From 'salt of the earth' to 'enemy within': How the defeat of the 1984-85 miner's strike reframed the relationship between the British state and its workers

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Bryony MacLeod

The aim of this paper is to examine the defeat of the 1984-1985 miners' strike and assess whether an alternative strategy could have yielded a successful outcome for the miners, or if the writing was on the wall from the outset. It will look at the consequences of the government's ideological neoliberal victory and the long-term ramifications for the relationship between the British state and worker, arguing that the Thatcher government purposefully dismantled and discredited the trade union movement, entrenching the values of meritocracy and a flexible labour market in the British economy. The legacy of these events can be seen in the suppression of wages and stagnation in improvement of living standards, greatly damaging the economic autonomy and community integrity of working class communities in the initial aftermath. The result of this was widespread intergenerational poverty, extending also to encompass middle class professionals in the 21st century.

'Given the degree of preparation by ministers, the range of resources at the state's disposal, and the manner in which much of the media focused both on Scargill per se and graphic images of picket-line violence (thereby ensuring that public opinion was generally negative or hostile towards the NUM), the miners' defeat in 1985, a year after the strike began, was virtually inevitable. Perhaps the only surprise was that the strike lasted as long as it did.'[1]

BRYONY MACLEOD studied a joint degree in Politics and Economic & Social History. Her research interests focus on the history of social and economic justice, security studies, and conflict resolution with a particular interest in the Middle East. Bryony hopes to pursue a postgraduate degree in International Relations, and wishes for a career in the field.

[1] Dorey, P, '"It was Just Like Arming to Face the Threat of Hitler in the late 1930s". The Ridley Report and the Conservative Party's Preparations for the 1984–85 Miners' Strike', Historical Studies in Industrial Relations, 34 (2013), 197.

The 1984-85 miners' strike broke the trade union movement and propelled Britain from its experiment in social democracy[2] - a project which had developed and grown over the past century, particularly after 1945 - into its modern neoliberal incarnation. The strike was a response to deindustrialisation[3] and the Thatcher government's war on trade unions as a key policy issue of its radical right-wing political agenda. It was triggered by Ian MacGregor's - the new chairman of the National Coal Board (NCB) - announcement of the closure of 20 'uneconomic' pits and the loss of 20,000 jobs, a number believed to be far short of the total by the National Union of Miners (NUM)[4]. As a strike, it was atypical in that its objective was not confined to short-term material goals such as improved wages or working conditions. This time the future of mining and the industrial professions was at stake, as were the survival of worker's rights, working class communities, and the trade union movement.

The miners fought a long and arduous battle, but despite their achievement of maintaining a year-long strike and widespread support, they were ultimately unable to secure their objectives. The Conservative government approached the dispute with ruthless determination, according to the left-wing Socialist register the groundwork for total defeat was laid down years before the strike[5], as evidenced by the comprehensive strategy outlined in the Ridley plan[6] and Keith Joseph's Stepping Stones report[7]. By 1984 a series of anti-union employment laws were on the statute book[8], the National Reporting Centre (NRC)[9] had been established and was ready to coordinate a rapid response police force trained in riot control and drawn from all over the country, a judiciary ill-disposed towards militant unionism was in place, coal stocks were high, diversification of the energy industry was

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[2] Ackers, P, 'Gramsci at the Miners' Strike: Remembering the 1984-1985 Eurocommunist Alternative Industrial Relations Strategy', Labour History, 55.2 (2014), 151-152

[3] Turner, R, 'Post-War Pit Closures: The Politics of De-Industrialisation', Political Quarterly, 56.2 (April 1985), p.167

[4] Philips, J, 'The Miner's Strike in Britain, 1984-85', Campaigning for change: can we learn from history?, Friends of the Earth, (2016), pp. 145

[5] Saville, J, 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike, 1984–5', The Socialist Register, 22 (1985–86), p. 295

[6] Ridley, R, 'Report of Nationalised Industries Policy Group (leaked Ridley report)', Margaret Thatcher Foundation, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110795

[7] Joseph, K and Strauss, N, 'Stepping Stones Report', Margaret Thatcher Foundation, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/111771

[8] Saville, J, 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike, 1984–5', p.299-301.

