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Janet Elizabeth Chapman

Aspects of the Response of the Churches to the 1984-5 Industrial Dispute
in the British Coal Industry.

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts,
Department of Theology, University of Durham.

1991.

ABSTRACT

For twelve months, from March 1984, the British coal industry was embroiled in a highly political industrial dispute, initially provoked by the sudden announcement of the closure of Cortonwood Colliery.

The aims of this thesis are -

- a) to identify some of the ethical and theological issues raised by the dispute;
- b) to document the involvement of the different levels of the Christian church in the dispute;
- c) to identify patterns of theological thought and action;
- d) to discern what lessons there are to be learnt for the church.

After giving a brief factual background to the dispute, attention is turned to the different parties to the dispute and their understanding of events, with key ethical issues raised by the dispute being identified.

The focus then shifts to the various attempts of the churches at regional and national level to respond to the events and issues of the dispute being described. Clergy, churchmembers and mining people from several pit communities in Durham and South Yorkshire have been interviewed and the results are summarised. The church responses are then analysed using a typology adapted from that devised by Drs D.G.A. Koelega in the report 'Unemployment: Work for the Church' (Driebergen, 1986) and issues raised by the responses are discussed further.

Overall, it was concluded that the more the church became involved in ministering to those caught up in the dispute the more she was able to promote discussion of the underlying ethical issues. However, the church response was weakened by lack of communication between the various denominations, and the church would have made a more distinctly Christian response if she had concentrated more on probing the underlying ethical issues rather than on trying to produce specific peace formulas.

Aspects of the Response of the Churches
to the 1984-5 Industrial Dispute
in the British Coal Industry.

Janet Elizabeth Chapman

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University of Durham

1991



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DECLARATIONS

No material for this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCC	British Council of Churches
BR	British Rail
BSC	British Steel Corporation
BSR	Board for Social Responsibility
CEGB	Central Electricity Generating Board
C. of E.	Church of England
COSPEC	Christian Organisations for Social, Political and Economic Change
DSR	Division of Social Responsibility (Methodist Church)
GS	General Synod
ISTC	Iron and Steel Trades Confederation
ITN	Independent Television News
JPSS	Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society
MINOS	Mine Operating System
MFGB	Miners' Federation of Great Britain
NACODS	National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers
NCB	National Coal Board
NEC	National Executive of the NUM
NIM	Northumbrian Industrial Mission
NRC	National Reporting Centre
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
PCC	Parochial Church Council
PSU	Police Support Unit
QSRE	Quaker Social Responsibility and Education
SIM	Sheffield Industrial Mission
SDC	Special Delegate Conference
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trade Union Congress

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My husband, Peter, well merits a mention for never allowing me to give up and for entertaining our daughter whilst "Mum disappears into the study..... again!"

INTRODUCTION

From spring 1984 until spring 1985 there was a bitter dispute within the coal mining industry in Britain. Strike action was taken by a considerable number of miners for many months and the dispute raised many questions about the conduct of industrial disputes. The Christian Church became embroiled in the dispute at many levels; church members were on strike, ministers were spotted on the picket line, bishops' comments on the dispute made the headlines.

The aims of this thesis are -

- a) to identify some of the ethical and theological issues raised by the dispute;
- b) to document the involvement of the different levels of the Christian church in the dispute;
- c) to identify patterns of theological thought and action;
- d) to discern what lessons there are to be learnt for the church.

The first task was to understand the recent history of the coal-mining industry in Britain and the events which led up to this dispute, as well as the actual events of the strike. The reasons for the mining dispute were complex and have been a matter of considerable debate. The first two chapters of this thesis will give a brief background to the dispute and describe the main events during its course.

In chapter 3 attention will be paid to the different parties to the dispute and their understanding of the strike. This chapter will attempt to identify the ethical issues which were raised by the dispute and will point to later sections which consider the response of the churches.

Chapter 4 documents the attempts of the churches at regional and national level to respond to the events and issues of the dispute. The sources for this chapter include the national press and the church press, as well as papers, letters and sermons written during the course of the dispute.

Chapter 5 examines the response of the local churches, particularly in the Durham and South Yorkshire area. In these areas clergy, churchmembers and mining people have been interviewed in order to build up a picture of

the church response. In these interviews I have worked with the Working Party set up by the Sheffield Diocesan Board of Social Responsibility which has produced the report 'The Church in the Mining Communities'. Although our spheres of interest were different we have been able to share much original material.

The last chapter, chapter 6, analyses the church responses, drawing heavily on the work of Drs D.G.A. Koelega in the report 'Unemployment: Work for the Church', in order to discern any relationships between theological thought and action. Koelega has evolved a typology which he used to classify church responses to unemployment. This typology has required only minor adaptation in order to become a useful tool to analyse church responses to the coal dispute. This chapter also considers further the role of church leaders in a crisis such as the coal dispute, and the tension that exists between obtaining a speedy settlement to the dispute and a just settlement. These were two issues which troubled many church people during the course of the strike and influenced their response to it.

Finally, the conclusions are drawn. These include the claim that the contribution of the churches during the coal dispute was greatly valued by the pit communities and the more the church became involved the more she was able to promote discussion of the underlying ethical issues. However, the church response was weakened by lack of communication between the various denominations, and the church would have made a more distinctly Christian response if she had concentrated more on probing the underlying ethical issues rather than on trying to produce specific peace formulas.

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CHAPTER 1

Background to the 1984-5 Coal Dispute

1.1 Introduction

On the eve of the nationalisation of the coal industry (1 January 1947) there were just over 700,000 men employed in 980 pits (Adeney & Lloyd, p12). On the eve of the 1984-5 coal dispute there were 180,000 people (Heffer, pxii) employed in 179 pits (Wilsher et. al., p54).

This massive reduction in manpower was a primary reason for the start of the dispute. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) stickers read 'Coal not dole' and this slogan summarised the essence of their protest. Set against a national unemployment rate of 11.6% (Central Statistical Office) the sudden announcement of the closure of Cortonwood colliery, followed rapidly by the announcement of a 4 million tonne reduction in production, which implied the closure of 20 pits and 20,000 redundancies (Wilsher et. al., p49-50) was too much for many miners to swallow, and protest action quickly escalated from the Yorkshire area to involve the majority of NUM members.

