLIDARIETA' CON I MINATORI BRITANNICI", fanno appello per una vasta ed urgente sottoscrizione per:

- inviare fondi e generi di prima necessita (cibo, vestiti pesanti) al **Sindacato dei minatori**;
- ospitare un centinaio di bambini, figli dei minatori, entro l'anno.

I fondi possono essere versati sul c.c.p. n. 17490350 intestato ad Alessandro Sbrissa, Padova.

I generi di abbigliamento si raccolgono presso la Camera del Lavoro in Via del Padovanino, 1 a Padova.

Comitato di solidarieta
con i minatori inglesi

ICG - CSE - MS di Padova - AGL - GP - PD - PUP - PL - ANP - ANO - Circoli per la pace - Pace a Milano Padova, Roma, Bologna, Padova, Firenze, Torino, Genova, Venezia, Verona, Vicenza, Mantova, Brescia, Bergamo, Sondrio, Lecco, Milano, Monza, Varese, Como, Varese, Novara, Aosta, Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Liguria, Lombardia, Trentino, Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli, Umbria, Marche, Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Basilicata, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Sardegna, Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Liguria, Lombardia, Trentino, Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli, Umbria, Marche, Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Basilicata, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Sardegna.

Richard Van Riel

"When I saw these posters in a square in Padua I wanted to weep" — Rachel.

WHEN I was a girl I lived in South Kirby and learned from an early age that when the chips are down there is nobody better and more reliable than miners. If there was no bread you didn't starve, if there was no coal you didn't freeze. In Sherburn in a very short time, much less than the twenty five years it's supposed to take for you to be accepted, we have created something similar. We have organised everything from a pantomime to a flying picket and achieved a community spirit. I only hope that those who resented our coming in for work have understood the lesson: *United you stand, Divided you fall.*

Sheila — Sherburn

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I USED to be fanatical about housework. In fact it was almost an obsession — once I'd cleaned the house, I wanted it to stay clean. I didn't want anybody in the house in case they messed it up.

When the strike started and I got involved in the food kitchen, I tried at first to do everything as I had done before, but I just couldn't cope. I was too busy to do the housework as well as being active in the group and working at the kitchen.

There was a week or more when nobody did anything at all in the house. It looked terrible. Now we have a new system. Whoever comes in first of an evening, whether it's myself or my husband or one of my daughters, does whatever they feel they can do. The house doesn't get cleaned as thoroughly, but we're a much happier household.

Kim — Castleford

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WHEN the strike began I had been on anti-depressants for about twelve years. I had always been a weight watcher from the time I was eighteen but by 1984 my weight was my obsession. Life was an endless round of dieting, losing a little weight, then gaining more as I broke my diet and then depression. I made my family miserable because of my misery and there was no way out. It was a vicious circle of depression leads to eating, eating leads to depression.

A new development had also occurred. Sometimes in the middle of the night I was overcome by a feeling of claustrophobia. When it came on I had to get out of the house quickly and so it became common for me to wander in the garden in the early hours of the morning.

Looked at logically I could see that I have nothing to be depressed about. I had a lovely big house, three lads, a husband and all of the labour saving devices one could wish for but I was depressed, mentally ill, and I knew that I would have to cope with it for the rest of my life.

Early on in the strike, before I became totally involved, things seemed to get worse. I used to cry quietly to myself, "For God's sake somebody please help me."

Then, suddenly, when we realised that the strike wasn't going to end quickly I found myself getting involved with something outside the

home. I had little confidence but quickly I found that I had some skills that were needed. I was in at the deep end and this was the antidote. The support group was the best thing that ever happened to me. Very soon I was helping to organise all sorts of fund raising events and the thanks we got from our community gave an enormous boost to my confidence. Also it became apparent that people had faith in my ability. I was asked to do things that a few weeks previously I would not contemplate. I hadn't time to think of myself I had too much to do. Consequently I broke the depression and all because of a tragic dispute which gave me reason to stand up and fight.

Pat — Sherburn

I TURNED up at this house. "Excuse me, love, have you got an egg to spare?" I was covered in Coal Not Dole badges. I could see that they took pity on me as a starving striker's wife. Straightway I took the egg, thanked them, lifted the car bonnet, unscrewed the water cap, broke the egg, separated the white from the yoke and poured the former in. Not a hungry miner's wife but a coal mining woman with a leaking radiator.

Betty — Woolley

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I HAD been in the village for nine months when the strike began. I wasn't at the first meeting but joined when someone came to the door with a food parcel. I went along to a meeting and got stuck in. My background was "true-blue", my parents dedicated Conservatives, and although the chain was broken when I married my husband against their wishes, (another link went when he became a miner), I didn't know much about politics. I know a lot now and I've learnt on my feet.

Ann — Sherburn

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THEY call our driver Brian. Well, we're always on about what we're going to do when the strike's over. How nothing'll be the same again. He listens patiently.

"When this lot's over," he'll say, "I'm going into gynaecology or midwifery or something like that. I've travelled with you lot so often and listened so long that I've got all the theory. When the strike's over, as I see it, I might as well get down to the practicals."

Margaret — Wistow

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THE other day, one of the miners in the kitchen said: "We men didn't know what we'd started when we started this strike, and win or lose, we'll come to rue the day."

Kim — Castleford

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I WENT down for a conference in London, and on the way back our minibus was full, so I had to hitch a ride with some lasses from Selby. Their spirits were so high, they were singing and shouting all the way, I thought to myself, "We mustn't ever let these lasses down." With all the suffering and hardship they've had to live through, their determination was as strong as ever, and it bucked my spirits up no end just to be with them — with people like that on our side I couldn't conceive of defeat.