[9] Buckley, S. B, 'The state, the police and the judiciary in the miners' strike: Observations and discussions, thirty years on', Capital & Class, vol. 39, (2015), pp. 425.

underway, unemployment was at 11.5%[10], the national media outlets at the time ranged from those actively discrediting the miners to those who were lacklustre in challenging the dominant narrative espoused by Thatcher and the NCB, social security benefits were restricted for strikers and their dependants, condemning many families to poverty. The government was willing to commit millions of pounds towards securing unassailable ideological victory[11]. In addition to these exogenous factors, the striking miners lacked unity within their own ranks, particularly in Nottingham. The controversial issue of a national ballot came to epitomise this divide and was seized upon by the miners' opponents in order to discredit the strike.

Defeating the miners' strike marked a watershed moment in British politics and, 30 years on, is still a highly relevant area of study, informing both academic analysis and political response to our current values and policy debates. The snap election of 2017 is testament to this dichotomous debate, the Labour manifesto[12] harkening back to the moral economy of the Labour government of 1945 and the Conservative manifesto emphasising tax breaks for the wealthy and the further shrinking of the welfare state[13], the Labour party being faced with the uphill struggle to challenge the popular neoliberal narrative. This paper will examine each element of the miners' defeat and assess whether a different approach could have yielded a successful outcome or if the writing was on the wall from the outset. It will also look at the consequences of the government's victory and the ramifications for the British worker.

The 1970s and 1980s were typified by increasing political polarisation, Thatcher's radical right to Scargill's militant left served as an apt microcosm of the global political landscape of communism versus capitalism. Both ends of the political spectrum were increasingly frustrated by a series of inadequate Labour and Conservative governments who had promised much in their attempts to please the majority but had served neither. Unemployment was rising, the oil crisis and stagflation had caused severe national disruption, anxiety over economic decline and Britain's global status was rife, and a series

[10] Denman, J, 'Unemployment statistics from 1881 to the present day', Office of National Statistics, (1996), p.7

[11] Phillips, J, 'Containing, Isolating and Defeating the Miners: the UK Cabinet Ministerial Group on Coal and the three phases of the 1984–5 Strike', Historical Studies in Industrial Relations, 35 (2014), p.137

[12] The Labour Party Manifesto 2017

[13] The Conservative Party Manifesto 2017

of large-scale industrial disputes had challenged the authority of the political establishment. Think tanks and campaign groups were established with the purpose of furthering a right-wing political agenda out of frustration with the failures of the post-war 'consensus' and Keynesian economics. It was felt by the right-wing of the Conservative party, the National Association for Freedom (NAFF), the Institute for Economic Affairs, and the Centre for Policy Studies that a radical restructuring of the economy was required with a focus on monetarism, privatisation, and the weakening of trade unions[14].

The 'Ridley Plan' and 'Stepping Stones'[15] were the building blocks of this policy direction, forming the basis of Thatcherism. Both documents adopt a tone of hyperbolic catastrophe in their depiction of Britain as a 'sick society' with a 'moribund economy[16], in desperate need of rescuing from the clutches of socialism and the thrall of the Labour party and the unions. The report of the Nationalised Industry Policy Group, a Conservative research group headed by Nick Ridley documented their findings on how best to manage the economically inefficient nationalised industries and set out a plan for denationalisation. The main thrust of their argument was that by implementing greater incentives for profitable sectors and successful managers, retracting government subsidies, and fragmenting the nationalised industries, it would then be possible to maximise the advantages of diversification and competition to achieve the dual purpose of releasing the state from the economic burden of supporting cumbersome industries and liberating the economy from the monopolistic power of those industries and their unions.

The confidential annexe of the Ridley Report[17], entitled 'Countering the Political Threat' designated coal, electricity, and the docks as the three most likely battlegrounds in the event of discontent at the election of a Tory government and the implementation of the Ridley plan. This threat and the 'full force of communist disruptors'[18] were to be defeated in five steps. First,

[14] Saville, J, 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike, 1984–5', pp.295-301

[15] Dorey, P. 'The Stepping Stones Programme: The Conservative Party's Struggle to Develop a Trade Union Policy, 1975-1979' Historical Studies in Industrial Relations (HSIR) 31/32 (2011), pp.115–54

[16] Joseph, K and Strauss, N, 'Stepping Stones Report', Margaret Thatcher Foundation, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/111771

[17] Ridley, R, 'Report of Nationalised Industries Policy Group (leaked Ridley report)', Margaret Thatcher Foundation, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110795

[18] Dorey, P, '"It was Just Like Arming to Face the Threat of Hitler in the late 1930s". The Ridley Report and the Conservative Party's Preparations for the 1984–85 Miners' Strike', Historical Studies in Industrial Relations, 34 (2013), 182.

