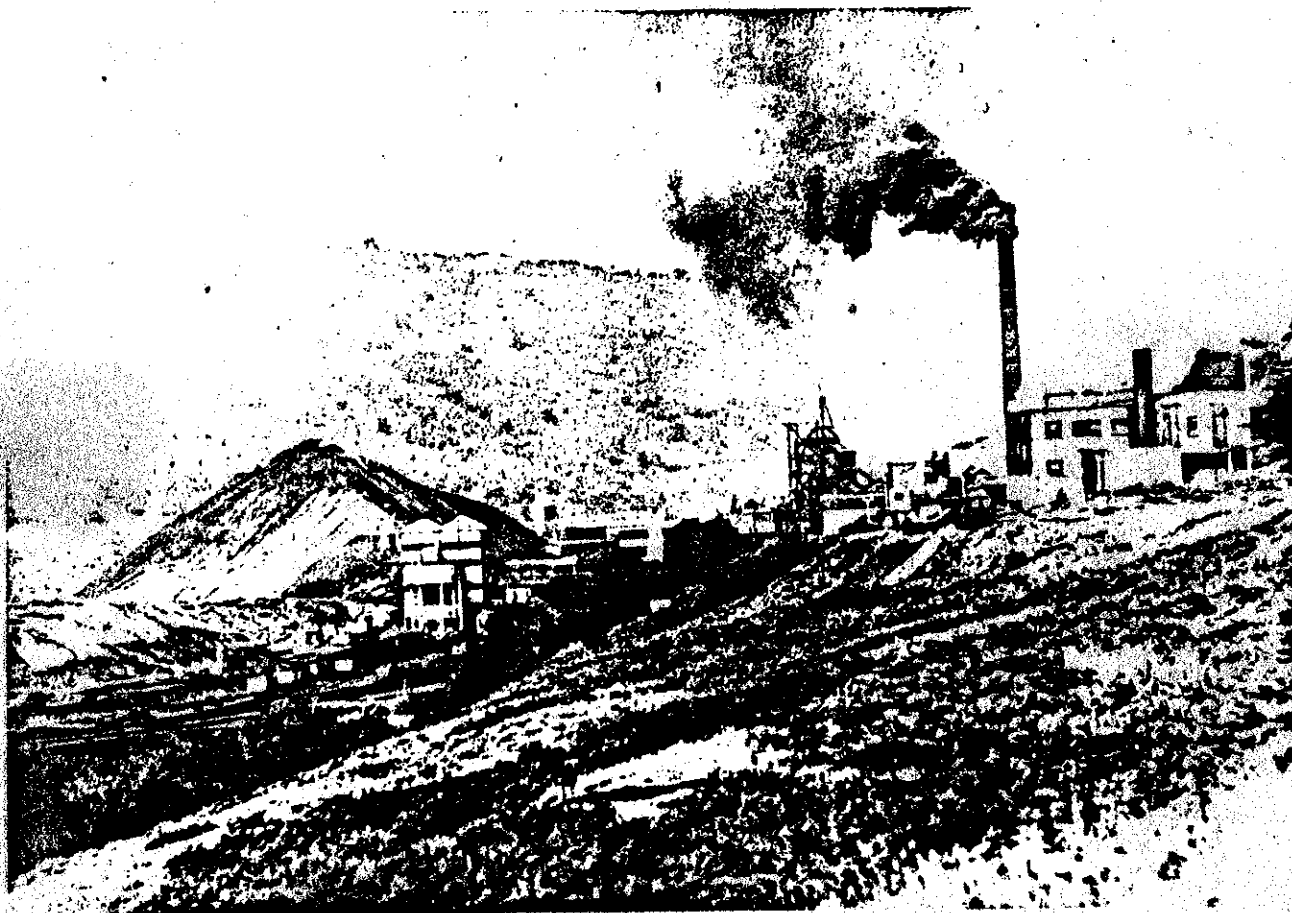


'Stay In' Strike

50th. Anniversary



Nine Mile Point Colliery

Report on the 'Stay In' Strike

Sat. Oct. 12th. - Sat. Oct. 19th. 1935

by R. J. Potter

BIBLIOGRAPH

Western Mail - South Wales Argus

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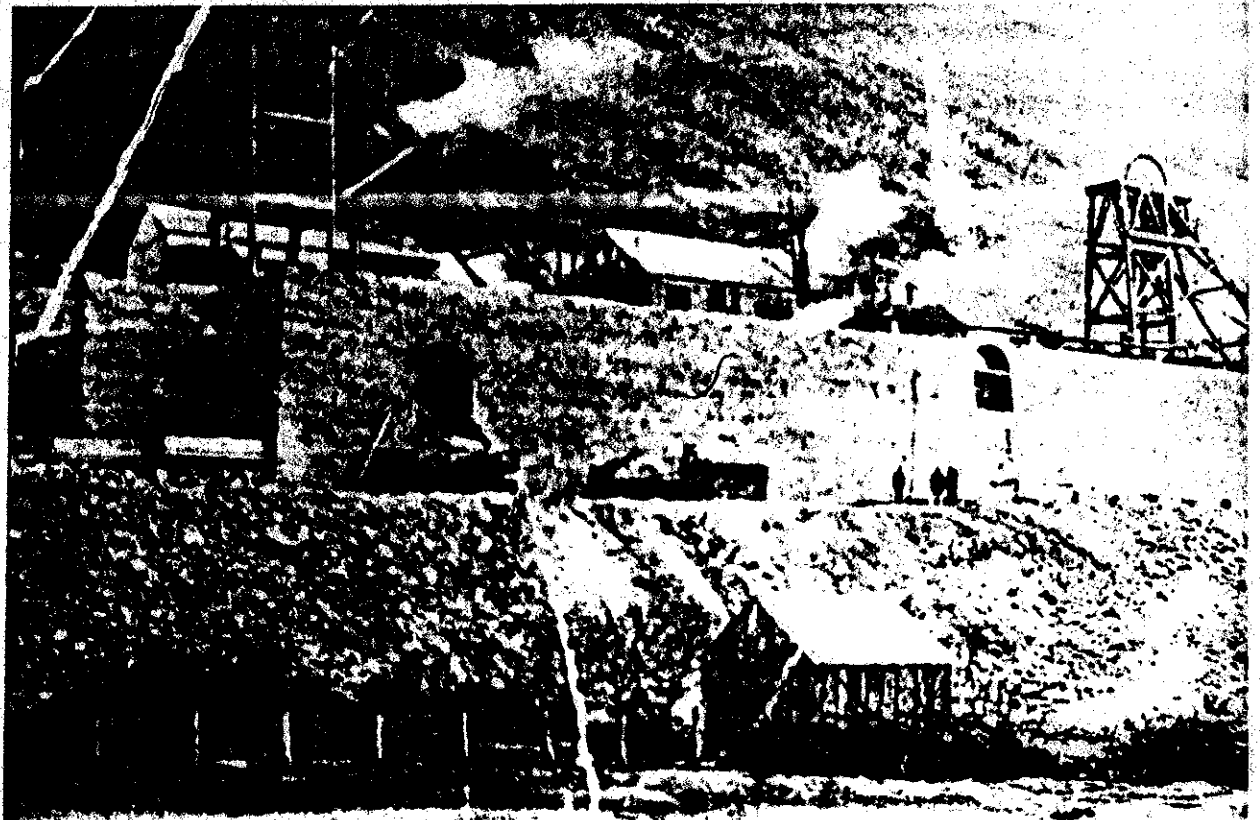
Pino and Sarah Lusardi, Risca Photocopying Studio.

I am grateful to Mr. Lusardi for his financial assistance in producing this report.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

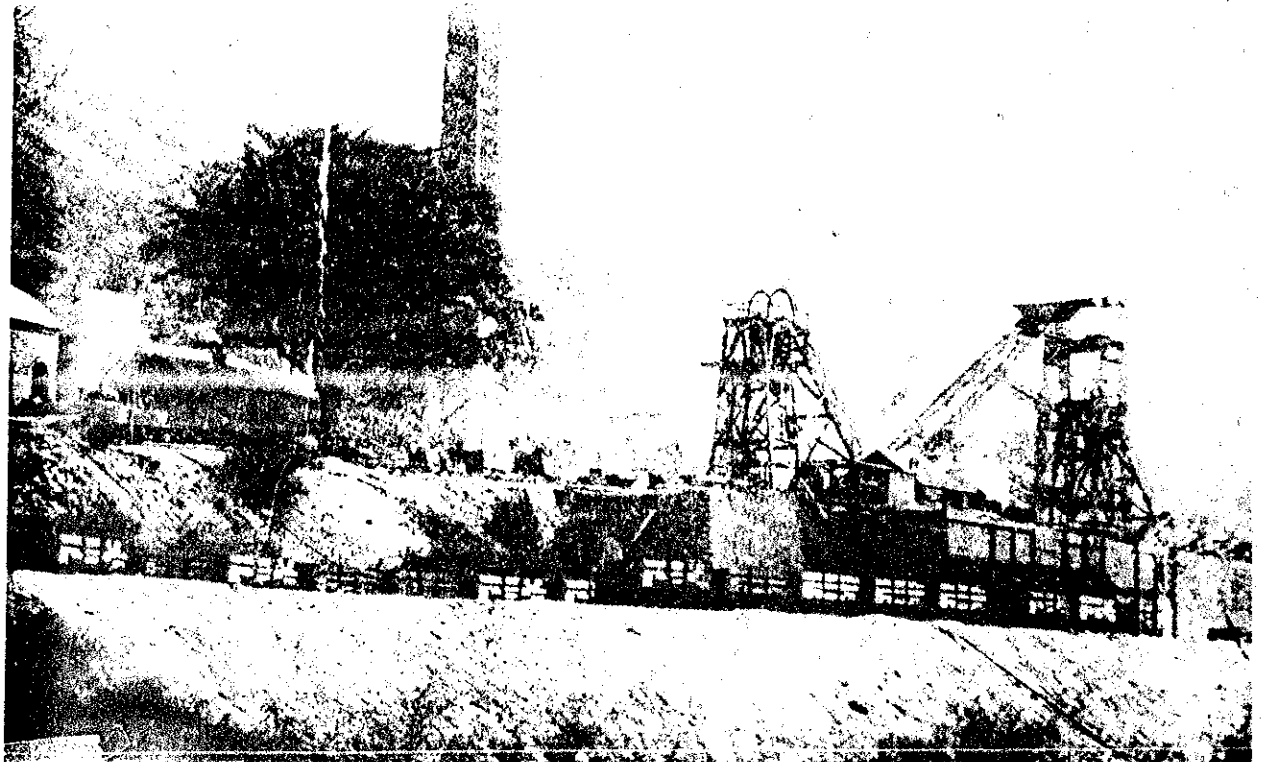
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Coronation Colliery.

1a.



2a

Foreword

During the time I was researching the history of Nine Mile Point one word to describe the strike breakers was in constant use in both newspapers and conversations I had with now-retired miners, that word being "Scab".

Although some 50 years have now elapsed since the "Stay In" strike, time has not diminished the note of scorn in the voices of men involved in the struggle when they talk of the "Scabs" who went to work.

At the turn of the century, a famous American author Jack London (1876-1916) penned his definition of a Scab.

"After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad and vampire, He had some awful substance left with which He made a scab.

A scab is a two-legged animal with a cork-screw soul, a water-logged brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have a heart, he carries a tumour of rotten principles.

When a scab comes down the street, men turn their backs, the angels weep in Heaven, and the Devil shuts the gates of Hell to keep him out.

No man has a right to scab so long as there is a pool of water to drown his carcass in, or a rope long enough to hang his body with. Judas Iscariot was a gentleman compared with a scab, for after betraying his Master he had character enough to hang himself. A scab has not.

Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, Judas Iscariot sold his Saviour for 30 peices of silver. Benedict Arnold sold his country for the promise of a commission in the British Army. The modern strike breaker sells his birthright, his country, his wife, his children and his fellow-men, for an unfilled promise from his employer.

Esau was a traitor to himself; Judas Iscariot was a traitor to his God; Benedict Arnold was a traitor to his country. A strike-breaker is a traitor to his God, his country, his wife, his family and his class. A real man never becomes a strike-breaker.

Of all the collieries in the South Wales Coal Field Nine Mile Point was certainly one of the most famous or infamous dependant on which side of the fence you belonged.