Traditionally, working class women haven't really been allowed to have their own feelings, but a lot of things have changed during the strike. I've always known it's been there, because I've always had faith in the working class. But I wonder whether Thatcher and McGregor realise what they've unleashed — they've woken a sleeping bear. I don't think they'll ever go back to the way they were.

Les — Allerton Bywater

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Political

Why Mam, Why?

Why don't the wheels go round, mam?
Why don't the wheels go round?
'Cause there comes a time when a man must stand
And take his destiny in his own two hands
And with all the courage that he commands
Say "Don't let the wheels go round".

Why is the table bare, mam?
Why is the table bare?
'Cause the strike's been long, and its made us poor
Though they've used the coppers, and bent the law
It's the nation's future we're fighting for,
That's why the table's bare.

Why does me dad hate scabs, mam?
Why does me dad hate scabs?
'Cause a scab's a blackleg, a scab's a swine
Who has no respect for the picket line
And he ain't no brother of yours, or mine,
That's why your dad hates scabs.

Doesn't the coal board care, mam?
Doesn't the coal board care?
They have no compassion for you and I
Let our children starve, and the pickets die
There's a sight more chance that you'll see pigs fly
Than you'll see the coal board care.

Overhill

Why don't the wheels go round, mam?
Why don't the wheels go round?
Our fathers fought, and their fathers too
For an industry that we'll leave to you
Just remember lad, it's not them, but you
That makes Britain's wheels go round.

Jean — Kippax

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WE have been described by some as the 'enemy within'. Now that hurt. Whose enemy I want to know. Our fathers created this industry with blood, sweat and tears and to let it go without a fight would prove ourselves not worthy of their struggles.

Enemy was their word not mine. Enemy denotes that a state of war exists. Well if that is what they consider it to be, it's as well we know their minds. We know them so they had better know us and make no mistake who we are. We are the people of whom Churchill said — (I've made some small alterations):

Even tho' large tracts of industry have fallen into the grip of
privatisation and all the odious apparatus of international capital
We shall not flag or fail;
We shall go on to the end;
We shall fight at the pit gates
and in the police courts;
We shall fight with growing strength;
We shall defend our industry
whatever the cost shall be;
We shall never surrender.

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Martin Jenkinson

Peace people, unemployed workers and striking miners — it's the same fight.

SHE'S going for the Trident system and she needs three times as many warheads as she has got now. Well, you don't make bombs from by-products of coal fired power stations but you do from nuclear ones. She wants plutonium, that's why she wants to scrap our mines and concentrate on nuclear power. We'll not stand for it.

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I WENT down to Greenham in 1983 and took part in the demonstration down there. For the first time in my life I experienced police harassment. Quite a few women started shaking the fence. We weren't near enough to shake the fence, but I was with them all the way because I felt that if they wanted to break that fence down they should do, to say we don't want this, we're not going to have it. We were immediately charged by mounted police from behind, and that is the first time I have experienced police harassment and police brutality, and a police helicopter came down very low and whipped up all the dirt in our faces. They came with the dogs and stood at the fence; it's the first time I've been anywhere where I've seen such organised police activity.

Since the miners' strike began I've been on the four-day *Mines Not Missiles* march, and I've learnt much more about the peace movement. I never did agree with nuclear power stations and the dangers they bring, when we've got the natural resources of coal. Why should we put men on the dole when we could dig for coal, and close those evil things down? I have also learnt that the waste products from the power stations are used to make nuclear bombs and missiles, which I didn't know before, and now personally I feel that a lot of the nuclear power stations are just a front for manufacturing arms. I have also learnt about the conditions of the men that actually mine uranium, which is radioactive, how their family life suffers, children being born deformed, and so on, and how Britain illegally imports uranium against any United Nations agreement or anything else. If it was Russia or another foreign power they would be really screaming and trying to create public opinion up against it.

Probably I was a lot more liberal than some of the women, but on the first day they were a little bit nervous, because they had read the press and seen television and they just felt that people at Greenham were lesbians. And during the course of the march they suddenly realised that they are women just like us. We are fighting for our jobs, they are fighting for peace, but between us there is a great link-up. I was very pleased to see miners' wives that had never even thought about nuclear power or the women at Greenham, saying to me, "Well, I'm going to go back home and I'm going to tell the rest of the women in my village what a great job they are doing and how good they have been to us on the march." So I think gradually it's going to have a snowball effect, that miners' wives will talk to other miners' wives and some will talk to other people, so we're going to have a great link-up between the peace movement and miners.

The thing that thrilled me was that four of the Greenham women who

had been on the *Mines Not Missiles* march actually appeared on our picket line, and it was really nice, because they were coming and saying, "Look we are supporting you, we supported you on the march, we are supporting you on your picket lines, you come to Greenham and support us," and they went up with us onto the picket line. I think that in a way they have a calming effect on us, because the miners' wives have been in a long struggle, we are tired, frustrated and they come along, and they support and calm us, which is nice. We just work together.

Betty — Woolley

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Martin Jenkinson

*You ask me 'will we lose?' Well I can't answer, friend,
The state has turned against us all its might.
But when the cause is just, no matter what the end,
We have no choice, we simply have to fight.*



This book about the miners' strike of 1984-1985 was written during the strike by those who took part.

More than fifty women (and some men) from mining communities in Yorkshire have contributed their stories, their feelings and their achievements. And whatever the eventual outcome of the strike, there can be no doubt that for many of the women who took part, it has been a victory.

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