higher wages should be afforded to the vulnerable industries to deter rebellion. Second, a battle should be provoked in a non-vulnerable industry in which the government could be confident of victory and the vulnerable industries would be discouraged from launching an attack. Third, coal is named the most likely area of conflict. The tactics for defeating it would be to build up maximum coal stocks, particularly at power stations, the hiring of non-union lorry drivers who would be willing to transport coal across picket lines, and the installation of dual coal/oil capabilities in all power stations. Fourth, the government should restrict social security payments to striking miners and their dependants leaving the unions to finance the living expenses of all members participating in strike action and their families. Fifth, there must be a large mobile police squad to deal with violent picketing[19]. Each step of the Ridley plan was implemented with scrupulous adherence to a document published seven years before the strike began. The government's actions were not a reaction to the much maligned allegedly undemocratic and violent strike masterminded by the despotic communist president of the NUM, Arthur Scargill. It was a carefully planned and executed battle plan as part of a long-term strategy to weaken and abolish nationalised industries and the trade unions, dismantling the civil liberties of working people in the process.

The whole argument of an inefficient industry as a drain on the economy is problematic in the case of mining as it is based on highly questionable methods of accounting. The fiction of the terminally poor economic performance of the mining industry has been refuted by economists such as Andrew Glyn[20] and Emile Woolf[21]. On closer inspection of the mining industry's finances Glyn found that operating costs were grossly exaggerated by including such outgoings as redundancy payments from former closures, pensions, and interest on government loans, all costs that would continue regardless of whether pits closed or remained open. The costs incurred by the rapid closure programme consisted of cash incentives offered to strike breakers, vast amounts spent on policing, unemployment benefits for thousands of unemployed miners, and the resulting loss in income tax receipts. It is estimated (conservatively) that the strike cost the government £6 billion (£14

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[19] Ridley, R, 'Report of Nationalised Industries Policy Group' (1977)

[20] Philips, J, 'Contested memories: The Scottish parliament and the 1984–5 miners' strike', Scottish Affairs 24.2 (2015): pp. 190-191

[21] Saville, J, 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike, 1984–5' pp.317-321.

billion in 2014 prices)[22]. Wholly false economic arguments captured the public consciousness of 'common sense' and the persistent failure of opposing political forces to effectively refute misleading lines of reasoning before the argument has been lost has had severe and far-reaching social, political, and economic ramifications. The Labour front bench were disinclined to strongly associate their party with the NUM under the leadership of the fervently left-wing Arthur Scargill and they failed to make a compelling case against Thatcher's depiction of the miners as 'the enemy within'[23] and the depiction of their actions as violence and anarchy against the state[24].

Thatcher was first elected as Prime minister in 1979 with a comfortable majority of 339 seats to Labour's 269. In 1983 she increased her share of the seats to 397 to Labour's 209. Such a clear mandate enabled her government to confidently implement a series of restrictive legislative measures against the unions. The Employment Act 1980 limited picketing to the individual's place of work, restricted secondary industrial action and eliminated the capacity of unions to call for arbitration when employers violated agreed terms and conditions. The Employment Act 1982 limited the definition of trade dispute, confined the accepted grounds for strike action to pay and conditions, redundancies, and closely related issues. Striking for political reasons was forbidden. Trade unions were made liable for damages resulting from strikes. Funds could be sequestered upon refusal to pay fines. The Trade Union Act 1984 made striking without a ballot illegal and imposed mandatory secret ballots for the election of committee members and the decision to use funds for political reasons. Clause 6 of the Social Security Bill 1980 reduced the amount of benefits payable to the dependants of strikers by between £12 and £16. If a striking union member's wife had her own income it would result in additional cuts. These laws dramatically restricted the ability of trade unions to mount an effective opposition to the mistreatment of employees by employers, as they were intended to. They formed the skeleton of the Conservative government's long-term plan to dismantle the unions in Britain. Freeman and

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[22] Phillips, J, 'Containing, Isolating and Defeating the Miners: the UK Cabinet Ministerial Group on Coal and the three phases of the 1984–5 Strike', Historical Studies in Industrial Relations, 35 (2014), 137.

[23] Phillips, J, 'Containing, Isolating and Defeating the Miners: the UK Cabinet Ministerial Group on Coal and the three phases of the 1984–5 Strike', Historical Studies in Industrial Relations, Vol.35 (2014), pp.122

[24] Saville, J, 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike, 1984–5', The Socialist Register, 22 (1985–86), p.322.