Since Burnyeat Brown, a Cardiff Company, first started to sink the pit in 1902 until it was finally closed in 1964, the colliery had a reputation for militancy far away in front of any other colliery in the South Wales Coal field, which in itself was already a very militant area.

The reason for this lies perhaps in the fact that the South Wales Miners Federation was formed in 1898 just four years before the colliery was sunk and as a new colliery the S. W. M. F. were determined to keep it a closed shop, the corner stone of the Union being to work in a colliery in South Wales you had to be a member of that Union.

So most of the trouble at Nine Mile Point was not the usual wrangle between Coal Owners and Workmen, but a political battle between rival unions.

To understand the feelings of the Committee running the S. W. M. F. we should briefly examine the structure of Trade Unionism in the South Wales Coal Field prior to the formation of the S. W. M. F.

In the 1890's the predominant union of the miners was the Miners Federation of Great Britain (M. F. G. B.), however, a founder member of this organisation was the Monmouth and South Wales District Association, in 1890 William Brace was elected miners agent for this Association and being a life-long opponent of the sliding scale, soon ran into conflict with other South Wales Associations, notably with William Abraham, known better as Mabon, a clash of personalities between the two men culminated in Mabon suing Brace for slander and was awarded £500 damages in 1893.

The next five years is an endless catalogue of trouble in the South Wales Coalfield, with police and the Military being called in to quell trouble and disorder throughout the coal field.

Strikes in various collieries lasting as long as four and five months were now becoming the norm with the miners invariably losing the day, however it taught the unions one lesson, their small local unions were too weak to oppose the Coal Owners so in 1898 Mabon and Brace settled their differences and joined forces to form the S. W. M. F. of which Mabon became President and Brace became Vice-President and affiliated to the M. F. G. B. in 1899.

So, for the first time, miners in South Wales were able to show a united front against the Owners of collieries in South Wales. This show of solidarity amongst miners obviously did not suit the coal owners and, under the pretext of freedom of choice and the inherent right of a man to work, tried to ensure they were not totally responsible for negotiations in the pits they owned. They encouraged miners

to belong to any Union of their choice. This resulted in a handful of miners in various pits joining other Unions. The Owners exploited this situation to the full.

During the 1926 General Strike the Coal Owners were given an opportunity to break the strike and the hold the S. W. M. F. had over them, one must remember that the so-called "General Strike" only lasted nine days then in a gigantic turn around there was a mass return to work, leaving the miners to carry on the battle alone.

In June of that year some miners in Wales, in common with other coal fields throughout the country, were slowly drifting back to work.

Working at the Raglan Colliery, Hoel-y-Cwm, Bridgend, at this time was a man called William Gregory, he approached a number of other miners and persuaded them to leave the "Fed" and return to work, needless to say, he was welcomed with open arms by the coal owners.

In January of that year the Taff Merthyr Steam Coal Co. had opened a new pit at Trelewis, encouraged by the owners Gregory went to the colliery and set up his own Union, which he called the "South Wales Miners Industrial Union".

This is somewhat of a grey area because it could well have been a continuation of the old "Spencer" Union which had long been a thorn in the "Feds" flesh.

What is clear Gregory now had a base to work from and his influence quickly spread. In June 1927 he registered the S. W. M. I. U. as an official union. He was soon firmly entrenched in Bedwas Colliery, in the Rhymney Valley, then he turned his attention to Nine Mile Point.

A two-year battle with the S. W. M. F. resulted in the infamous "baton charge" in February, 1929, as a result six S. W. M. F. members were sent to prison for:-

"With 700 others they unlawfully and riotously assembled to disturb the public peace and make riot and disturbance to the terror and alarm of the Kings subjects at Cwmfelinfach on February 5th, 1929.

In the years that followed there were still outbreaks of trouble with the Industrial Union and the S. W. M. F.; indeed the Industrial Union was obviously gaining support in South Wales because the number of men affiliated to it was on the increase and matters came to a head once again in 1935. Newspaper reports of the day said the "Storm Centre" this time was the Parc Colliery at Cwmparc, and on 7th October 1935 police had been drafted into the Rhondda to relieve the pressure on the local police.

So, once again, police were being used to escort miners to and from work. Shades of 1929 all over again.

At Nine Mile Point the number of I. M. U. members had increased from the 19 employed in 1929 to something like 80, not all local men because the coal owners were now bringing in miners from other areas by bus and train to work at the colliery, and once again miners at Nine Mile Point affiliated to the S. W. M. F. found themselves in conflict with the police, and once again Supt. Spendlove was called in.

The tactics used by the miners in 1929 were obviously of little use, proven by the increase in numbers of Non-Federation workers, and the bad press the S. W. M. F. was receiving. Perhaps the best example of this can be shown in comparing Nine Mile Point with Bedwas Colliery just a few miles away in the Rumney Valley. The Bedwas colliery was totally under the control of the I. M. U. and Gregory; indeed before you could be employed there you had to sign an agreement whereby you would have no dealings what-so-ever with the Federation, and your Union subscriptions would be deducted from your wages, at Nine Mile Point the Union (S. W. M. F.) was not allowed on the premises so subs were collected in a wooden hut built on the side of the mountain.

Yet the coal owners were repeatedly telling the press that the workforce could belong to any Union they wished.

Checking on reports and comments of this period I would jot down a few notes and read them back to old miners who were involved in these turbulent days, an adverse comment was invariably followed by "Ah! you read that in the Coal Owners Gazette"; their name for the Western Mail.

However, on to 1935 and the "Stay In" strike. Once again the coal field was on strike and I. M. U. members were receiving police escort to get them to work.

The main thorn in Gregory's side was obviously Nine Mile Point, I believe he was convinced, break the "Point" and he would break the Federation.

In the week leading up to the "Stay In Strike" some collieries were working normally, other particularly those owned by Ocean Co. had non-Federation men being escorted to work by police.

On Saturday, 5th October, 1935, under the heading "Call off the Strike" the following report appeared in the Western Mail:

It may be suggested to the executive of the S.W.M.F. that the time has come to "call off the strike", bringing discredit to the Trade Union Movement. Strike instituted for the purpose of compelling non-unionist to join the Federation.

The number of non-unionist is infinitesimal compared with the total of people employed.

The strike weapon is like a sledge hammer being operated to crack a nut.

It is not creditable to Trade Unionist or a self respecting body of labour leaders that tactics of this sort should be resorted to, the fact that the strike decision was arrived at after prolonged debate suggests that the Executive was evenly divided on the subject and the scales were tipped in favour of a strike policy by men of the strike-minded type - men who inherit the "principles" embodied in the notorious brochure "The miners next step", in which it was held to be proper to ruin the coalfield as a means to the achievement of the political aims professed by some of the moving spirits of the Federation.

If the strike continues it will be necessary to supplement the local police force by drafts from other areas, at a heavy cost to the ratepayers.

These men are expected to maintain an unflinching patience, tact and good humour, even in the most trying circumstances. The least lapse on their part would evoke the malicious animadversions of the Standing Joint Committee.

This report is, I am sure, one of the most biased reports I have ever read on any dispute, much publicity was given to the various collieries throughout South Wales of the fact that large numbers of police were being used to escort small numbers of miners to work, a typical example being the Parc Colliery at Cwmparc, where two miners had an escort of 130 police, much emphasis was also placed on the right of a man to work and belong to any union he chose, it is a pity that publicity was never given to pits such as Bedwas.

After numerous meetings in the week of October 7th between Unions and Owners, men working at Cory and United National owned collieries voted to return to work and after a recommendation from the Executive of the S. W. M. F. the men working at Ocean Coal Collieries, also returned, all-but reluctantly, to work.

By now the S. W. M. F. had paid out some £14,000 in strike pay, but still nothing had been resolved, because once again the "Scabs" were being escorted to the "Point", the figure quoted of men out on strike on 8th October was 291,470 and most of these had been out since early September, they were now at the crossroads of what to do next, strikes brought poverty and hardship, mass demonstrations were riots followed by prison sentences.

On Saturday, 12th October, 1935, the 6-2 shift at Nine Mile Point went to work as normal, and during the shift they were told that "Scab" labour from outside the district were being brought in to work the pit that afternoon. Tactics used by the S. W. M. F. to stop these outsiders reaching the colliery varied from placing a board studded with nails across the road at Ynysddu to stop buses, and pushing coping stones off bridges down onto the railway line to stop trains, all to no avail because the "Scabs" were at the colliery and preparing for the afternoon shift.

In the West Pit on R1 face this particular morning 13 men were working namely: Vince Miller, S. Davies, A. Cann, Percy James, Horace Morgan, Garnet Brown, Dai Curtis, Dai Jones, Charlie Woods, Bill Harris, Jonathan James, Will John Williams (Fishguard) and Arthur Harding.

In conversation with Vince Miller he related "We were walking towards pit bottom at the end of our shift and discussing what to do about the "Scabs" who were ready to come down the pit when we came up, when one of them said: "If we stay down they won't be able to come down" (and to this day he does not know who said it) but they could hardly have imagined the repercussions of it.

Much has been written about this period of time, some of it rubbish, some of it pure speculation, and even worse some reports romanticised about it, whereas in reality the men involved in the "Stay In" endured hardship and cold (particularly in the Rock Vein) in filthy conditions that any-one who has never worked underground could imagine.

On this Saturday morning word passed quickly around, the result being 78 men stayed down the pit.

Initial reports passed to the village that the men were stopping down the pit on hunger strike, but I have been assured by men involved that this was not their intention.

Indeed, this was resolved on the Sunday morning when Superintendent Spendlove went down the pit with a basket of food, which was accepted by the men.

One must give all due credit to Superintendent Spendlove for descending the pit because he was not unknown to the workforce of the "Point" since the "Baton Charge" of 1929.

Superintendent Baker was also at the pit head and reports suggest that he was all for sending the police down the pit, fortunately what can only be described as a stupid error of judgement was averted by the good sense of Mr. Davies, who, in the absence of Mr. Syd Jones (Miners agent for the district) persuaded Supt. Baker to allow Supt. Spendlove to go down the pit.

One can hardly imagine the repercussions if police had gone down the pit that day.

On the Sunday three of the "Stay Down Miners" came up the pit, one because of the death of a near relative; one because of the illness of a near relative; Mr. Sam White, aged 56, Of 19 Duffryn Terrace, Wattsville, came up because of illness and exhaustion. He stated: "They are all like crickets down there, and, if they are not taken ill, they will remain there. They are Britons".

Another error of judgement was made on the Monday. Totally misreading the attitude of the men, the owners allowed men to go down the pit to work and hopefully talk the men staying down to return to the surface with them, as a result instead of about 78 men down there were now over 200.

However, after some discussions, it was agreed to send the boys up.

All the boys returned to the surface except one, the exception being Sid Reagan of Wattsville, he was down for 130 hours, no one I have spoken to seems to know why he stayed down. At the time of the strike he was 15½ years of age.

Over the weekend Mr. Oliver Harris, Gen. Sec. S.W.M.F., together with Mr. Sidney Jones, met with Mr. Levi Phillips, Gen. Man. of United National Group of the Ocean Coal Co. at Wattstown. However, no progress was made.

The first information the public received on the strike was a report which appeared in the South Wales Argus on the Saturday evening, they were certainly quick off the mark because although the strike only started at 2 o'clock by 5.30 that same evening the Argus had a full report and on sale in the streets in 3½ hours.

At least in this first report no mention was made of a hunger strike.

The report stated:

150 S. W. M. F. men engaged on the morning shift at Nine Mile Point refused to ascend the shaft until 88 non-S. W. M. F. working on the same shift are stopped.

All members of the S. W. M. F. had presented themselves for employment but the Colliery Co. has so far only engaged 200.

A statement from Mr. W. J. Prosser, Sec. N. M. P. Lodge of the S. W. M. F. said; "There were 88 non-Fed men working at the colliery, this is an increase of last Wednesday's number, which was 55.

Wednesday was the day on which the strike ended.

The Company, he said, had been signing on non-Fed men and were content to do so.

Early in the year 1,600 men were employed at the colliery, but trade depression led to the closing of 3 districts in April, so that at the time of the stoppage only 800 men were employed. Of that number only 500 had been taken on since the strike."

The Non-Fed men go down the pit after the Fed. men and are brought up before the Fed men.