However, the strike was not simply a protest against pit closures. Some believe that it was deliberately provoked by the Government, whilst others hold that Arthur Scargill, the President of the NUM, was attempting to stir up class warfare and bring down the Government. It is rare that there is a simple reason for any strike. Sometimes one particular grievance acts as a trigger, but attitudes which have developed beforehand also shape the type and extent of any industrial action. It is therefore necessary to examine the recent history and the future prospects of the coal industry, including its industrial relations, the pressures it was under from various quarters, and the impact of new technology.

1.2 The economic climate within which the National Coal Board had to work

Since the nationalisation of the coal mines in 1947 there have been wide fluctuations in the demand for coal. At first the newly nationalised industry could not produce enough coal to meet the demand. The first Plan for Coal was drawn up in 1950 and set an output target of 240 million tonnes a year to be realised through a massive investment programme (Wilsher et al., p5). Just as this target came within reach, the home consumption of coal plunged dramatically with the advent of cheap oil, natural gas and nuclear power. By 1974 annual output had been cut to 113 million tonnes (Lloyd, p13) and many high-cost pits were closed, even where they had large reserves (Wilsher et al., p20).

With the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war in the Middle East in 1973 oil prices quadrupled. This led to a sudden increase in the demand for coal, but the run-down coal industry could not meet the market, so the industry once more embarked on an investment programme (Jenner, p66) and the 1974 Plan for Coal was drawn up. The Plan was a tripartite agreement, endorsed by the Government, the National Coal Board (NCB) and the NUM, and output targets were set at 135 million tonnes by 1985 and 170-200 million tonnes by the year 2000.

The 1974 Plan envisaged that about 2 million tonnes a year of capacity would be lost through exhaustion (Adeney & Lloyd, p18), but although some pits closed, the loss was well short of that proposed because of the continued high demand for coal.

By the end of the 1970's productivity had picked up and new capacity was coming on-stream. Then, suddenly, the market collapsed due to the combination of the world-wide recession and the increasing success of energy conservation which had been embarked on in response to the high oil prices (Adeney & Lloyd, p19). Having geared themselves up to steadily increase production, the NCB found themselves over-producing on a massive scale and coal stocks rose. The pressure to take remedial action was hastened by a change in Government and thus Government policy towards nationalised industries which "laid down that the NCB must break-even,

without an operating subsidy, by at the latest the financial year of 1983-4" (Wilsher et al., p23). It was back to the drastic run-down policy of the 1960's, but now unemployment was much higher and pit closures would no longer go through on the nod.

In February 1981, when the NCB Chairman, Sir Derek Ezra, outlined the implications of Government policy and estimated that "between 20 and 50 pits would close over the next five years" (Adeney & Lloyd, p19), union reaction was to threaten a national strike ballot. The Government and the Board backed off a little and it was agreed to continue the 1972 review procedure before closing any pit (Lloyd, p5), thus slowing down the process. However, under Sir Norman Siddall's chairmanship of the NCB (1982-3) the pace of closure was gently stepped up with 20 pits and 20,000 jobs lost (Lloyd, p12). Of those remaining, many were struggling to break even financially (Wilsher et al., p30).

In 1983 Ian MacGregor took over Chairmanship of the NCB. He agreed with the Department of Energy's view that the basic objective of the NCB "must be to earn a satisfactory return on its assets, after payment of social grants" (MacGregor, p133), and this was to have implications for the rate of pit closures.

1.3 Changes in Mining Technology and their implications

Thirty years ago coal was hacked out of the seams with a pick. By the mid 1980's extraction was a technologically sophisticated operation. There had been three significant changes. First, power-loading, which involved the use of "powered hydraulic roof support, the rotary cutter and the armoured conveyor belt" (Wilsher et al., p7), was in common usage by the 1960's. Secondly, the 1980's saw introduction of the mine operating system (MINOS). MINOS is "a computer system whose aim is to monitor and direct all activities in the pit from a control room on the surface" (Callinicos and Simons, p40). Thirdly, alongside the implementation of MINOS there has been the creation of super-pits, such as the new Selby complex and the grouping of sixteen pits in the Barnsley area into three complexes with shared facilities. All this has led to massive increases in productivity, reductions in manpower and considerable

deskilling of the remaining tasks; for instance, the grouping in Barnsley has "enabled an optimization in resources such that output is increased by 21% and manpower reduced by 21%" (Winterton, p237).

These huge productivity increases, at a time of falling demand for coal, have increased the pressure to close the less productive pits. No area would be free from job losses, but as MINOS investment has been concentrated in the central coalfields, the peripheral areas of Scotland, South Wales, Durham and Kent would bear the brunt of the pit closures as lack of investment in these areas meant that these pits were the least productive.

Back in 1960, E.F. Schumacher, then an economic advisor to the NCB, was warning against referring to high-cost pits as 'uneconomic' as the concepts of 'economic' and 'uneconomic' cannot be applied to the extraction of non-renewable resources without great caution. Once a pit is closed the remaining reserves are effectively sterilized, as it is usually both dangerous and extremely expensive to re-open a closed colliery.

Furthermore, the automated mining techniques are extremely wasteful. "The machinery depends upon large seams and cannot mine smaller ones. It also take out the centre of a seam and wastes the top and bottom in order to avoid including non-carbonous material, which would slow down production (Skirrow, p1). Schumacher has also questioned the morality of taking the best resources and leaving the worst and adds "it is surely a criminal policy if, in addition, we wilfully sterilize, abandon, and thereby ruin such inferior resources as we ourselves have opened up but do not care to utilize (Winterton, p239, quoting Schumacher).

The new technology and restructuring of pits can also be criticised on health and safety grounds. As MINOS reduces down-time in machine-cutting the face-workers are increasingly exposed to the existing hazards, particularly dust. It also means increased work-surveillance, more managerial control, deskilling and social isolation which will probably lead to more occupational stress and stress-related illnesses (Winterton, p240), and therefore become a potential source of malcontent amongst the workforce.

1.4 Industrial Relations in the Coal Industry

Occurring alongside the formation of the NCB was the creation of the NUM which developed out of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB). In the early days of nationalisation a year long strike would have been unthinkable, though local, unofficial strikes were commonplace. Nationalisation brought with it an elaborate structure of conciliation and consultation. Both sides agreed to arbitration machinery and the NUM passed a rule which meant that a two-thirds majority was required for strike action (Adeney and Lloyd, p13). The nationalised coal industry was a "symbol of consensus, a post-war bargain between organised labour and the establishment" (Adeney and Lloyd, p12). The 1984-5 coal dispute demonstrated very clearly that this consensus no longer held.