Pelletier convincingly argue a direct correlation between these laws and a sharp and lasting decline in union density in the UK[25].

Policing played a central role in antagonising and breaking the strike. The NRC, based in London, coordinated a rapid response mobile police force to mass pickets throughout the country[26]. This style of policing was relatively new and raises questions about the legitimate use of force the state uses against its own citizens[27]. The government's decision to send thousands of police officers with no connection to the local area put both miners and police in the dangerous situation of being in a potentially violent conflict with people who are strangers, defined as mutual enemies, as opposed to neighbours[28]. The risks of losing control through fear of an unknown adversary when there will be no ongoing relationship and need for reconciliation, are greatly increased. Violence by both pickets and police was captured on film and reported in oral history testimonies, and while many miners were arrested and charged with crimes of breach of the peace and rioting there has been no investigation into unprovoked police brutality, unjust arrests, and the prohibition of the pursuit of civil rights. Parallels can be drawn between policing and media coverage[29] during the strike, particularly at Orgreave, and the tragedy of the Hillsborough disaster[30]. A campaign to conduct a Hillsborough style investigation into Orgreave is ongoing.

At the time of the strike he NUM was a powerful union with a long history of successfully negotiating wage settlements and acting with strength, unity, and pragmatism. The NUM had led successful strikes in 1972 and 1974 over wage levels, and in 1981 their threatened strike action won them the victories of averting pit closures, securing a reduction in coal imports and a rise in

[25] Freeman, R and Pelletier, J, 'The Impact of Industrial Relations Legislation on British Union Density, British Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 28(2), (1990), pp.141-164.

[26] Wallington, P, 'Policing the Miners' Strike', Industrial Law Journal, Vol. 14 (1985) pp. 146-147.

[27] Buckley, S. B, 'The state, the police and the judiciary in the miners' strike: Observations and discussions, thirty years on', Capital & Class, vol. 39, (2015), pp. 419-434.

[28] Buckley, S. B, 'The state, the police and the judiciary in the miners' strike: Observations and discussions, thirty years on', Capital & Class, vol. 39, (2015), pp. 425-426.

[29] Hart, Christopher. "Metaphor and intertextuality in media framings of the (1984–1985) British Miners' Strike: A multimodal analysis." Discourse & Communication 11.1 (2017): 3-30.

[30] Philips, J, 'The Miner's Strike in Britain, 1984-85', Campaigning for change: can we learn from history?, Friends of the Earth, (2016), pp. 152.

subsidies. In retrospect, this was a temporary set-back rather than a defeat for the government and perhaps a failure of the NUM to really maximise their advantage. The government made a tactical retreat and used the next few years to strengthen their position[31]. The decline of the coal mining industry in Britain began after World War One (WW1) and ended in December 2015 with the closure of Kellingley colliery in North Yorkshire, the last deep coal mine in Britain. Coal production in Britain peaked in 1913 with 3024 deep coal mines producing an output of 292 million tonnes, employing 1,107,000 people. The table on page 7 shows the decline from 1913 to the present day with emphasis on the period from 1970 to 1990 to illustrate the state of the industry directly before, during, and after the 1984-85 strike. Pit closures happened continuously throughout this period and was by no means the exclusive pursuit of Conservative governments, Labour governments also played their part in deindustrialisation. The unique elements of the Thatcher years were the ideological ruthlessness and lack of concern that mass unemployment and the destruction of communities was a foregone conclusion. Unemployment was at its highest level since 1938[32] when the strike began, a great asset to the Prime Minister in her struggle against the miners. The collective bargaining power of the labour market was weak, consequently a ready supply of non-unionised workers was willing to cross picket lines and transport coal. Miners facing redundancy had little hope of securing employment in an alternative profession and the impact on communities whose social and economic fabric had depended on the mine for generations was severe and far-reaching.