There will be a delegate conference of the lodges of the S. W. M. F. at Cardiff on Monday, and it is understood that the position at Nine Mile Point will be a subject of discussion.

Members of Gregory's Union were again brought to the pit on the Monday and with a heavy police escort from the train to the pit-head prepared to descend the East Pit, these men had once again been hand picked by Gregory from other areas, they were purported to be ordinary workmen, who's only aim was to earn a living, whereas in reality they were part of Gregory's band of strike breakers, picked for their size and ability to handle themselves if and when a rough house developed.

On Tuesday, 15th October, the following report appeared in the Western Mail:

"Monday was a day of comparative quiet on the Nine Mile Point Front.

The number of men staying in was variously computed the softest estimate was 200 men for the two pits, 140 in the West Pit where the whole thing started and about 60 of the Monday morning shift in the Rock Vein". It was also reported that inter-Union disputes had been going on for some years in the South Wales Coal Field.

Also published was a statement by the Colliery Company:

"No progress until normal conditions are established".

From enquiries made by Mr. Levi Phillips, the agent of United National Collierys Ltd. regarding the position at Nine Mile Point:

"It is apparent that on Saturday morning the men went to their work normally, but at the termination of the shift 78 men refused to leave the pit. Of these 78 men 3 have, in the meantime, ascended.

The company state that there is no dispute between the Colliery Company and the workmen in their employment. The men who are staying in appear to be doing so in an effort to influence the management to dismiss certain workmen who are employed at another pit owned by the Company. The method of coercion which is being adopted, either on their own initiative or by the advice of unreasoning leadership, is calculated with the intention of creating a tyrannical force to compel workmen to be members of a Union which they individually have refused to join.

It is a result of the non-unionist strike called by the Miners Federation who instructed the workmen to give 14 days notice completely terminating their contract of employment, and it was not a matter of surprise that other workmen who have been idle for years should seek to obtain employment in collieries which obviously had to remain open for work. The non-unionist strike was called off by the Federation last Wednesday".

This was in direct reference to a statement made by Mr. Oliver Harris (Gen. Sec.) after a meeting between S. W. M. F. officials and the Ocean Coal Co. on Tuesday, 8th October, it would appear that after discussions lasting all day the S. W. M. F. had been successful because at 9.15 in the evening Mr. Harris announced:

"In view of the success which attended the campaign against the employment of non-unionist at the collieries indicated, the Executive Council which has sat all day recommend that the men now on strike should agree to return to work immediately.

There is thus brought to an end one of the biggest stoppages which has yet taken place in the South Wales Coal Field as even after the settlement at the Cory Collieries about 9,500 men are still involved".

Although this statement appeared in the Western Mail the following day I have placed it out of the normal sequence of events leading up to the "Stay In" because the interpretation I have is the colliery would not employ any more non-unionist to replace the S. W. M. F., the strike was obviously over as far as the "Point" was concerned because the men were in work, yet here we have a situation where a "Stay In Strike" was in operation in the West Pit and the Rock Vein and non-unionist being escorted to the East Pit and working.

To understand the position at Nine Mile Point we must look at the South Wales Coal Field in total because once again carefully worded statements were showing the men at the "Point" to be a militant group acting in isolation.

Another colliery owned by Ocean Coal was Blaengarw. At the beginning of October when the S. W. M. F. had called a strike to, once again, halt the spread of Gregory's Union, a large percentage of workmen belonged to the so-called "Scab" Union, but when a strike was called they changed their affiliation to the S. W. M. F. and the colliery continued to work during the first few days of the strike.

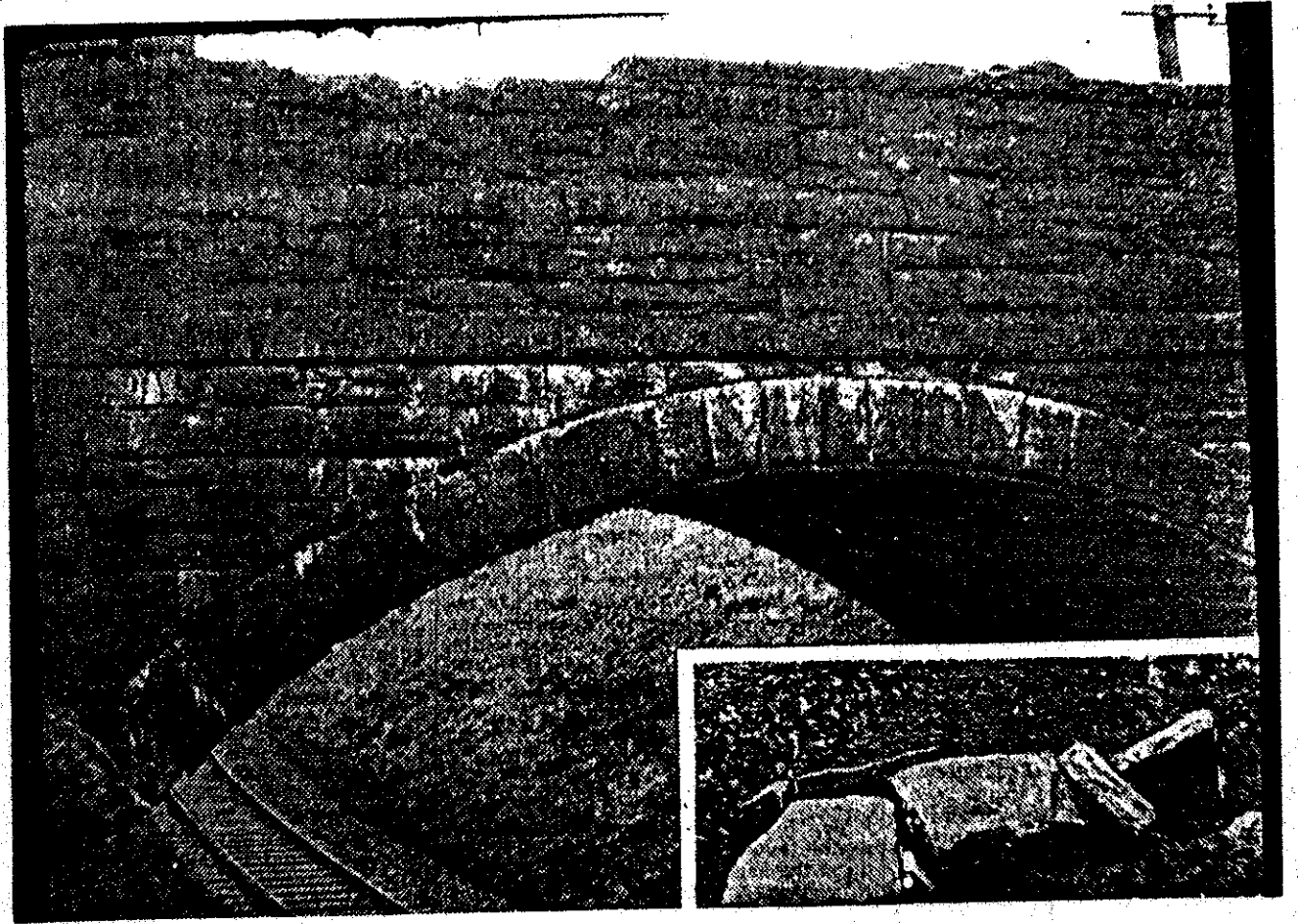
At Cwmparc and Gelli collieries the picture was much the same within a few days of calling the strike, men quickly changed to the S. W. M. F.

The same story was being repeated throughout the coal field except the 3 pits which were 100% I. M. U. but even here the S. W. M. F. were beginning to make inroads, but what of the "Point"? At the beginning of October at Nine Mile Point the I. M. U. members numbered from 5 to 19, dependant on various reports but on Saturday, 12th October, the day of the "Stay In" 88 men had been transported to the colliery.

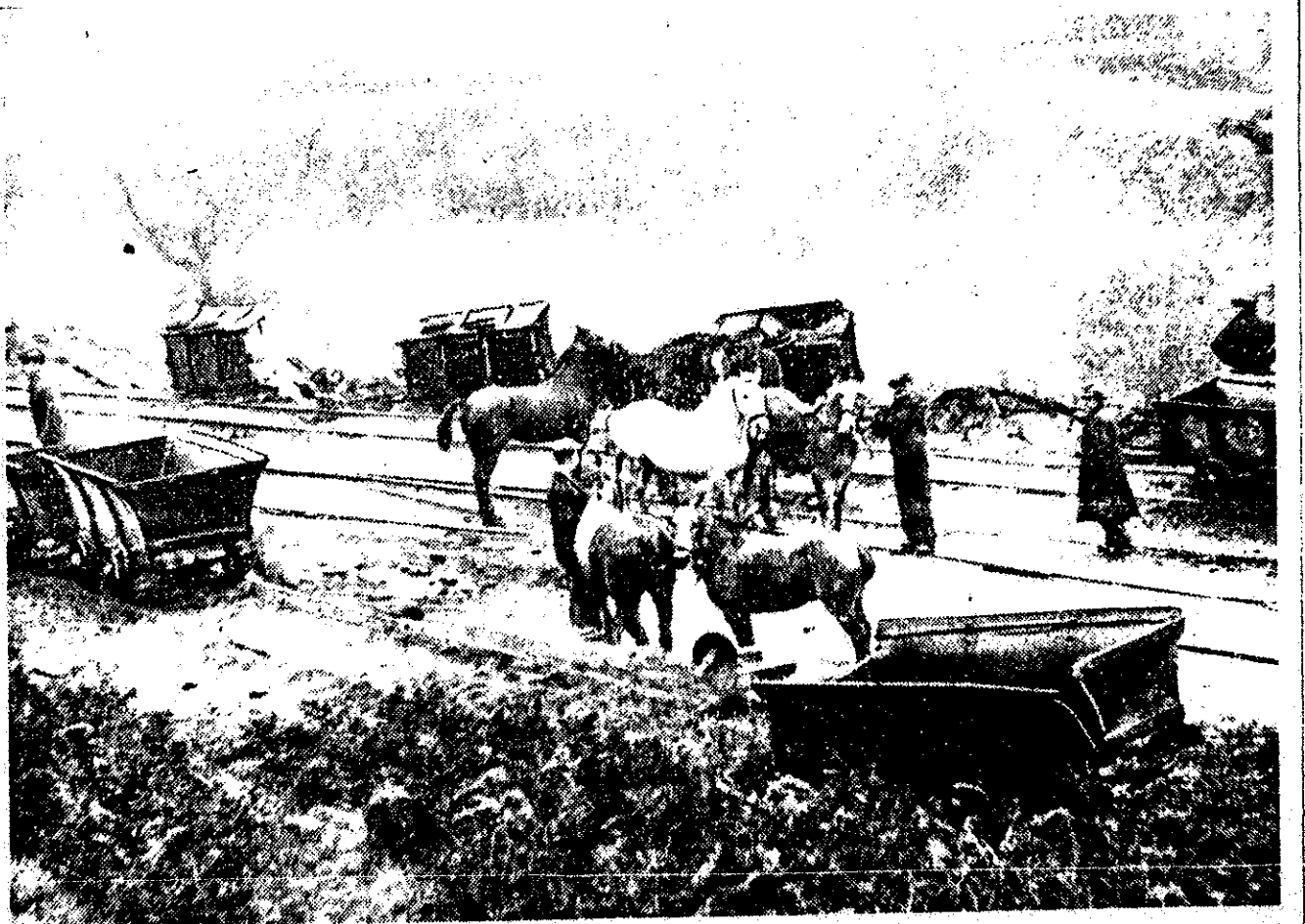
So this was to be Gregory's last chance against the S. W. M. F., why he chose Nine Mile Point I do not know because they had always been his major obstacle in the past, or is it as I said earlier, he knew the "Point" was the leader and if he could overcome them the rest would follow. I am in no doubt that the men at the "Point" knew this as well, because although other Coal Owners had agreed on the recommendation of Tuesday, 8th October, Ocean Coal were not party to this agreement, so Gregory was now shown in his true light of strike-breaker to the Ocean Coal Company.