In 1971 the NUM reduced the majority needed to sanction a strike to 55% (Crick, p49) and after the rejection of its pay claim the "first national coal strike since 1926 began on 9th January (1972)" (Crick, p53). This was the first step towards the breaking-down of the consensus. "By February (1972) the strike was hitting home, as a succession of power cuts showed" (Callinicos and Simons, p28). "The Government had called a State of Emergency and appointed a Court of Inquiry, under Lord Wilberforce, to look into the miners' case" (Crick, p62). The inquiry recommended wage increases averaging 27%. Two years later, the NUM were again using strike action to try to increase their pay but this time the economy was being threatened by inflation and the Conservative Government was determined to try to resist the NUM's demands for fear setting the pace for a series of inflationary pay rises. However, after there had been an 81% vote in favour of the strike, the Prime Minister suspended parliament and called a General Election.

The election returned Labour to office and the dispute was quickly settled with the miners receiving their pay increase. The return of a Labour Government heralded a new era of consensual industrial relations in the coal industry and the 1974 Plan for Coal, drawn up at a time when the demand for coal had resurged, painted a rosy future for the coal-industry. But the union, having achieved unity and proved that it was a force to be reckoned with, slowly began to lose power. Under the Social Contract, the only way to achieve reasonable pay rises was to negotiate local

productivity agreements. To avoid a showdown with the NUM the Government was prepared to collude in this, but the NUM Left was against an incentive scheme warning that it would mean "more deaths, more serious injuries, more pneumoconiosis" (Crick, p74) and that "it would reintroduce great differences in pay between areas and make it harder to achieve solidarity over industrial action in the future" (Crick, p75).

Although 61.53% voted against local productivity schemes (Crick, p74), pressure from the areas of high productivity caused the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the NUM to give way, arguing that unofficial schemes were already widespread. The Left contested the NEC's decision in the High Court "seeking injunctions against any such local agreements" (Crick, p76), but lost. Within weeks all areas had negotiated productivity schemes.

This internal wrangling set some important precedents; despite votes against the scheme by both Conference and the membership as a whole, Joe Gormley had used the power of Presidency and the support he had on the NEC to implement the scheme (Crick, p76). In 1984 the Left followed this precedent of by-passing the wishes of the union nationally by taking action area-by-area in order to escalate the industrial action (Crick, p76). Similarly, in 1977 the Left set a precedent by resorting to legal action to attempt to settle an internal dispute. In 1984, the right-wing pro-ballot miners followed suit by taking the Left to court accusing them of interpreting the rule book in their favour and working area-by-area. In 1977 the judges upheld the implementation of the productivity schemes, despite the NUM vote against them, but in 1984 the judges were to find against the Left and its by-passing of democratic procedures (Crick, p76).

And so, by the early 1980's, the strength of the NUM was in decline. The reversion to local settlements had taken away the bargaining power of the national union and, due to the savage reduction in the number of miners, the NUM was now financially and numerically weaker. The trade union movement as a whole was in retreat, with the 1978-9 'Winter of Discontent' reducing public sympathy for organised labour. Moreover, the 1979 Conservative Government, acting on its election promises to curb the power of the unions, had passed the Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982, which reduced the legal immunities of trade unions. With an anti-union

Government who were suspected of wanting to seek revenge for their 1974 defeat in office and with the appointment in September 1983 of an NCB Chairman who had a reputation for being tough with unions and a track record of pruning nationalised industries, combined with the election in April 1982 of Arthur Scargill, a militant member of the Left, as President of the NUM, the days of collaboration between the Government, the NCB and the NUM were numbered. It was surely only a matter of time before a major confrontation would take place.

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CHAPTER 2

The Coal Dispute

2.1 The beginning of the dispute

From 31st October 1983 the NUM operated an overtime ban in order to exert pressure on the NCB to improve their pay award of 5.2% and to slowdown the closure programme (Wilsher et al., p35). By December, the NCB were still not prepared to increase their pay offer (Adeney and Lloyd, p80), despite the effect the overtime ban was having on the profit and loss account (Wilsher et al., p39), but the Chairman had agreed to discuss the state of the coal industry as a whole at the next meeting with the unions, a national consultative meeting. This meeting was originally scheduled for February but was then postponed until 6th March 1984.

Meanwhile, the Board and the Government had been working on the 1984-5 budgets and these "carried closure implications which marked a significant increase on the rate set by Siddall" (Adeney and Lloyd, p85). At the end of February, MacGregor saw each of the Area Directors to discuss their targets and assess the amount of trouble likely in each Area (MacGregor, p165). The cuts were to be concentrated in four of the regions: South Wales, The North East, Scotland and South Yorkshire.

George Hayes, Area Director of South Yorkshire felt he could cut production by the necessary 500,000 tonnes by the loss of only one pit if that pit were Cortonwood and if it were closed by the end of April 1984 (Wilsher et al., p42). He announced this at the South Yorkshire quarterly review meeting on 1st March 1984. (This meeting had originally been fixed to be after the national consultative meeting but was now to be held before it, as the latter had been postponed.) In making this announcement Hayes breached the normal procedure. He should have described the pit as having 'problems' (Adeney and Lloyd, p86) and then "asked for a reconvened meeting with the branch representatives present to discuss the matter more fully" (Wilsher et al., p44). By naming a closure date, Hayes seemed to be pre-empting the colliery review procedure, although he

"insisted he wanted the procedure to go ahead" (Crick, p99). Certainly the NUM officials felt the procedure had been flouted and refused to attend further meetings (Wilsher et al., p44). Hayes also made clear that "it was an overtly economic closure...there was no market for Cortonwood coal" (Adeney and Lloyd, p86), but men had only just been transferred to the pit from Elsecar on the understanding that Cortonwood had an expected life span of a further five years, and over £1 million had recently been invested in the pit (Adeney and Lloyd, p86).