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[31] Brotherstone, T and Pirani, S, 'Were There Alternatives? Movements from Below in the Scottish Coalfield, the Communist Party, and Thatcherism, 1981-1985', Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory, 36-7 (2005), p.104

[32] Denman, J, 'Unemployment statistics from 1881 to the present day', Office of National Statistics, (1996), pp. 7

Deep Mine Coal Production UK 1913-2015			
Year	Number of Deep Mines	Deep mined	Employment
1913	3024	292	1107
1945	1570	177	702
1960	1167	189	607
1970	293	137	290
1971	289	136	286
1972	282	109	274
1973	261	120	252
1974	250	100	253
1975	241	117	252
1976	239	110	250
1977	231	107	248
1978	223	108	240
1979	219	108	242
1980	213	112	237
1981	200	110	172
1982	191	106	164
1983	170	102	148
1984	169	35	139
1985	133	75	114
1986	110	90	91
1987	94	86	75
1988	86	84	69
1989	73	80	56
1990	65	73	49
2000	33	17	11
2010	10	18	6
2015	5	9	2

Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, (2016)

The government had the solidarity of common purpose lacking in the heterogeneous mining communities dispersed throughout the country. The NUM has a federalised structure, each area has its own leadership, history, and priorities[33]. The divisions were especially acute between the more profitable areas due to favourable geological conditions on the one hand and those who were more vulnerable to closure on the other. Nottingham (Notts) was the second largest coal field in the UK and the most profitable, miners working there felt relatively secure and were less inclined to endure the hardships of a long strike. The Notts workforce was more diverse than most, composed of many miners whose origins and family history were not bound to the geographical location of the Nottingham mines and who had been relocated due to the closure of their home pit[34]. The practice of striking and picketing has a long history of contention between mining localities, going back to the 1926 general strike. This was fundamental in the refusal of Nottinghamshire miners to participate in 1984-85. The lack of a national ballot before the strike and mass picketing began was highly controversial at the time and remains so.

The sudden closure of Cortonwood in March 1984 marked the beginning of the national strike. The pit had many years of coal left to mine and workers had been transferred there just two weeks prior to the announcement with the assurance of several years' work. The timing of this closure was inopportune for the miners and propitious for the government and the NCB. Not only was it spring and coal stocks were quite sufficient to keep power stations active for months, the suddenness provoked the NUM into immediate strike action without having time to galvanise popular support across the federalised unions. The NUM leadership were operating under Rule 41 and the 'dominoes strategy'[35], allowing individual areas to go out on strike and seek to persuade others to follow through the use of flying pickets. The Nottinghamshire miners fundamentally disagreed with the NUM national leadership over the interpretation of the NUM rulebook, the extent to which the whole industry was at threat, and the most effective or appropriate

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[33] Howell, D 'Defiant Dominoes: Working Miners and the 1984–5 Strike', in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders, eds, Making Thatcher's Britain (Cambridge University Press), 148–64

[34] Amos, D, 'The Nottinghamshire miners, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the 1984-85 miners' strike: scabs or scapegoats?' PhD thesis, University of Nottingham. (2012), Ch. 5.

[35] Howell, D 'Defiant Dominoes: Working Miners and the 1984–5 Strike', in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders, eds, Making Thatcher's Britain (Cambridge University Press), 148–64

response to the proposed programme of closures[36]. These differences of opinion were exacerbated by lack of adequate communication by the NUM and some unfortunate incidents of violence and aggression perpetrated by Yorkshire pickets against Notts working miners at the onset of the strike[37]. The Notts area were adamant that a national ballot was the only way to legitimise a strike whereas the NUM were determined to pursue a national strike area by area. These divisions lasted throughout the strike and beyond, many ex miners blaming the Notts so-called scabs for their defeat and many Notts miners were angry at what they felt was unjust vilification. Both sides of this argument have substance and it is regrettable that the differences were insurmountable. The miners were plainly outmatched by the government's singular focus and access to vast resources, the one possible hope for victory would have been total national unity across the NUM and the other trade unions. The solidarity shown, particularly by Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) and Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) enabled the strike to last far longer than would have been possible without their support and was a great show of working class solidarity with other marginalised groups across society[38] [39]. However, the lack of full support from every miner fatally weakened the strike.

The 1984-85 miners' strike resulted in defeat for the miners, leaving a legacy of broken unions[40], communities in decline, and the ideological dominance of neoliberal governance and economics. The defeat of the archetypal respectable, hard-working, communities of miners and their supporters was a sobering event for the working class and the left. The establishment's victory seemed total. Members of the proud and industrious working class mining communities were left with few economic opportunities or support to regenerate the abandoned industrial towns. Once the engine of Britain's industrial revolution, now they were denigrated as 'the enemy within' and abandoned. Many found themselves trapped in the benefits system, working in low paid and low skilled jobs, unemployed, or

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[36] Griffin, C, '"Notts. have some very peculiar history": Understanding the Reaction of the Nottinghamshire Miners to the 1984–85 Strike', Historical Studies in Industrial Relations 19 (2005), 63–99

[37] Samuel, R, Bloomfield, B and Boanas, G, 'Enemy Within: Pit Villages and the Miners' Strike of 1984   85', History Workshop Series, Routledge, (1987), Ch. 1 & 2.