The public were certainly kept well informed with happenings at the "Point" by press coverage every day, one such report stated:

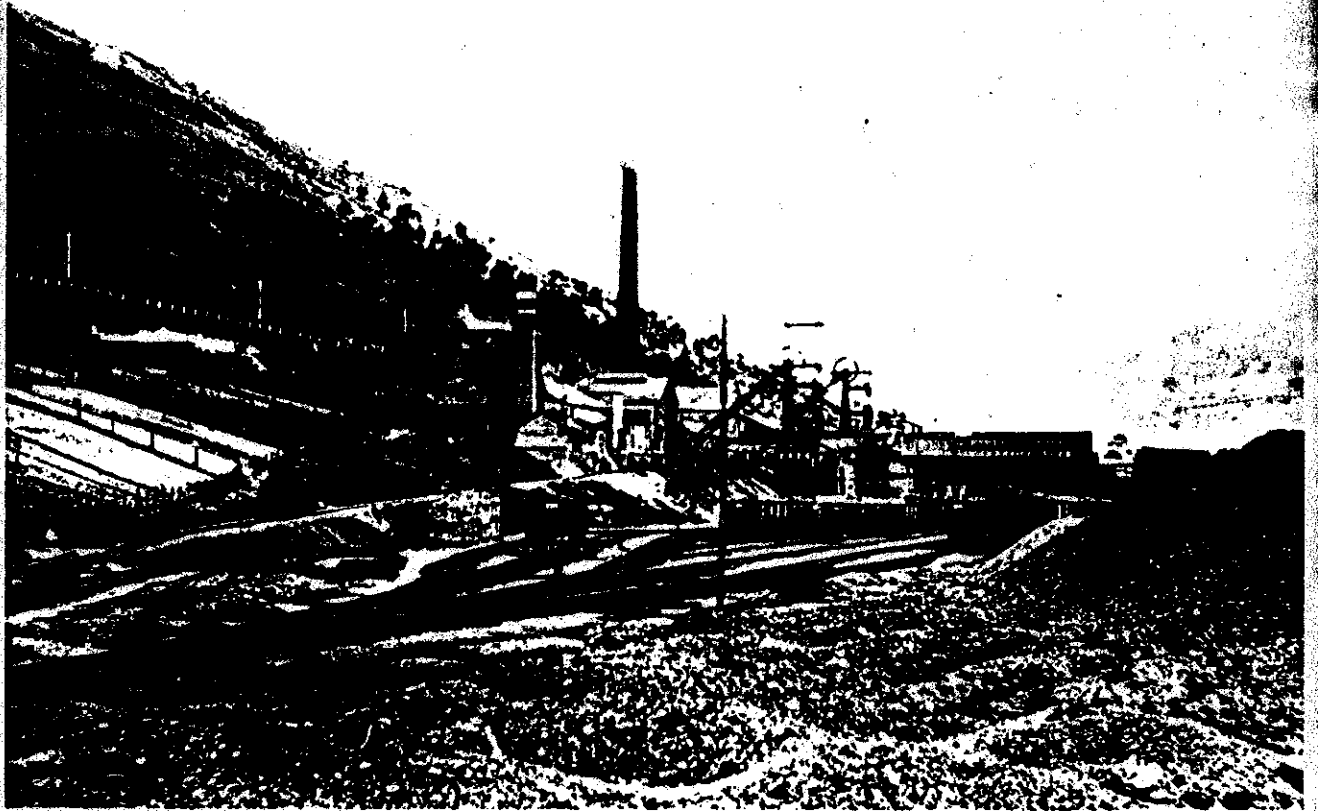
"The men underground are of course not allowed to smoke, but a quantity of chewing tobacco and chewing gum had been sent to the pit to allieviate their self-imposed abstention".



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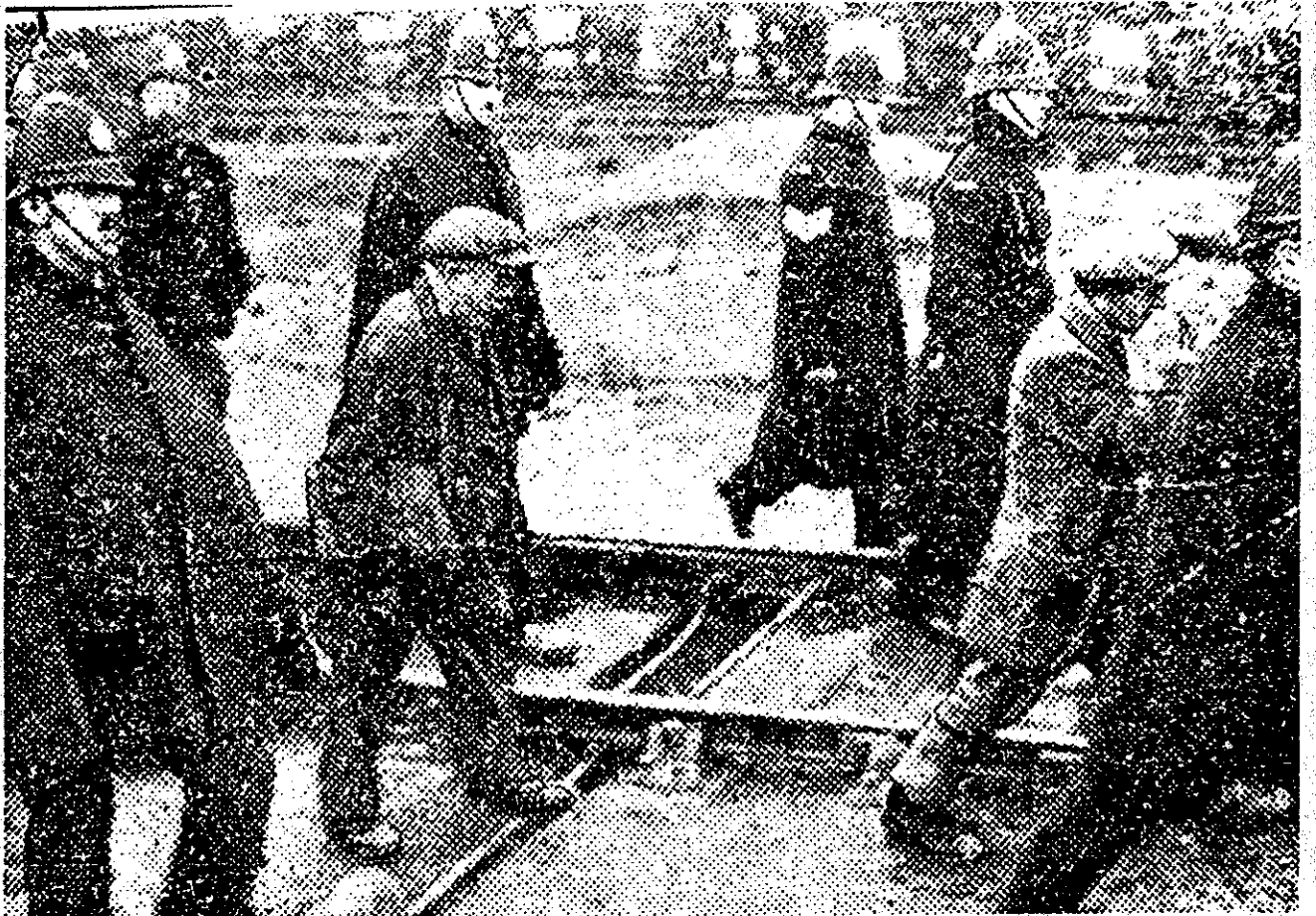


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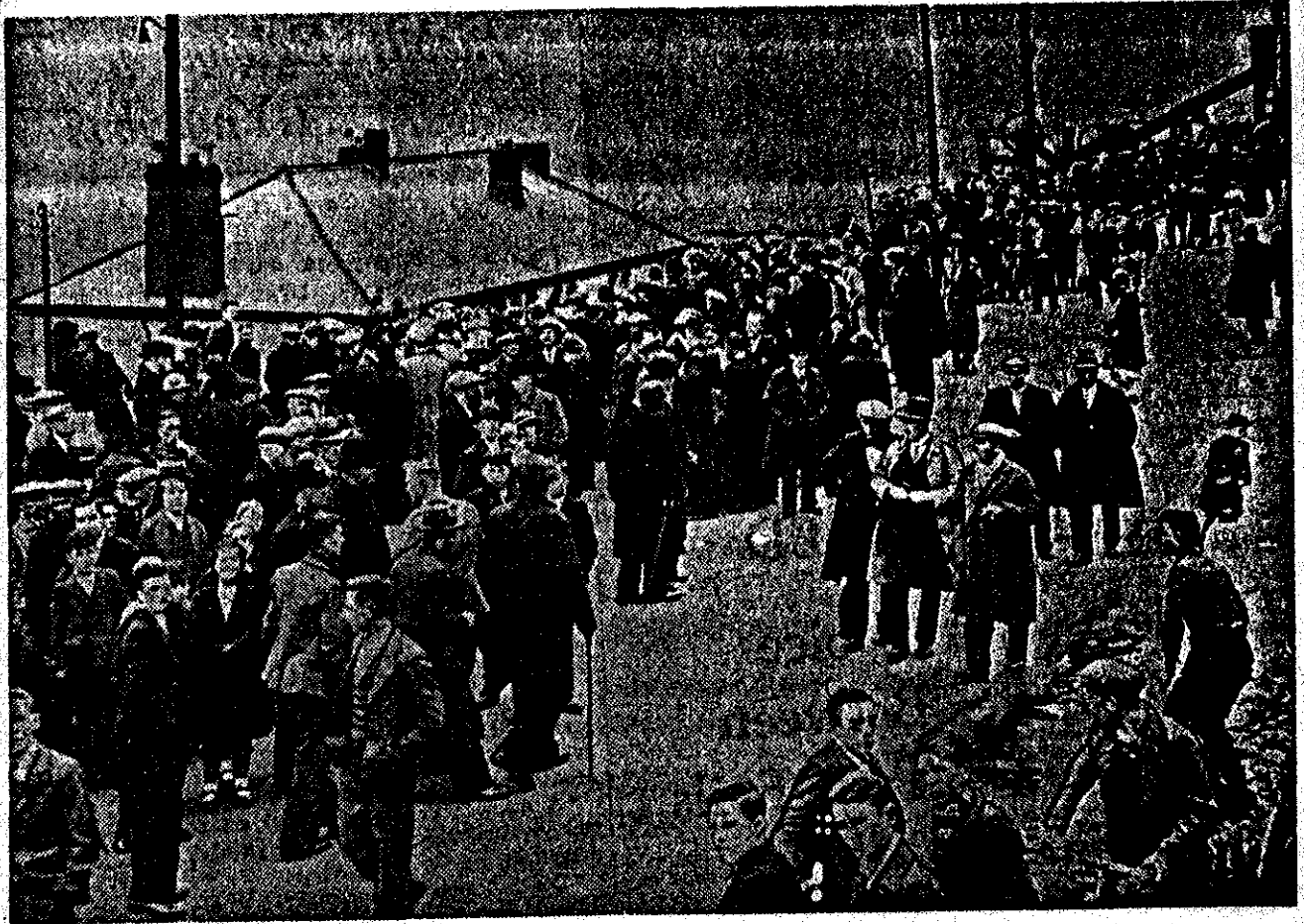
NINE MILE POINT COLLIERY CWMFELINFACH.

LILYWHIT
TRIANGLE

5a



6a



7a



8a

I read this out to one old miner and waited for a comment, his reply: "I remember that, what they didn't say in the report was the chewing gum was a laxative type". Joking, I replied "That could have made a mess, how did you manage?". Back came the quick response "We tightened our 'Yorks' and soldiered on". On such remarks Welsh humour is in a class of its own.

There was however no humour in the fact that once again the "Ghost Train" turned up at the Point and under strong police escort some 90 "blacklegs" went down the East Pit on the Tuesday, but word had passed around the area and now the "Stay In" had spread to other collieries. In fact, although the idea had originated at the Point, there were now some 2,000 miners on "Stay In" in various collieries, and other collieries were on strike, even members of the I. M. U. were on strike, some were even taking part in the "Stay In".

One can hardly imagine the feelings of the men underground when they were told that once again "Scabs" were going down the East Pit, where it must be pointed out a handful of S. W. M. F. members were "Staying In" and fears for their safety were expressed.

The rumour of a hunger strike was also perpetuated by the South Wales Argus, on the Monday when a report appeared in that paper under banner headlines proclaiming the "Hunger Strike", for this sort of report to appear in an evening edition I can only assume that paper was looking for sensationism rather than accuracy, however, I think the report is worth recording.