The closure announcement occurred on the Thursday. On the following Sunday, the traditionally moderate workforce of Cortonwood voted unanimously to fight the closure (Wilsher et al., p45). On Monday, 5th March, an NUM Area Council meeting was hastily convened and "voted to stop work 'as from last shift Friday 9th March to stop the action of the NCB to butcher our pits and jobs', and to call on other areas - and other unions - for immediate support" (Wilsher et al., p46), but half the pits in South Yorkshire were already out (Adeney and Lloyd, p86). They were protesting that "for the very first time...they were being asked to accept a purely economic closure in their area" (Wilsher et al., 43-4).

At the national meeting on 6th March, MacGregor announced a cut in production by 4 million tonnes for 1984-5, and agreed with Scargill's conclusion that this would mean 20 pit closures. (Adeney and Lloyd, p87). At the meeting the Board would not give assurance that there would be no compulsory redundancies and it took a further two days before their already agreed and "extremely generous and improved package" was announced (Wilsher et al., p50-1). Furthermore, it was only after intervention by Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, that Cortonwood men were informed that their pit would go through the proper procedure before closure (Adeney and Lloyd, p86-7).

Having previously spoken so much about the NCB having hit lists of pits they wished to close, and opposing commercially orientated closures, Scargill could hardly ignore the threat to Cortonwood, but would the NUM membership be prepared to fight? Three national ballots in the previous 30 months had all rejected industrial action (Lloyd, p22), the most recent being in March 1983 when the Tymawr Lewis Merthyr pit was being threatened with closure.

2.2 The Strike Escalates

Rule 43 of the NUM rule book states that

"a national strike shall only be entered upon as the result of a ballot vote of the members taken in pursuance of a resolution of Conference and a strike shall not be declared unless 55% [this was replaced by 'a simple majority' at the Special Delegate Conference on 19 April 1984] of those voting in the ballot vote in favour of such a strike..." (Crick, p149-150).

This rule had been used to authorise all previous national strikes. However, it was feared that the necessary majority would not be achieved, so the NUM's National Executive Committee (NEC) decided at its meeting on 8 March 1984, to endorse the requests they had received from Yorkshire and also Scotland, that their strikes be recognised under Rule 41 and "to give support to any other areas which wished to take similar action" (Crick, p101).

Rule 41 "was primarily designed to give the national executive control over industrial action in individual areas" (Wilsher et al., p53) but now the rule was being used to endorse area strikes which would hopefully escalate into a national strike. As Mick McGahey (Vice-President of the NUM) put it, "Area by area will decide and in my opinion it will have a domino effect" (Crick, p101).

However, many areas decided to hold local ballots, but none achieved the necessary 55% majority (Ottey, p77-8). This vindicated the NEC's view that a national ballot would not produce a strike vote, but it meant that the only way to extend the strike was by picketing. This worked in South Wales and Durham, and also in North Nottinghamshire, until that area voted 3 to 1 to remain at work (Crick, p104). Subsequently, many Nottinghamshire miners refused to be picketed out and their 'right to work' was ensured by a massive and controversial police operation (See section 3.5).

By the middle of March, about 132 pits were on strike and 42 were still working (Ottey, p76) and violence between striking miners, working miners and the police, especially in Nottinghamshire, was escalating. The NEC

was under pressure to call a national ballot, but although it seemed that a majority of the NEC supported this, when the motion was moved at their meeting on 12th April, Scargill ruled it out of order. He claimed that, as the matter had been discussed at the previous meeting, it could not be brought to a subsequent meeting (Crick, p106). Seven days later, a Special Delegates Conference (SDC) changed rule 43 so that only a simple majority was required to call a strike, but four separate motions calling for a ballot were each rejected (Crick, p106). And so "throughout the summer the miners' strike became a war between striking pickets and working miners, and between striking miners and the police" (Crick, p108).

The striking miners had few allies. Although both the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) gave considerable support, the effect of their action was reduced by much coal being transported by lorry, whilst Bill Sirs, the General Secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) stated that he would not see his members' jobs "'sacrificed on someone else's altar'... and...'the ISTC would unhesitatingly handle fuel supplies, 'scab' or otherwise, from any source that presented itself" (Wilsher et al., p85).

For a short time it seemed that the miners also had the support of the dockers. ASLEF train drivers were refusing to cross the NUM picket just outside the Immingham docks where the iron-ore for the Scunthorpe steel works was berthed. British Steel had brought in trucks to move the ore and at one point, on 6th July, the dock labour scheme was breached. The Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) called a strike. But on 20th July, whilst talks were afoot to resolve the dispute, angry lorry drivers at Dover forced their way onto ferries at Dover thus breaking the strike (Wilsher et al., p138-144). Within two days the strike was over, and when the dock scheme was more flagrantly breached at Hunterston, a few weeks later, the dockers refused to strike again (Adeney and Lloyd, p141-2).

The NUM's successes in 1972 and 1974 had been won with the help of the power workers who had refused to handle coal, and power cuts had resulted. This time the power unions were reluctant to take any supportive action. They "were undoubtedly influenced by a lack of a

ballot" (Adeney and Lloyd, p151), but with many miners working there seemed little point in taking costly sympathy action.

The only other time the NUM had the advantage of other union support was when another of the mining unions, the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS) fell into dispute with the NCB. NACODS men had continued to work during the dispute, but had pledged "moral, financial and industrial support for the NUM" (Wilsher et al., p165). However, by early autumn their relationship with the management had deteriorated to the extent that a strike ballot produced an 82.5% vote in favour of industrial action. The strike, due to commence on 25 October was called off at the eleventh hour when agreement was reached which dealt with NACODS grievances, both over their treatment during the dispute and over pit closures. It seemed that the NCB had agreed to the provision of a new independent review body to deal with pit closures with the promise that "full weight (would) be given to its findings" (Wilsher et al., p170). At this point the Trades Union Congress (TUC) intervened to see if the NUM would settle similarly, but Scargill was not impressed with the agreement with NACODS, and so the dispute continued (Wilsher et al., p170-176).

The striking miners did, however, receive financial support from many trade unions, both from official funds and extra collections. The miners, too, were busy raising money in order to maintain themselves and their dependants. Those on strike received no strike pay or social security and their dependants received reduced supplementary benefit as they were deemed to be in receipt of £15 strike pay (Booth and Smith, p368). Within weeks of the commencement of the strike, most pits had a Miners' Support Committee or a Women's Support Group which provided meals and food parcels for those no longer drawing wages.