[38] Kelliher, 'Solidarity and Sexuality: Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, 1984–5', History Workshop Journal, 77.1 (2014), 240-62

[39] Bradley, H 'No More Heroes? Reflections on the 20th anniversary of the miners' strike and the   culture of opposition', Work, Employment and Society, 22.2 (2008), 337-49

[40] Phillips, J, 'Containing, Isolating and Defeating the Miners: the UK Cabinet Ministerial Group on Coal and the three phases of the 1984–5 Strike', p. 141.

suffering from health problems or drug and alcohol dependency. Despite claims made against the NUM of monopolising the industry, their dominance was fragile and vulnerable to the vast amount of alternative resources at the disposal of the government. The last vestiges of collective working-class pride and dignity were lost with the defeat of the 1984-85 miner's strike. The former working-class heroes who had served Britain at great personal sacrifice – in terms of a 'high risk working environment and community isolation'[41] - had been redefined as 'enemies within'[42] and subsequently became drains on society as their prospects for meaningful employment opportunities and economic independence were taken away and replaced with dependence on the state for financial assistance and the stigmatisation attached to this new economic reality.

Thatcher's politics of individualism and self-interest appealed to large sections of the electorate as shown by consecutive sweeping victories at the ballot box, they were not imposed upon a population defenceless against the tide of neoliberalism. There was a willingness of many to ignore the basic needs and civil liberties of the working class and all groups marginalised by the politics of individualism. Trade unionism, characterised as an aggressive attack on the sanctity of democratic governance by right-wing opponents, is no more or less than the collective voice of the workforce as the cogs of the economy to ensure good working practices and fair conditions. Unionism is the means through which workers secure wage levels above inflation to ward against pay cuts in real terms, protect themselves against discrimination and unfair dismissal, ensure safety in the workplace, negotiate and administrate pensions and sickness pay. They provide a vital channel of communication between workers and employers. The weakening of trade unions has rendered workers vulnerable to the new modus operandi of precarious work in modern Britain. Recourse to justice is inaccessible in terms of cost and unavailable to those who need it, giving employers the freedom to act with impunity in relation to their workforce. This does not of course mean that all employers abuse this position of power but it has been made entirely possible for those that choose to.

The characterisation of the 'salt of the earth' miners as an enemy of the state and a threat to the stable governance and economic security of Britain reframed the relationship between state and citizen and had far reaching consequences. The

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[41] Arnold, J. (2016). "The Death of Sympathy." Coal Mining, Workplace Hazards, and the Politics of Risk in Britain, ca. 1970-1990. Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung, 41(1 (155)), p. 102.

[42] Ibid, p. 103.

Thatcher government's assertion that 'hard-work pays'[43] placed the onus of economic security upon the individual rather than the structural conditions of the economic system and popularised the arguably false belief that a person's wealth or lack of it is entirely dependent upon a person's work ethic or talent, solidifying the commitment of successive British governments to the values of meritocracy and thereby relinquishing the state from the responsibility of fixing structural inequality. The responsibility of the citizen to contribute to the state was given pre-eminence over the duty of care of the state. Sacrifice with minimal recompense is now an entrenched expectation of many of the groups of workers who provide vital services to British society. Educators, doctors, soldiers, police officers, and women working as unpaid carers to children and relatives are obliged to work longer hours with declining salaries, the 2016 dispute between junior doctors and Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt is a contemporary example of this ideological debate[44]. The prospects of future generations are greatly inhibited by this dominant narrative, allowing success and prosperity for the privileged few as welfare is stripped from successive groups[45] and the cost of living rises. The result of the upcoming general election in 2017 will decide whether this trajectory will continue or whether it will be reversed and the state will reclaim the role of serving and enabling the many[46].

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[43] Arnold, J. (2016). "The Death of Sympathy." Coal Mining, Workplace Hazards, and the Politics of Risk in Britain, ca. 1970-1990. Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung, 41(1 (155)), p. 105.

[44] Owen Jones 'Jeremy Hunt's battle with junior doctors is his miners' strike moment', The Guardian, (2016), https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/26/jeremy-hunt-crush-junior-doctors-miners-strike

[45] Stanton, Richard, et al. "Who's next? Cuts to welfare often target immigrants first but then move to nationals." British Politics and Policy at LSE (2016).

[46] Labour Party Manifesto 2017

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