Monday, October 14th. Seventy one Federation miners employed at Nine Mile Point surrendered to hunger after 18 hours of slow starvation in the West Pit. Their protest against the employment of Non-Fed miners from outside the district forthwith took the form of Stay-in strike.

All but three stayed in the pit. They had a meal at about ten o'clock Saturday morning. They were not to eat again until the early hours of Sunday. Colliery officials placed food at their disposal. They refused point blank to eat it.

Finally they chewed some sandwiches and drank tea or coffee. The hunger strike was over. From that time it was to be a passive stop-down strike, undertaken by men determined to fight to a finish.

Earlier on Sunday, while two thousand people were singing and dancing on the roadway above the colliery, three men left the pit.

Dry clothing was sent to the pit bottom for those who had been working in wet places.

Some of the younger men went rat-hunting to pass the time away. Pit rats are bolder than tigers, they leap across your body as you are trying to catch a wink of sleep.

We were also troubled by "Red Indians" - great crawling creatures, red in colour, which gave off an offensive smell.

Some slept on hard rocks, some slept on sacks or chaff in the stable, but no matter where you slept you were soon covered with black beetles.

The position at Nine Mile Point had been relayed to other collieries, as a result miners at Wylie refused to work and marched to the Point.

Similar action and a gesture of sympathy had been made by men employed at Markham, Tytrist, Oakdale and Pochin Collieries.

Reports of the day said that bands were marching and between 3,000 and 5,000 people congregated at the pit and along the main road making it difficult for traffic to move.

It was then declared that Bedwas miners in a meeting the previous day passed a resolution expressing solidarity with the miners at Nine Mile Point, this must have given a big boost to the "Stay In" men because Bedwas was 100% Gregory Union.

The report ended with the statement:

75 men descended Rock Vein Pit this morning and are staying down, 71, the original "hunger" strikers in the West Pit, were joined by 41 men today and are remaining in the mine.

94 Non-Fed men worked in the East Pit today with a number of Federation men. The latter are staying in the pit.

By Tuesday the miners at Marine Colliery in Cwm had come out on strike in sympathy with the "Stay In" men of the Point. In the Ogmere and Garw Valleys nearly 300 men at the Ocean Coal Co. pits at Blaengarw and Nantymoel are "Staying In" in sympathy.

Sir Charles Edwards M. P. , Chief Labour Whip and Mr. Sidney Jones, Miners' Agent, left Newport today for a conference in London with the Ministry of Mines over the "Stay Down the Mine" dispute.

If they are unsuccessful, Sir Charles said he would probably see Mr. E. Marchbank, Gen. Sec. of the N. U. R. to stop the trains which bring non-Fed men to the Point.

The deputation who called upon the Sec. of Mines (Captain Crookshank) were Sir Charles Edwards, M.P., Mr. J. Griffiths, President of the S. W. M. F., Mr. Sam Garland, South Wales Miners' Executive member, and Mr. Sidney Jones.

Meanwhile back at the pit one of the West Pit strikers left the pit at 2 a.m. after 68 hours in the mine, his mother was ill. A banksman at the East Pit refused to wind coal mined by the non-Fed men and left the colliery.

At a mass meeting of Blaenavon miners, Mr. E. Jones, Chairman of the combined Blaenavon Lodges, stated his men would not go back to work until the men at the "Point" came to the surface.

Risca Traders and Ratepayers Association discussed the position at Nine Mile Point and Risca Collieries.

"We take no side and express no opinion in the dispute" said Mr. T. J. Jones, "but is there not some means of getting over the trouble? Can we help in any way to find a solution?"

It was decided on the suggestion of Mr. G. T. Pryce, that a telegram should be sent to Lord Davies of Llandinun appealing to him to use his influence.

At the pit an official of the Nine Mile Point Lodge of the Miners Federation stated: This morning (Tuesday) there are 70 men in the West Pit, these are men who started the hunger strike on Saturday.

At the Rock Vein there are 73 men who have remained below the surface. These men went to work on the Monday morning shift.

19 S. W. M. F. members have remained in the East Pit, where the non-Fed men who have been imported are at work.

These 19 men who are traffic men have taken the tools which the non-Fed men had used - tools which Nine Mile Point miners allege are the property of men regularly employed in that pit.

However, it was stated that the train which brought the non-Fed men to work also conveyed tools for the use of these men.

Once again Supt. Spendlove made the news but this time in a different light. Quote from the South Wales Argus Tuesday, 15th October.

There has been praise on all sides for the tact and courtesy of the police, Supt. Spendlove has been in complete charge of the police arrangements, he has revealed remarkable organising capacity, and he has established a bond of fellowship between his men and the crowds that have gathered.

His whole object has been to prevent difficulties and unpleasantness, and he has succeeded in marked degree.

Other collieries joined the ones already out and a complete stoppage of the South Wales Coal Field was imminent, collieries who joined the strike on the Tuesday were:

Westernen, Nantymoel	25
Deep Navigation, Treharris	750
Garw, Blaengarw	240
Bute, Treherbert	250
Parc, Cwmparc	400
Maindy, Tonpentre	100

By now a regular pattern of communication had been set up and messages were passing regularly.

Amongst those "Staying In" in the West Pit was Stan Winmill the Crosskeys and Welsh Rugby International, he sent a message up the pit for a Football Argus and a pint of beer, with him was his brother, Joe Winmill, a former Abertillery Captain.

Another in the West Pit was Jack Regan, the tenor who had broadcast several times.

Also on Tuesday evening Elijah Portsmouth came up the pit.

Mr. Tom Beecham, the manager of the "Point" had a police escort to and from the pit. There was a small amount of booing and cat-calling but no trouble occurred.

Another report appeared in the paper on Tuesday which was later proved to be untrue, was that there had been a pitched battle between men and police in which the police had had the worse end of it, and new forces were being sent down from Lancashire to take the place of the men who had fallen in the fight.

However, trouble must have been expected when the "Scabs" came to the surface after their shift, again a quote from the Western Mail:

Just after 1 p.m. the large force of Mon. County Const. under Supt. Spendlove was reinforced by 50 Cardiff City Police and 30 Newport Borough Officers, at once a strong cordon was thrown along the road, another section lined the railway lines and tips and a further detachment was waiting at the pit head to escort the non-Fed men when they came up from underground on the completion of their shift.

At 2.30 their shift had ended, the train drew into the incline from the main line to the colliery and in a few minutes the men were away.

With the departure of the extra police the crowd too had begun to thin out. Towards dusk the crowd at the pit head had decreased considerably. There was a slight demonstration when Mr. T. Beecham (Colliery Manager) left the colliery, he was escorted by two police officers.

The departure of the Tredegar, Pontypool, Abertillery and other drafts of police was marked by jocular exchanges.

Mr. Marsden (Chairman Fed. Lodge) also issued the statement:

"The secret had been remarkably well kept. Even the wives of the hunger strikers were unaware that the move was contemplated, and apart from Mr. Marsden and Mr. J. Prosser (Sec. Lodge) no one on the surface anticipated the move.

Although this comment is supposed to have come from Mr. Marsden, one can hardly believe it was reported accurately to still refer to it as a "hunger strike" when the men had been receiving food for some two days might have had some bearing on the fact that this was the reason for the local papers giving more publicity to a "hunger strike" rather than a "stay in".

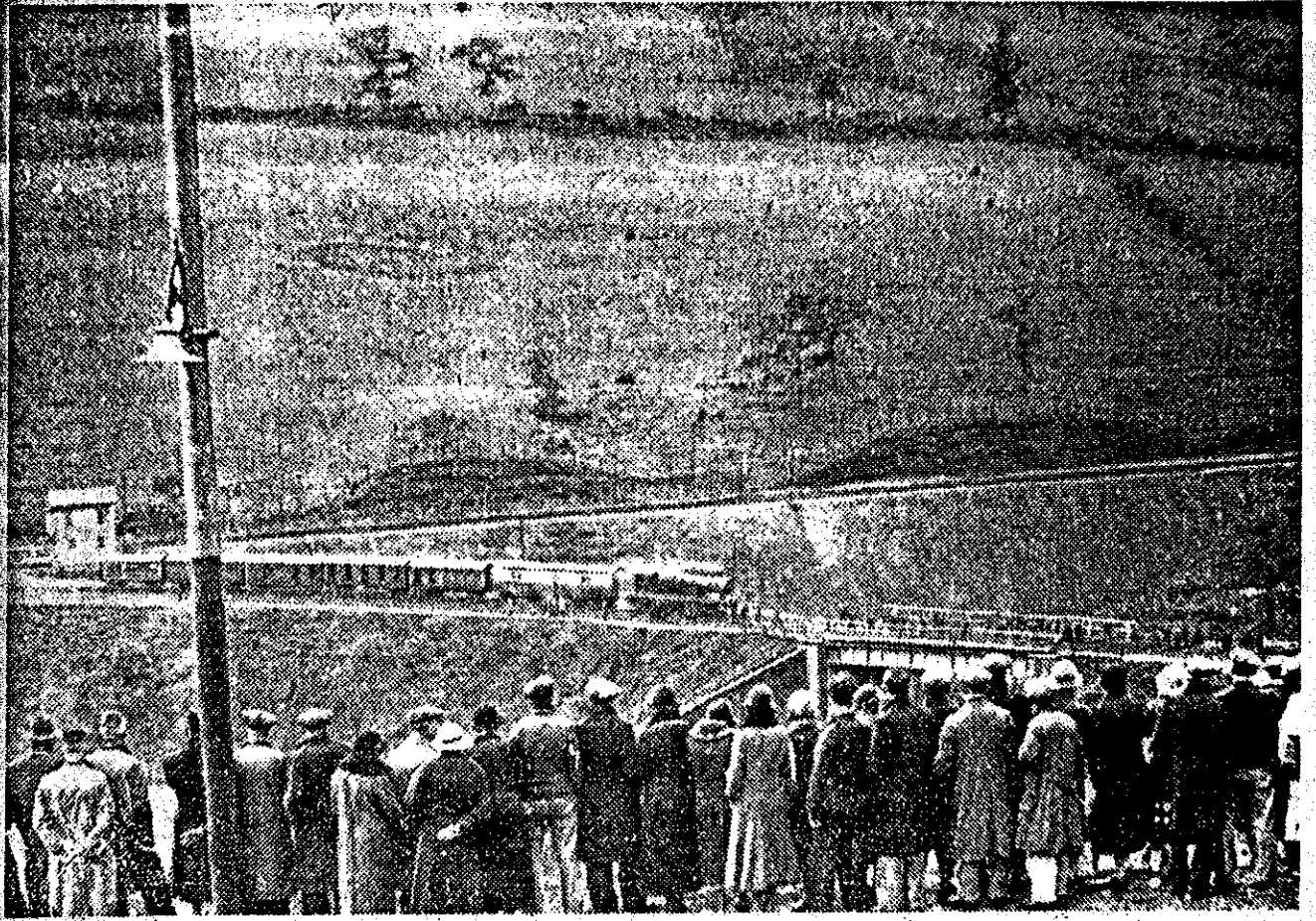
The wording also suggests that it was all pre-arranged before hand.