2.3 Negotiations

Throughout the strike there were long periods without negotiations. It was not until 8th June, almost three months into the strike, that an initial attempt at negotiations was made. At the first meeting the parties "reached some degree of accommodation" (Wilsher et al., p131) but

breakdown occurred on 13th June. In the intervening few days, MacGregor, in an interview with 'The Times', had spoken of the need to eliminate uneconomic capacity, affirmed the Board's right to manage and his intention to produce a new Plan for Coal, and had predicted that the strike was only half way through (Wilsher et al., p132).

The second round of negotiations commenced on 6th July during which both sides produced a proposal to end the dispute and "they embodied a remarkably high degree of unanimity" (Wilsher et al., p135). The main stumbling block was the subject of uneconomic pits. The NUM draft stated that where "a colliery has no further minable reserves that are workable or which can be developed, there will be agreement between the Board and the union that such a colliery shall be deemed exhausted" (Wilsher et al., p136, quoting NUM draft). The NCB wanted it to read "beneficially developed". Despite searches for alternative phrases, agreement could not be reached on what was to prove to be the most attractive package to be offered to the NUM, and so the dispute continued.

Negotiations in September started well but again stalled in the "attempt to define a third category of closures other than those on ground of exhaustion or safety" (Wilsher et al., p159). After the NACODS dispute had been settled in late October, negotiations ceased until the new year. Then Norman Willis, General Secretary of the TUC, acted as an intermediary between the NCB and the NUM but the promise that "no pits would close whilst the revised review procedure was being agreed" (Adeney and Lloyd, p216) was rejected by the NUM.

By the middle of February 1985 the NUM's position was very weak. The High Court had found in favour of two Yorkshire miners who had "questioned the constitutional validity of the strike" (Crick, p111) and the NUM's assets had been sequestered. Also the NCB's back-to-work campaign was gaining momentum. On 28th February the Board claimed that "50.75% of the miners were back" (MacGregor, p357). In South Wales union leaders were calling for a "return to work in dignity but without agreement" (Wilsher et al., p249) and Durham leaders backed this call. On 3rd March the NUM delegate conference voted by 98 to 91 "for the dispute to be brought to an end without an agreement" (Wilsher et al.,

p251). The NEC were asked to negotiate an amnesty for miners sacked during the dispute, but not to make it a prior condition to a march back.

The march back occurred over the subsequent three days, but was somewhat chaotic, as Kent miners picketed some Yorkshire pits, and miners refused to cross the picket line. However, by the end of the week the 41,000 strikers "who had stuck it out to the bitter end" (Wilsher et al., p255) had returned, and the strike was over.

2.4 Reporting the Coal Dispute

Recent research has concluded that "where the television audience has no direct experience of information, then the media - and especially television news - has a very powerful effect on beliefs" (Philo, 4.6.90). Since many people within the church had little first-hand experience of the coal dispute, then the media coverage of the dispute must be examined, particularly as it has been the subject of considerable criticism.

MacGregor complained that the "overall presentation of the strike in favour of Scargill's propaganda helped to prolong the dispute considerably" (MacGregor, p316) whilst many in the mining communities felt their case had been distorted or omitted altogether (Jones et al., back cover). MacGregor admitted that he reacted badly to aggressive questioning in front of TV cameras but felt that he was too often forced into an adversarial position. He accused the press of hero-worshipping Scargill because he gave them success in terms of prominent and lengthy articles (MacGregor, p299-300). Furthermore, news coverage was thought to be imbalanced: NUM pro-strike miners received more coverage each week (89 minutes) than the NCB and the working miners (49 minutes) and the amount of violence inflicted on pickets by the police was exaggerated because a disproportionate amount of it was shown (MacGregor, p315-6).

The catalogue of complaints against media misrepresentation of the striking miners' cause is much longer and more detailed than this. It was the subject of a lengthy correspondence in the letter pages of 'The Guardian' and prompted the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom to produce a booklet on the subject. There were three main areas of complaint.

First, distortion of fact. 'The Sun', 20.11.87, has been accused of deliberately distorting figures of working miners, when between its first and second editions it added 15,000 auxiliary workers to the number back at work (Schwarz, p124). The 6pm BBC News on 18 June 1984 presented the image that the violence outside the Orgreave Coke Works had been started and continued by the pickets, with the police acting merely in self-defence. However, the ITN news was making clear that the heavily armed police were responsible for some of the worst violence and this was part of a deliberate, carefully planned operation. By 9pm the BBC had modified its coverage so that it fell more in line with that of ITN and Channel 4 (Jones et al., p26-9).

Secondly, use of loaded terms was commonplace. "The 'bloody,' 'bitter' pit 'war' was a well used phrase in the tabloid press" (Wade, p274). Many papers did not hesitate to make clear which side they supported by referring to the working miners as 'the brave', and contrasting 'the thugs' with good, decent workers, thereby giving a 'good versus evil' interpretation of events. The term 'the miners' strike' was greatly preferred to the more neutral 'coal dispute'. Each time this term is used, the opinion that the miners are to blame for the stoppage is reinforced into the public consciousness (Philo, 16.2.85). Similarly, in reporting a £2billion loss by the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB), the ITN news headline blamed the miners' strike and later referred to a proposed increase in prices as a 'Scargill surcharge' (Philo, 16.2.85). Other loaded phrases in regular use were 'uneconomic' pits, rather than pits 'said to be uneconomic', and 'new faces' rather than 'strike-breakers' (Philo, 23.2.85).

Thirdly, distortion can also occur through the omission of details. The press has been accused of virtually ignoring "the conflicting claims and philosophies underlying the dispute; the Government's constant behind the scenes management of the entire dispute...; the enormous support for the strike from the mining communities themselves, especially the role of women; the threat to civil liberties posed by the police role in the dispute" (Jones et al., p11). Similar complaints have been made about the broadcast coverage of the dispute. Alan Prothero, the Assistant Director General of the BBC, has defended the corporation's coverage of the dispute against accusations that it has been blind to the many issues that

are related to the strike, by pointing to BBC-2's 'Newsnight' and current affairs programmes which did probe many of the underlying issues. However, since the 6pm and 9pm news bulletins reach many more people, surely, these should be balanced in themselves? Furthermore, balance means more than equity in airtime and the BBC has been accused of taking "a singularly hostile stance to the striking miners" (Jones et al., p30). The British Film Institute's Broadcasting Research Unit has concluded that "Scargill has been treated much more as an adversary in interviews than has MacGregor" (Jones et al., p26).