So, on to Wednesday and this was to be the turning point of the whole struggle not simply a turning point for the "stay in" strike, for this was just another battle in the long war the men at the Point had been waging. I wonder if the people who were standing around the pit head and also along the railway realized the significance of the non-arrival of the "Scab" train, a report appeared in the South Wales Argus that evening:

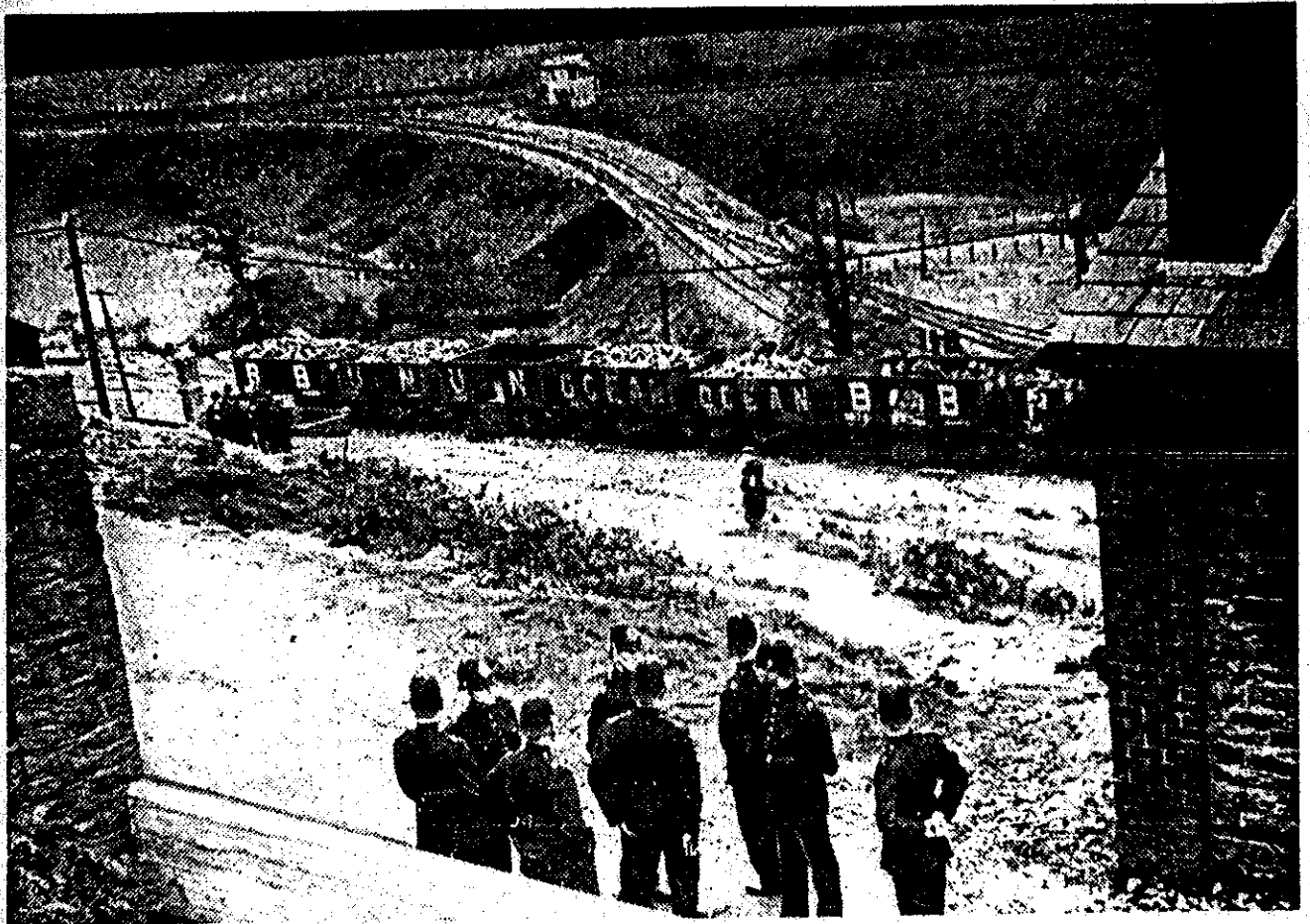
A sensation was caused at Nine Mile Point on Wednesday morning. A crowd estimated at 250, had gathered at the roadside above the colliery to watch the arrival of the Non-Fed men, who have been working at the colliery for the past fortnight, and are brought by train from Merthyr and other places. Officers of Mon. Constabulary and Newport Borough Police guarded the colliery and were posted at strategic points along the railway and in the fields.

But the expected train did not arrive, and no imported men descended the pit.

It was evident a train was expected, the police precautions proved that. Supt. L. Spendlove with a posse of police officers waited at the junction of the colliery siding with the main line and as the light grew stronger other officers were to be seen lining the roads and standing sentinel at various spots on the colliery premises.



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10a

Officers were also posted along the railway line and at Pont Lawrence Halt, where earlier in the week the Non-Fed men had detrained. To get to the colliery from Pont Lawrence it is necessary to follow a path which skirts the colliery tips, and on Monday afternoon and Tuesday the police arranged for the train to be shunted from the main line to a point a little up the siding. Here the men entrained and detrained. It involved a shorter walk, and the route, in the main, was hidden from the crowds on the roadside by the colliery buildings.

Wednesday morning's crowd began to gather while it was yet dark. A heavy mist enveloped the mountain tops, and the lights of buses which had conveyed police officers punctured the darkness.

As dawn broke miners and their wives, relatives and friends of the men who are in the West Pit, and the Rock Vein Pit, lined the fence along the colliery.

They eagerly awaited the arrival of the train, and speculation was rife as to whether there would be a diminution in the number of imported men.

Suddenly a police whistle was heard.

It came from the region of the signal box near the junction of the main line and siding.

An officer was seen to run along the railway line to the colliery and convey some message to other officers stationed near the pit head. Some excitement was caused by this; but it soon died down, and the crowd stood waiting and watching.

At 6.30 a.m. a passenger train passed down the valley, and soon afterwards Supt. Spendlove and his men started to walk away. The Supt. signalled to other officers in the vicinity and ordered all the police to file in. This they did and as soon as they reached the colliery, a statement was made that the train had not started, and would not run. No imported men were brought to the colliery by any other means.

The watching crowd were surprised when the police were withdrawn.

Only about 6 men had turned up at Merthyr station, the starting point of the train. It was also revealed the railway men refused to operate the train.

At Hengoed station 15 Non-Fed men were waiting to be picked up, after waiting about 45 minutes they returned to their homes.



11a



12a

At Nine Mile Point the opinion is general that the men who have undertaken the "stay in" strike will not ascend the pit until an agreement is reached and signed by the Company and the Federation. It is certain that such agreement - according to Fed. members at Cwmfelinfach, Ynysddu and Wattsville - will have to contain a safeguard for the men who have remained in the pits.

The fact that there are now no non-Fed men at the Point is not taken in the district to mean that this is a settlement of the dispute; and it is the opinion firmly held and freely expressed that the men down below will not ascend until the case of the Point workmen is satisfactorily settled.

At 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning 68 men in the West Pit had been below for 100 hours and 33 had been down 76 hours. At the Rock Vein pit there are 71 men and in the East Pit, where the non-Fed men were engaged, there are 19 Fed men who are traffic men. They, with the Rock Vein men, have been below for 76 hours at 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning.

Driving rain and a high blustering wind did not deter 3 or 400 people assembling outside the colliery at 2 p.m. Apparently many people had the idea that the non-Fed men who had not arrived in the morning would be conveyed to the colliery by other means for the afternoon shift in the East Pit. This did not materialise.

An outstanding incident of the afternoon was the appearance of George James of Wattsville who had been in the West Pit with the "stay in" strikers for 103 hours.

This, by the way, is 3 hours longer than the time spent underground by the hunger strikers in Tecs, Hungary, a year ago.

An official of the South Wales Miners Industrial Union, to which the imported men belong, stated:

"We are determined to get the men to Nine Mile Point by one means or another, you can take it from me, within the next 24 hours the men will be at work again. We are not beaten".

The officials of the G. W. R. said they would get the train through if there was a sufficient number of men to warrant running it.

Meanwhile, volunteers were busy cutting sandwiches and making tea. "We cut up 90 small loaves a day" said one helper. "In the morning we send to the boys corned beef or ham sandwiches, in the afternoon and night we make cheese and meat-paste. In the course of a day we send 40 gallons of tea down the pit!"



13a

The men write messages in the cardboard boxes which contain the food and repeatedly state that they are facing the situation cheerfully.

The wives and sweethearts also smuggle messages to their men folk.

Dr. Blackley has expressed his willingness to go down the pit anytime they wish.

Thomas Sheldon also came up the pit later in the day.

Talk today to some of the women who remember the "stay in" and you get comments like "I think my man stayed down because he was in the middle of decorating the front room and he would use any excuse to get out of that". A variation would be he was in the middle of digging the garden, or he is getting better food down there than he would if he was at home, but always I would get a lighthearted reply, no one talked about the worry and anguish the wives or mothers must have felt.

Another reason for some of the inaccurate reports was the fact the local people would tell the reporters what they wanted to hear, this probably accounted for the fact initial reports said it was highly organised, well kept secret for the men to stay down the pit that morning.

Also on Wednesday there appeared a statement issued by the Ocean Coal Co. the previous day:

"The statements coming from the President of the S.W.M.F. about the position at Nine Mile Point and other collieries in the coal field indicate a complete failure, or possibly a refusal, to face what is the truth.

It has always been the unswerving attitude of the coal owners to allow all workmen complete freedom of choice as to whether they should be members of any trade union, or of no trade union at all, and surely this is the right that every Briton must enjoy. The Miners Federation cannot hope to run with both the hare and the hounds, and when Mr. Griffiths says the position created at Nine Mile Point Colliery and other collieries is the result of the Owners of the collieries challenging the authority of the Miners Federation, he is disregarding entirely the fact that the real authority of the Miners Federation is being flaunted by the men themselves.

It is not true that the Federation leaders have done all they can to prevail upon the men at Risca, Markham, Wylie and Marine Collieries to carry on with their work? Is it not true that they have done all they can to prevail upon the men who are operating a "stay in" strike to come out of the pits? and they have utterly failed, not for the reasons that the men themselves hold different views, but because there are other influences at work which have created such a position as enables them to flaunt the Executive leadership of the Miners Federation.



Relatives of the strikers asking police-officers who are on duty at the colliery for news of the men who are remaining under-

the



STRIKE—relatives of the stay-in strikers at the pit-head at Nine Mile

It has long been known that the extreme or Communistic element within the ranks of the "Fed" has been trying to obtain complete control of that organisation, and every opportunity has been taken in an effort to establish that control, and the President of the Miners Fed is indicating the extreme weakness of his organisation when he attempts to justify the action of these Communistic agitators by indicating that the position is due to a fight between the employers and the Miners "Fed".

Time and time again the Miners Federation had failed completely to control its constituent members in the individual collieries and carry out its side of the agreement which exists between the Federation and the colliery owners, and this failure has always been due to the influence of the left wing or extreme elements. The Federation has in the past pronounced against Communists, but has not effectively excluded it.

Nothing different has happened on this occasion from what has happened many times in the past.

A non-Union strike often occurs by the men themselves deciding to give notices, but the recent non-Union strike occurred because the S. W. M. F. instructed the men to give notice, that in itself constitutes a breach by the "Fed" officials of the Coal Trade Conciliation Board agreement.

When the notices had expired and the men had withdrawn their labour, the colliery remained open for work, and it has been the invariable practice for men who apply for work when such a condition arises to be given employment.

The only difference in the position today is that there now exists in the coalfield a comparable strong union in opposition to the S. W. M. F. and this union took advantage of the opportunity of finding collieries where there was employment offered for men who were genuinely seeking work, and who were members of their organisation, and these men having secured work, their employment had been continued.

There have been numerous examples of the tyrannous pressure brought to bear by the S. W. M. F. during recent years to force men to join their organisation, and this pressure has usually been brought to bear by unemployed workmen, many of whom retain their membership of the S.W.M.F.

It has generally been realised that the time would come when such a position as exists today would be created because the dictation of the terms and conditions of employment of men in work by committee upon which unemployed men have no responsibility and nothing to lose, was obviously bound to lead to such a position of flaunted authority and unreasoned tyranny.

There is no dispute between the United National Coal Co. and their men, and at a few collieries outside the control of this Company strikes have occurred where there is no dispute at all, and these men are out in sympathy with the general movement.

In all these cases namely: Markham, Wylie and Risca the authoritative representative of the S. W. M. F. openly and strongly recommended the men to continue work but other influences were apparently brought to bear, and their advice was flouted, so that the question of the S. W. M. F. is very clearly indicated. It is being opposed from somewhere within its own ranks.

Surely there is no difference between this strike or any other strike, except that the men who have downed tools, have imposed upon themselves conditions which are a little more onerous by staying down the pit, than by coming up out of it, and while the effects of this self-imposed martyrdom is to create greater publicity and possible sympathy in the minds of the general public, it is nevertheless an action which might result, if the general public treats it as serious, which it is not, in a Communistic control of a character which cannot be tolerated in this country.

There can be no doubt that the S. W. M. F. have for years failed to recognise the responsibility of their representation of the men, and they have entirely failed to realize that a Trade Union cannot do its duty to its men unless it strictly abides by its rules and by its express views upon extremist action.

The sufferer in all this are the men themselves, who have been, and are being, so badly misled. This persistent attitude of fighting which the S. W. M. F. have adopted and maintained, or allowed itself to be forced to adopt and maintain, has almost brought the industry to ruin, and it is this very activity which gave rise to the formation by sounder thinking men of Unions entirely freed from Political influences and the sound-reasoning collier, who is generally quiet, and has no use for public meetings, has undoubtedly found that his own reasoning is reflected in such a Union, and by his membership has given the activity strength.

Also on the Wednesday employees of the railway made an inspection of the line over a large area, they removed surplus sleepers from the line-side, "Removing our ammunition" one miner said.

Official figures issued to the South Wales Argus stated at Markham 1,360 men were involved, at Wylie 900 and at Oakdale 1,900.

Men at Pochin, Tytrist and Bedwellty Pits were also on strike, and the number involved - this is for the three pits and forming the Tredegar Combined Lodge of the Miners Federation - is 2,670.

Four other pits belonging to the Tredegar Co. were also idle and there was no work at any of the collieries in the Sirhowy Valley.



6a



On Thursday morning a conference was held by the S.W.M.F. in Cardiff, after a meeting lasting 3 hrs the delegates averted an all out strike, and advised the "Stay-in" strikers to leave their respective pits.

The lodge reps of the Point called a meeting at Midnight in the local Workmens Hall after a meeting lasting some four hours it was agreed to leave the decision to the men underground. Alderman Sid Jones was empowered by the meeting to see the "Stay in" miners. This was the only decision taken at that meeting. The men at the Point decided to stay-below.

Some of the ponies were brought up the pit.

As one can gather the local papers were carrying little else, they were full of statements and comments, claims and counter-claims.

In fact the Point made the Pathe News" for those old enough to remember the "good" old days in the pictures, and finally the news spread across the sea and a report appeared in an American Newspaper.

Almost unnoticed the following article appeared.

"One of the most momentous and vital conferences' in the history of the M.F.G.B. took place in London today.

It was called to consider the situation arising out of the demand of the S.W.M.F. for an increase in wages throughout the country of two shilling (10p) a day.

What price inflation in those days when asking for a 10p a day rise was a vital and momentous conference issue, although if one quotes percentages the story is not so different as today's prices.

When the decision to stay down was passed to the Ocean Co. they replied that they would close down the 3 pits at N. M. Point for an indefinite period. They also stated :

"Officials of the Fed are assured that if representations are made later by the Fed to re-open the pits, the Co. will meet the reps of the Fed for that purpose.

Although the Executive meeting in Cardiff lasted all day and it is reported that delegates spoke with great passion and fervour over the question of an all out strike.

The import of the discussions can be judged by the fact that if a general stoppage in the S. Wales and Mon. Coalfield was ordered 134,000 men would be involved. Of these about 30,000 are mineworkers in Mon.

After Mr. Sid Jones had relayed the miners intention to stay down, Mr. Joe Hughes Sec to Tredegar Valley District of No.7 area of the S. W. M. F. declared.

"The men at N. M. P. refused to return to the surface until they received a written guarantee that no further non-Fed men should be employed at the colliery, and that there should be no victimisation.

The men in the West Pit had now been underground for 124 hours from 10 O'clock that morning (Thursday).

All the men, numbering just over 200, left Risca Colliery on Thursday morning. They had been underground 72 hours.

On Thursday evening Haydon Gregory age 21 left the Point, he had been down since Saturday.

When he arrived at the surface he could hardly stand the bright light.

He said the men were quite cheerful despite their ordeal. No newspapers containing information about the coal situation are allowed to be sent to the men in the pit.

Papers wrapped around food supplies have any strike news torn out before they are sent down.

A crowd of about 2,000 people marched singing up the Western Valley Thursday evening to stop the night shift going down two Newbridge collieries.

The demonstrators were drawn from Cwmfelinfach, Wattsville, Crosskeys and Risca, and as they marched, singing, up the valley, they were joined by sympathisers.

Mon. Police were hastily drafted into the area from Risca and Abertillery divisions, but the demonstration achieved its object. There was no work at wither colliery that night.

At mid-day on Friday the men had now been down for 150 hours in the West Pit and the men in the Rock Vein and the East Pit had been down for 101 hours.

Officials of the S. W. M. F. once again descended the pit to try to persuade the men to come to the surface so that the question of imported labour could be settled after the pit had been cleared.

The men at the Point were adamant. They do not regard the Coal Company statement as sufficient guarantee, and this view is supported by workmen in the district who are on the surface.

Notwithstanding the anxious time which the women folk have had, they were as resolute as the men in the belief that those below would not ascend until a written agreement was secured from the owners of the colliery, the Ocean Coal Company.

It was expected that the President, Vice President and Alderman Sidney Jones, Miners' Agent for the Area which embraces Nine Mile Point, would arrange to descend the pits on Friday night after the executive meeting, which concluded a little before 8 p.m., but the President and Vice President declined to make any statement.

They did not descend the pit on Friday night, and the men at Nine Mile Point are still below.

Saturday, 19th October, 1935

It is expected that the three chief officials of the Fed. would go down the pit this morning, to make another appeal to the "Stay Down the pit" strikers to come up.

There are 184 miners still below ground and some of them have now been in the pit for a week. The president of the Fed., Mr. James Griffiths, the Vice President, Mr. Arthur Jenkins, and the Gen. Sec. Mr. Oliver Harris, drove early to Cwmfelinfach.

They had a mixed reception from the crowd which had gathered despite the early hour. Boos and cheers greeted them.

They went to the Workmens Institute in the centre of the village, where they met the local committee in order to get their views before going down the pit.

While the discussions were going on inside the crowd waited in the cold. After a short time the Chairman of the local Lodge came out of the hall and told those gathered around the position. There was a demonstration by part of the crowd against any suggestion of the men being persuaded to come up before they had obtained their object.

Some of the colliery owners also came into Cwmfelinfach today. It is possible that later there may be a meeting down the pit between the owners and the men's leaders.

The meeting between the Fed. leaders and the local committee is expected to last several hours. It is stated that more than 30,000 are now on strike in the South Wales coalfield. Additional police have been drafted to various points from other districts to strengthen the local forces.

The Chairman of the Lodge, Mr. J. Marsden, explained the three main points in the dispute.

1. The men could not leave the 3 pits until he personally called them out.
2. That Mr. Levi Phillips, the owners' agent had not entered personally into the negotiations.
3. That verbal promises only had been made by the Company.

Mr. Marsden added that these assurances had been given over the telephone by a representative of the owners.

"We must have a signed assurance" he added, "that no more non-Fed. imported labour will be employed at Nine Mile Point pits, and that there will be no victimisation following this strike!"

After a meeting lasting 3½ hours the workmen held a meeting and they accepted the recommendation of the Committee that the Fed. point of view should be adopted.

This means that the men should come up.

It was then announced officers of the Lodge would descend the pit while Fed. officials waited at the pit head for the men's decision as to whether they desired to confer with them.

One of these men was brought to the surface ill on Saturday morning.

It is understood that men suffering from their long sojourn underground will receive treatment at either Talygarn or Langland Bay Miners home, the expense to be borne by the Fed.

Alderman S. Jones (Miners agent) stated he had received a letter from the owners, signed by Mr. Levi Phillips, Agent to the Ocean Coal, in which assurances were given that there would be no victimisation.

Questioned regarding non-Fed. labour Alderman Jones said that the owners had agreed to negotiate with the Fed. on that point before the re-opening of the colliery.

Lodge and Fed. officials early this afternoon proceeded to the pit-head.

- 1.45 Mr. Jack Marsden and Mr. Jack Prosser, Chairman and Secretary of the Lodge, together with Miners Agent, Mr. Sid Jones, descended the West Pit.
- 2.00 Mr. James Griffiths and Mr. Arthur Jenkins, President and Vice-President of the S. W. M. F. followed them.
- 2.40 The first cage load of men arrived at the pit head.
- 3.10 The central East Pit men - 19 in all- arrived at the surface.
- 3.23 The 76 in the Rock Vein Pit began to emerge.
- 4.30 The S. W. M. F. Officials left the colliery almost unnoticed.

When that first cage carrying men from the West Pit arrived at the surface they had been underground for an incredible 177 hours.

Various reports stated:- "Some were rather shaky on their feet, some were affected by the light, all were sporting a healthy start of a beard".

Among the first up was "Docker" Winmill, the old Welsh Rugby International, he raised a laugh when he emerged into the light wearing a raincoat round his waist, "I have torn my trousers" he explained. Waiting the mens arrival was Mr. Sam Garland, Executive member of the S. W. M. F.

In the newly opened pit head baths 3 doctors waited.

Medicines, restoratives and laxatives - strong coffee, brandy and castor oil - were administered. Although advised against it, the first request of most of the men was "have you got a fag".

So dusk fell on a tired, excited and happy community.

A bell-man went around to announce that the cinema, closed since the strike had started, was open again.

In the Workmans Club someone switched on the wireless, it had been silent for a week, except during the news bulletins.

Lights appeared in the shops, boys ran up the street with the "Football Argus" (report taken from the Argus).

It started to rain - everything was back to normal.

The Executive Council meeting on the Saturday evening in Cardiff adopted a motion expressing "deep resentment" against an "unnecessary display" of force by the police in some of the mining centres.

This resentment, it was added, applied especially to the importation of the police from other counties and Cities, which in the Council's opinion had been provocative and calculated to create disturbances that would otherwise not have taken place.



18a



19a

Report from the South Wales Argus, 15th November:

Arising out of the alleged incidents during the recent stoppage at Nine Mile Point defendants Percy Knight, John William Griffiths, were summoned for damaging an omnibus the property of Messrs. Fulcon and Watts of Ynysddu on October 12th. Knight was further summoned for throwing pieces of timber studded with nails on the highway on the same date.

Four women were also summoned, Annie Bowditch, Doris Jones, Hilda Games and Annie Wolley. They were summoned for throwing stones at carriages on the L. M. S. railway line on October 14th.

Mr. F. O. Bates, Euston, prosecuted for the Company.

Mr. A. Gordon Edwards, Newport, defended, and pleaded guilty to a technical offence on behalf of the women. These cases were taken first.

Mr. Bates said that in the ordinary way the Company might be expected to take a serious view of the cases. Mr. Edwards had pointed out in correspondence and that day, that the dispute out of which events arose had been settled, and the Railway Company would be unhappy to rake up the business again.

Mr. Bates proceeded to outline the details. The population around Nine Mile Point colliery decided that the train that had been running should not carry the colliers who were working.

"The defendants were warned more than once not to do anything, but notwithstanding this, stones like these" said Mr. Bates, producing a stone the size of an orange, "were thrown".

He was glad to say that no personal injury was caused to any persons in the train. 4 windows were broken. If the magistrates were prepared to take the view, the Company were prepared for the defendants to be bound over.

Mr. Edwards said that there were extenuating circumstances in the cases, Mrs. Jones' husband had been unemployed for some years, Mrs. Bowditch's husband was working at the Point before the stoppage. Mrs. Wolley had 8 children and her husband had been idle for 8 years, while Mrs. Games' husband had been idle for 6 months.

He could not imagine the women doing anything of that nature unless there was great provocation.

He did not want to rake up the unfortunate history connected with the stoppage, but it was evident that allowing members of the M. P. U. (Gregorys Union) to work at the colliery would incense any person who had been working there before.

Naturally the importation of the "Foreigners" caused high feeling in the district. He was assured that the women had no intention of doing any harm.

They went to see the train off, and according to his instructions, one of the men who was travelling put his face to the window and put out his tongue. That annoyed the defendants and they lost control of themselves and threw stones.

The matter was now settled and he was assured that all wanted peace to continue.

Mr. W. S. Nash, the Chairman of the Magistrates, expressed the Magistrates' sorrow to see women before them and said the women had their sympathy.

He thought they should appreciate that it was a very serious matter to throw stones at trains. His advice was not to do anything unless they had the advice of their leaders behind them. He was sure that if they had consulted the leaders, that would not have happened.

The four women were bound over in the sum of £5 for 12 months and each ordered to pay 10/- towards the costs.

Then Mr. Knight and Mr. Griffiths were brought before the court, they both pleaded not guilty. They also were defended by Mr. Edwards.