Overall Channel 4's coverage of the dispute has received least criticism. It produces an hour long news broadcast each evening which means that there is time not just to present the news but to start to explore the issues which provoke the news.

In general, the media tended "to assume that unions were strike-prone and conducted their interviews with the belief that strikes were wrong" (Wade, p237). Lord Reith certainly took this line when explaining the role of the BBC during the 1926 General Strike. He said that, "Assuming that the BBC is for the people and that the Government is for the people, it follows that the BBC must be for the Government in this crisis too" (Reith in Jones et al., p20). "By that logic all strikes harm the nation, particularly in an economic crisis and generally, therefore strikes are seen as being against the 'national interest'" (Jones et al., p20).

It must, however, be pointed out that the NUM did not present their case well. Despite their President's expertise in handling the media, the NUM's press office proved to be inadequate to the task before it. During the 1972 and 1974 strikes the NUM Headquarters had been openly accessible to journalists but under the new President everything now had to go through the new press officer, Nell Myers (Adeney and Lloyd, p242). Journalists were hampered by the congested telephone system at the NUM headquarters and the regular unavailability of the Press officer, (Adeney and Lloyd, p246) and too often NUM campaign leaflets failed to reach the desks of journalists (Wade, p282). On the picket line journalists were hampered by NUM hostility and were occasionally the subject of violent attack (Adeney and Lloyd, p248). By contrast, the NCB employed 40 press

officers and it had acquired the reputation of the "best press department in private or public industry" (Adeney and Lloyd, p245).

This, however, does not excuse all the complaints which the striking miners had against their media representation. There is little doubt that during the strike there were a worrying number of journalistic excesses which were due to an individual interpretation of events taking precedence over any attempt at objective news coverage. The coverage of the dispute by much of the church press avoided many of these excesses and provided its readership with a fair balance of articles. This will be examined further in section 4.2.

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CHAPTER 3

Ethical issues raised by the dispute

3.1 Introduction

The 1984-5 coal dispute was considerably more than a dispute between a group of workers and their management over a work related issue. At the surface it was a dispute about the right of a union to be consulted by their management. However, a pit closure often hits the local economy very hard, so at a deeper level it was about some communities fighting for their survival, and their dispute was primarily with the Government which lay behind the nationalised coal industry, and was thus held responsible for the prevailing high level of unemployment. There was also a dispute within a dispute, for the NUM was not united in its struggle; many miners continued to work throughout the strike, so, at another level there was a dispute between miner and miner over the conduct of the strike. There were also considerable tensions within the higher management of the NCB, and the relationship between the Board and the Government was, at times, uneasy. In addition, questions were asked about the behaviour of the police during the dispute.

This chapter will examine the perspectives of the main groups which were in some way party to the dispute and will try to identify the ethical issues which were raised by the dispute. Brief references will be made to the way the church responded to some of these issues. The response of the churches to the dispute as a whole will form the substance of subsequent chapters.

3.2 The Perspective of Striking Miners

The main trigger for the strike was the announcement of the closure of Cortonwood colliery in a way that blatantly flouted the agreed procedure for pit closures (see section 2.1). Since management had recently given

assurances that there was at least five years' life left in the pit, the reason for closure was solely that of short-term economic prudence.

The speech by Dave Douglass, (Samuel et al., p92-99) delegate of Hatfield Main pit in South Yorkshire, calling his branch to support the miners at Cortonwood, shows why so many did. Douglass spoke of Cortonwood being the acid test of loyalty to the union. Since the men at Cortonwood had been treated with utter contempt and the union had been told outright lies, they were fighting not just for Cortonwood, but also for managerial respect of the union. The fight was not just to save Cortonwood but, "If we accept that Cortonwood can close...then we can accept that ANY pit can close on economic grounds....Doncaster's coal is too expensive, roughly **half** of Doncaster's pits produce coal **DEARER** than Cortonwood's. I DON'T THINK OF THIS AS A FIGHT TO STOP CORTONWOOD CLOSING. IT'S A FIGHT TO STOP **DONCASTER** CLOSING" (op. cit., p93).

Douglass also raised the fear that the coal industry might be privatised, quoting the example of the recent construction of a washery at Ferrymoor Ridings where outside contractors had been employed with union agreement. Then the union was informed that the washery would also be operated by an outside firm. "IF IT'S A WASHER TODAY, IT'LL BE A DRIFT THE DAY AFTER AND A DEEP MINE THE DAY AFTER THAT! We have been warned of the possible denationalisation and the return to private coal ownership. WELL HERE IT IS. THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS AGO THIS UNION DEFEATED THE COAL OWNERS AFTER TWO CENTURIES OF STRUGGLE. I HOPE NOBODY OF **THIS GENERATION** OF UNION MEN IS GONNA ROLL OVER AND LET PRIVATISATION COME CREEPING BACK!" (op. cit., p95).

This argument illustrates the consciousness within miners of their roots and the conditions previous generations suffered underground. Their grandfathers had fought for nationalisation and it was not the remit of the present generation to concede that battle now. Furthermore, each job is regarded as a type of patrimony which an individual miner has not the right to give away by accepting redundancy; it belongs not to him but to the miner's posterity. Douglass, himself having been moved from the North East to Yorkshire, was well aware that miners cannot keep being moved on from one area to another. The fight was not just for individual jobs and pits but for the preservation of the local community and a whole

way of life. Ironically the miners were "defending precisely those 'old-fashioned' values - 'Victorian values' - which, in other spheres, the Prime Minister (Margaret Thatcher) has made it her platform to defend: the dignity of work, the sanctity of the family, 'roots'" (op. cit., p5). From the striking miners' point of view the decision about the future of a pit should not be taken on the grounds of profitability alone. They saw the question as a moral question for a pit closure, particularly at a time of high unemployment, meant the way of life for the whole pit village was threatened. To ignore the social costs of pit closures was felt to be grossly irresponsible. The church very much grasped this point and stressed the need to include social costs in the equation defining an uneconomic pit; see especially, point 7 of the statement by the Roman Catholic Bishops (section 4.3.3), the proposal by the Welsh churches to end the strike (section 4.6) and the Archbishop of York's letter to the Durham miners (section 4.5).