P. C. Probert said he was travelling in a bus to the colliery and after passing Pont Garm Bridge he saw 12 men come from the right hand side of the road and throw stones, while planks were thrown beneath the wheels. As the bus was pulling up he saw Knight throw a board beneath the bus, it was studded with nails, witness got out of the bus and ran up the bank. "I saw Griffiths throw a stone" he said, "I chased after him and caught him, I later took him to the "Point" and reported him to Supt. Spendlove. Defendant declared he did it on the spur of the moment."

P. C. Davies of Maesycymmer who was also travelling on the bus said he saw Knight throw a stone at the bus "I got off the bus and chased after him and caught him".

The bus driver, Mr. T. Davies of Penydarren, stated one of the stones smashed through the window and landed on his lap.

Mr. W. S. Nash, the presiding magistrate, said "These foolish acts brought South Wales into disrepute in London and elsewhere".

Griffiths was then fined 20/- (£1) and ordered to pay 10 shillings (50p) costs.

Knight was fined 40 shillings (£2) and 10 shillings (50p) costs.

The magistrates, said Mr. Nash, concluded that the police exercised foresight, control and tact during the trying circumstances arising out of this stoppage.

Mr. Edwards for the defendants assured him that he agreed with his remarks and applauded the work Supt. Spendlove and his Officers had done, their good work had averted trouble, he said.

* * * * *

At a meeting of Monmouth Rural Council the Clerk (Mayor A. C. Tweedy) read a letter from Abertillery Urban Council asking for support for the following resolutions:

"That attention be drawn to the state of things at the collieries in the valleys of Monmouthshire, where a number of miners remain underground, and the untold anxiety which the families of the men are suffering, as a protest against the employment of men who are not members of the S. W. M. F.

That the action of the colliery owners in allowing this state of affairs to continue be condemned.

That protest be made against the utilisation of the police force of the county in support of the colliery owners.

The communication also asked Mon. Rural Council to send copies of the resolutions to the Prime Minister, Home Secretary, Minister of Mines, M. P. for the County etc.

The Clerk remarked "I do not know what you think of this".

Mr. A. G. Fennell of Raglan, said he would move the resolution lie on the table and the resolution was seconded and supported.

Captain F. J. Adams, Skenfrith, remarked "As an amendment, I propose the communications is placed in the fire".

The resolution was carried.

* * * * *

In a letter to the Rev. John Evans, Vicar of Risca, Lord Davies, Chairman of the United National and Ocean Collieries Co. explained their attitude to the present dispute at Nine Mile Point and other collieries.

Lord Davies, who has been indisposed for some time, left on Friday for a recuperative voyage to South Africa.

He states that he and his colleagues deeply regretted the unfortunate occurrences which had taken place at Nine Mile Point and added that the dispute was not between their employees and the company, but between the employees themselves.

"We have always regarded it as a sacred right that the individual should be allowed absolute freedom of choice as to what associations or trade unions, if any, he may desire to belong" the letter adds.

"This we consider, in a free country, is the indisputable right of every individual citizen, whatever his position may be.

Consequently my board have always held that it is not our business to interfere with this freedom of choice, and we should be lacking in our duty if we did not employ persons who desire to work, absolutely irrespective of any organisation to which they may happen to belong.

It is not true that my Company have imported men into the district, but we felt we had no right to refuse work to men who genuinely desired it, even though they lived at a considerable distance from the colliery.

We cannot believe that the methods adopted during the last four weeks - the coercion and violent intimidation which has been dispensed and exerted upon individual members of the community - are in keeping with christian ethics and principles, or with the fundamental axioms of individual liberty, which, after so many years of struggle in the past, have become the pride and heritage of the people in this country.

I can assure you that we have no desire to inflict injury or harm upon the S. W. M. F. or any other organisation, but, in this matter we feel that there are certain principles which we cannot lightly ignore for the sake of expediency.

I may also point out that these particular collieries have been worked on an uneconomic basis for many years, and have produced consistent losses, owing partly at any rate, to the interminable friction which has been engendered and imposed by what we believe to be relatively small numbers of the community upon their neighbours.

Coupled with the existing depression which has unfortunately descended upon the coal trade, we cannot contemplate bearing this loss indefinitely, and it may become necessary, therefore, unless the desire for peace on the part of the whole community can find some practical expression than at present, to close down the pit for an indefinite period.

We should greatly regret to be compelled by the force of circumstances and the final position of the U. N. Co. to adopt such a course, but having regard to the facts, it appears to us there may be no alternative.

We have always maintained that in disputes, where it may be impossible to reach agreement between the two parties concerned, both sides should be willing to refer the issues for peaceful settlement, by having recourse to arbitration - an independant and impartial tribunal - whose decisions both sides would be prepared to respect and carry out!"

Remember, on the Tuesday Risca Traders and Ratepayers Association had said "We take no sides and express no opinion in the dispute", so one wonders why Rev. Evans gave this letter to the press and allowed them to publish it because it certainly showed the miners in a bad light.

So, twice in the space of a week much publicity was given to two statements vilifying the S.W.M.F.

The facts, however, tell a different story.

Prior to the "Stay In" miners had been on strike for nine days. The Secretary for Miners on behalf of the Ocean Coal Group stated: "If the S.W.M.F. terminate the strike I have been assured by the owners all the men would be allowed to return to work".

Alderman Arthur Jenkins, Vice President of the S.W.M.F. said it was the greatest crisis in the South Wales Coal Field since 1926.

Commenting on the situation at Nine Mile Point he stated:

"There have been numerous non-union strikers in this and other coal fields in years gone by, and hitherto to owners have always adopted a neutral attitude, they have never attempted to recruit labour to take the place of men who were for the time being, on stop, but in this instance at Nine Mile Point the men accepted the unions recommendation to return to work, and when they went back they found 90 to 100 men in places which had formerly been occupied by men living in Cwmfelinfach and district.

Men were there who had been imported from places as far as 20 miles from the pit.

When the difficulty arose about the middle of last week we sought in every way possible to prevail upon the management of the Colliery Co. concerned to agree to withdraw the men who had been imported. If that were done, there is no reason in the world why a settlement could not be immediately effected".

As to Lord Davies when I read his statement to a retired miner, he said, "Yes, he was the man who took his daughter to the pit as a treat, so she could see the miners, when the bond came up and the miners started to walk out, she turned and said "Oh, look, father, don't they look like men".

True or false I do not know, what it does show is an attitude towards the coal owners, that they would make such a comment.

Lord Davies is a descendant of David Davies of Llandinium, the founder of the Ocean Coal Co.

He also told the Rev. Evans his company had not imported men into the "Point". Perhaps somebody should have told him that not only did they import men, they were prepared to pay them more money. The wage in the "Point" at this time averaged about £2.16sh. or £2.80 in today's money, whereas every man brought in from outside was offered £4 a week, plus free transport to and from work. Once again, this is an example of the bad press the men at Nine Mile Point were receiving.

One accepts the fact that they were not whiter than white, and no doubt the tactics they had used in the past did not meet with the approval of the establishment or indeed, some of the Union Officials. However, one fact does stand out, if one examines the newspapers of the day, all comments on disputes at collieries in South Wales were to the detriment of the S.W.M.F. and Nine Mile Point was always singled out for special treatment.

Out of all the newspaper articles I have read of this period, one appeared in the South Wales Argus, Wednesday, 16th October, 1935, which showed that the I.M.U. was not the quiet, much maligned group of men that the coal owners stated they were.

The report concerned an incident at Taff Merthyr Colliery:

"During violent scenes at Taff Merthyr this afternoon police sergeant and constable were seriously injured when police made a baton charge on the crowd.

The scenes followed an un-canny struggle down the pit when Federation men who had decided to join the "Stay In" were set upon by I.U.M. men.

The "Fed" men were bundled into trams and taken out of the mine after a fierce hand-to-hand struggle".

As to the final chapter of the "Stay In". It meant one thing to the workers at the "Point", no more Gregory Union, and although it was some months before peace descended and the men and women were convinced that the struggle had been worth while.

As an end-note to this epic seven days I would like to quote a poem which appeared some time after wards, relating to this time.

Thomas May

Big, uncouth in many a way,
 Could right be said of Thomas May,
 A miner who once lived near this town
 Who for his bread, worked underground.

Yet in a "stay in" strike 'while back
 He proved he did not goodness lack,
 Gentle he showed that he could be,
 And those who knew would full agree.

It happened like this: When the strike began
 Among the crowd was Billy Egan,
 An engine driver who worked down the mine
 Whose body was frail, but whose spirit was fine.

Poor Billy strove hard for the first two days
 Down in the damp and dark roadways,
 But the strain and the cold got over poor Bill
 And he only kept going by great effort of will.

Tom begged him to go and ascend the pit,
 To stay there much more he was never fit.
 But Bill said "No matter, I'll stick with the rest",
 Though he shivered with cold and a cough racked his chest.

Tom took his hand, like a mother was he,
 Two a sight that never forgotten will be.
 The big rough man, as Billy grew worse,
 Looked after his "charge" as good as a nurse.

When it came to an end, and they came up the pit,
 Those six hard days had tested their grit.
 One thing's quite certain, for they all could say
 That the gentlest of all, why 'twas big Thomas May.

The poem was written by Durward Osborne of Crosskeys who took part in the "Stay In" strike, and in fact stayed down in the Rock Vein from the Monday till the Saturday. Mr. Osborne was a Lay Preacher and held a service near pit bottom during the strike. Mr. Osborne retired in 1959 after 52 years in the industry. At the time of his retirement he was wages control officer, No. 6 Area South Western Division of the N. C. B. He started work at 14 years of age at Risca Colliery for 1/6d a shift as a colliers assistant.

I wonder how many of the miners listening to him preaching that day know that as Lt. Cpl. Osborne of the Welch Fusiliers he was awarded the Military Medal after the battle at Ypres during the 1914-18 war.

Thomas May the "Gentlest of All" received a prison sentence of six months for rioting at Nine Mile Point in 1923.

During the time I was researching the history of the "Point" I spoke to many miners about the "Stay In", even today they believe it was the first time any action of this kind had ever been taken. Records show that the first genuine "Stay Down" in South Wales had occurred twelve months earlier in October 1934 at Waunlwyd slant of the Brynhenllys Colliery, Cwmtwrch in the Swansea Valley, when 22 men refused to come up the pit at the end of the shift. They remained underground for a further six and a half hours.

One must bear in mind that to stay down the pit as these men and the men at the "Point" did was in direct contravention of the Mines Act and thus made them liable to prosecution, so it would be understandable that the officials of the S. W. M. F. would deny prior knowledge of it or admit to being the instigators of it.

As a matter of interest the first known "Stay In" was at Tec in Hungary when the men refused to come up the pit and threatened mass suicide unless they were given a pay rise.

The Coal Miners Prayer

Take a look at these hands Lord, they're worn and rough
Our faces scarred with coal marks, our language is tough
You know in our hearts lie the souls of men
Who very rare reach their three score and ten

There's sulphur and coal dust and sweat on our brow,
To live like rich men - we've never learned how,
But if you've got a corner when our work is through,
We'd be mighty proud to live neighbours with you.

Each dawn as we rise, Lord, we know all too well
We face only one thing - a pit filled with hell,
To scratch out a living the best that we can
But deep in each heart lies the soul of a man.

With black covered faces and hard calloused hand,
We work the dark tunnels unable to stand
To labour and toil as we harvest the coals
We silently pray "Lord, please harvest our souls".

Just a corner near heaven when we grow too old,
Our backs just won't bend Lord to shovel the coal
Lift us out of the pit where the sun never shines
Cos it gets mighty weary down here in the mines.

But we'd rather be us Lord, thou' no riches we show,
Though tired and weary, we're just glad to know,
When the Great Seal is broken the pages will tell
That we've already spent our time living in Hell.

W. Calvert

NO DAYLIGHT FOR OVER A WEEK



MINERS COME UP DAZED AND HAGGARD AFTER 177-HOUR NIGHT

After more than a week in the mine-nearly a mile underground, the 184 "stay-down-the-pit" strikers of Nine Mile Point Colliery came to the surface yesterday. (Here you see some of them.) They were dazed by the daylight and by their first view of the world for 177 hours. Relatives and friends swarming down the banks to embrace them found them haggard and bearded and grimy. Some were in a state of collapse and were put to bed to await doctors' orders.

1.Cyril Standley 2.Ted Williams 3.Eric White
4.David Price 5.Ossie Williams 6.Tom Warman