Not surprisingly, it was the regions which were most threatened by pit closures which were the most ready to take industrial action. Those who were the most ardent supporters of the strike saw themselves fighting for **their** industry and were insistent that personal greed for the generous redundancy terms must not be put before the corporate need of miners as a whole. However, many were realistic enough to realise that pit closures would not be put off indefinitely but, bound by loyalty to the union, they were not going to give in without a struggle. Furthermore, they were objecting to the way the NCB was going about pit closures. As the strike developed the style of management became a major issue of contention. A miner at Thurcroft explains; "The main issue turned out to be this thing 'Management's right to manage'. We said 'No, we're the workers in this industry, we want a say in it'. When we started off the strike we said, 'We don't want pit closures'. But the press totally exaggerated this thing about no pit closures. We understand that with an extractive industry some pits have to shut and others get the investment for the future. We wanted a proper say" (Gibbon and Steyne, p46). Section 3.4 discusses the NCB's understanding of their right to manage.

However, for some miners there was more to the strike than internal industrial relations within the coal industry. Under Conservative Government the rights of individuals in employment had been steadily

eroded, including rights relating to employment protection, unfair dismissal, maternity leave and the closed shop (Catholic Church, p12-3). Also, secondary picketing had been made illegal and the Government produced a 'Code of Practice on Picketing' which recommended that a maximum of six pickets be allowed at a workplace entrance (McIlroy, p103). The miners' leader, in particular, was thought to take the view that the strike was between the unions as a whole and the Government's trade union legislation (Adeney and Lloyd, p209).

The relationship between employers and employees is an ethical issue. The Christian Church in Britain has played a part in supporting workers in their struggle to be properly protected from abuses of power by their overlords. Industrial relations in post-war Britain have been shaped by the general understanding, accepted by the church, of the need for negotiation and consensus between employees and employers. The church was to comment on aspects of industrial relations during the course of the coal dispute e.g. the debate in the General Synod of the Church of England on the report 'Perspectives on Economics' showed that many in the church saw the manager's right to manage as being far from absolute (see further section 4.3.2), the industrial chaplains, too, put the case for industrial relations to be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect (see section 4.4) and many church leaders criticised Government policy for undermining the post-war consensus, for redistributing wealth in favour of the rich and creating a sense of powerlessness amongst many (see section 4.5, especially remarks by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Birmingham). However, the church made little comment during the dispute about the specific issue of the erosion of trade union rights.

It is worth considering Arthur Scargill's views and his impact on the strike further for, "It is a common belief in Government, in the Labour movement and in the NCB that Scargill, by sheer personal force, greatly prolonged the strike and greatly raised the stakes, that he, largely alone, turned the strike from what it might have been - a partial victory - into a complete defeat because **he** had to be beaten. **He** was the embodiment of the enemy within" (Adeney and Lloyd, p28). Certainly, by the sheer force of his personality, Arthur Scargill stamped his own mark on the dispute, and there is little doubt that his political ideology and his economic demands are heavily intertwined for he refuses to divorce wage

claims from political battles. There were some in the church who were very suspicious of Scargill's 'marxist views'; in particular Francis Bridger who felt the church neglected the strong element of class struggle which underlay the miners' cause (see section 6.4) and the Roman Catholic newspaper, 'The Tablet' which nearly always referred to Scargill as a marxist when mentioning him in editorials (section 4.2).

Scargill was elected President of the NUM in 1982 having campaigned heavily on a pledge to "fight the closure of 'uneconomic' pits and to call for strike action if necessary" (Crick, p93). In his two Presidential addresses prior to the dispute, he reiterated that, in his opinion, the union's prime responsibility was "to protect the coal industry from the ravages of the market mechanism, the short sightedness of politicians and the deliberate political decisions designed to destroy our industry, our jobs and communities" (Scargill, 1983, p349). If the strike led to the downfall of the Conservative Government, then that was very much in the miners' interests, but a Labour Government would not necessarily mean victory. Scargill has been very scathing of union leaders who abandon wages claims when a there is a Labour Government. Although many within the churches questioned Thatcherite values (see section 6.3), there were few who would have been prepared to support any attempt of the NUM to bring down the Government.

Care does, however, need to be taken not to exaggerate 'the Scargill factor.' It must be remembered that the miners' leader holds democracy in great respect. He sees the NUM's national conference as the supreme decision-making body and "its decisions 'binding on me, on the National Executive Committee and on the union as a whole'" (Adeney and Lloyd, p37 quoting Scargill, Presidential Address, 1982). It is his inability to compromise in pursuit of obtaining the demands of conference which causes Scargill to appear as the autocrat, but since he is the executor of NUM Conference decisions rather than the decision-maker, he cannot be held solely responsible for the happenings of the dispute. Scargill needs to be put into a totality which includes both officials and a highly politicised membership (Allen, p136) and whilst he may have done much to shape the views of his membership, it would be wrong to assume that he commanded the blind obedience of his members.

The arguments about the reasons for supporting the strike continued throughout the duration of the dispute both in the media, in the local communities and even within individuals. The perspective of striking miners was never a single perspective but had many facets and these changed as the dispute went on. Most miners saw themselves fighting to a greater or lesser extent for their jobs, their union and their community. As the dispute continued, the community element became stronger as the loss of wages began to bite and the whole community felt the effect of this. Those on strike received nothing, and supplementary benefit for their families was reduced because they were deemed to be in receipt of strike pay (Booth and Smith, p365). Virtually whole communities banded together to raise money in order to survive, and considerable energy was expended in providing communal meals and food parcels. The Government had justified its recent alterations in the rules pertaining to benefit payments to those involved in industrial disputes on the grounds that the provision of accelerated tax refunds to strikers and full supplementary benefit to their families created a fundamental imbalance in industrial relations in favour of employees (Booth and Smith, p368). For those struggling to feed themselves and their families, their right to subsistence was as fundamental as their right to strike, but as both the churches and some charities responded to the obvious hardship, the question was raised whether that was the proper use of charitable monies, when miners could immediately solve their financial problems by returning to work. Some felt that the church and charitable agencies have a duty to maintain a neutral stance in the face of an industrial dispute and the offering of relief to those on strike compromises this neutrality. This issue proved to be a major dilemma for many in the churches during the course of the coal dispute as will be seen in subsequent chapters (see especially sections 4.7, 5.5, 6.2 and 6.4).

3.3 The Perspective of Working Miners.

At no point during the dispute was the NUM united in its stance against its employer, as many miners, particularly in Nottinghamshire, continued to work. These miners considerably undermined the stance of those on strike. Many of those who did strike felt betrayed by their working colleagues but those who worked felt that they had been betrayed by their union.

Why did so many miners refuse to join the strike? "The working miners arose as a phenomenon in reaction to the NUM's leadership's decision not to have a ballot" (Lloyd, p32). Perhaps it was not quite that straightforward but, certainly, the lack of a national ballot was a major factor in the decision to continue working. The NUM has always been a very democratic union and many miners feel they have a right to a ballot over any major issue particularly before taking industrial action.

From the first day of the Yorkshire strike pickets had flooded into Nottinghamshire in an attempt to gain support there. Those from Thurcroft (Yorkshire) who picketed at the Bentinck colliery (Nottinghamshire) have described some of the reactions they had from men crossing the picket line:

"We haven't voted yet."

"If there were only six of you we wouldn't go in."

"We've been told that if we come out on strike we shan't be able to claim any redundancy." (Gibbon and Steyne, p65)

Looking back, there are many in the NUM, including some from Yorkshire, who believe "that it was a great mistake for the Yorkshire pickets to rush into Nottinghamshire that first week, before the Notts men had a chance to decide for themselves" (Crick, p102). It seems that the NUM's failure to hold a national ballot, and the over-enthusiasm of pickets, raised a point of principle which some regarded as being of higher priority than the issue of pit closures. They thus continued to work.

In the absence of a national ballot local union officials were often placed in a difficult position. Colin Bottomore, Branch Secretary at Bentinck, was in favour of the strike. He refused to cross a picket line until the Notts Area ballot but after the ballot he worked normally, though he upheld the over-time ban. He admits his dilemma, "There's always been a conflict in my own mind... because I would have loved to have supported the men who were on strike but I wasn't elected to support the members on strike, I was elected to support the men at this colliery" (Samuel et al., p73). Roy Ottey sums up well the dilemmas facing many miners; they felt "torn between the justice of their right to a ballot and their loyalty to the union by not crossing picket lines" (Ottey, p89-90) and he goes on to ask, "How can a man, exercising the right given to him in a ballot in his own area be called a 'scab' if he abides by the result and goes to work?"

(Ottey, p123). The intimidation of working miners, and their right to go to work, was a major issue throughout the dispute. The next section examines the right to go to work more thoroughly.

The violence on the picket-lines and the intimidation of miners who did not support the strike was heavily reported by the media and was almost as heavily condemned by the NCB, the Government, the opposition parties, many trade union leaders and also by the churches. Some ministers in pit villages went to great lengths to try to defuse potentially violent situations (see section 5.6) and many church leaders made pleas for reconciliation within mining communities. They also made some attempt to understand why such violence was occurring and also to point out that the vast amount of picketing was conducted peacefully (see sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.5 and 5.4). However, over the issue of whether the strike was properly constituted the church authorities were reluctant to comment, though many church members muttered about the lack of a proper ballot.

Another factor strengthening the resolve of some miners to continue working was the feeling that the NUM head office was serving only one part of the membership - the strikers - (Ottey, p96). Bottomore was one of the organisers of the May Day Rally in Mansfield which was an attempt to get the voice of working miners heard. Many also disliked Scargill and felt that he was "running the union for political ends" (Adeney and Lloyd, p261).

It would, however, be wrong to assume that the miners who did not strike and those who organised the various working miners' groups were attempting to break their union or that they identified with the Thatcherite ideology. The Nottinghamshire Working Miners' Committee set down as one of its aims, "to reaffirm democracy within the NUM, but not to break it or replace it" (Adeney and Lloyd, p265). Many of the working miners resented the assumption that they supported the Coal Board's position" (Crick, p125) and even the new 'break-away' union, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, "declared that it would remain loyal to the Labour Party and would wish to affiliate to the TUC" (Adeney and Lloyd, p276).

Within the coal industry the militancy of the miners varies from area to area, with Nottinghamshire being traditionally moderate. The geology of the coal-field contributes to the Notts attitude; "they've got better conditions, bigger seams, better strata, the lot." (Gibbon and Steyne, p47). This means that there have been fewer pit closures in the area and also that they receive much higher bonuses. Striking, therefore, means giving up more in order to achieve little which will be of direct personal benefit.

There also seemed to be an air of realism in the area. A Bentinck miner explains why he voted against striking, "To my mind every colliery comes to the end of its days and everyone has been promised they'd be given a job if they wanted one or they could take redundancy with severance pay, so that was fair enough in my book" (Samuel et al., p82). Many of the miners were more than happy to take the "redundancy package which no other manual workers approached" (Adeney and Lloyd, p263) and either start a second career or enjoy their retirement.

However, a further factor which could contribute to the reluctance to strike is the relationship between local management and miners. Dave Cliff (in Samuel et al., p86-92) has compared two adjoining pits in North Staffordshire; Hem Heath and Florence. "Their work-forces are drawn from the same catchment area; the Hem Heath workers enjoy better conditions and bonuses than their colleagues at Florence. Security of employment is far greater at Hem Heath, a local feeling that Florence may face closure in the next two or three years exists, and they both enjoy (or suffer) the same area leadership" (op. cit., p87). Hem Heath thus seems to be similar to the Nottinghamshire pits, whilst Florence resembles many in Yorkshire. However, it is Hem Heath which is the more militant of the two pits, with only 10 out of 600 voting against strike action and many Hem Heath pickets being arrested, whilst Florence worked almost normally throughout the strike. During the overtime ban management at Florence "agreed that if maintenance work needed to be carried out in normal working hours, then men who could not work on their normal jobs would be found alternative work" (Cliff in Samuel et al., p87), but at Hem Heath the management took the view that the situation was created by the men's refusal to work overtime and, therefore, refused to redeploy men. This hard-line attitude provoked bitterness and militancy

amongst the Hem Heath miners.

Crick (p115) draws attention to the collieries of North Nottinghamshire which were opened during the 1920's. The owners of these mines "developed a special paternalistic relationship with the people they employed" (Crick, p115) and later, when miners were moved in from other areas, they "seem to have adopted the more conciliatory nature of the Notts men" (Crick, p117).

Before the start of the strike, there were several local disputes going on in the Yorkshire Area. The dispute at Manvers Main had been provoked by management imposing minor changes in meal times which had been agreed with the union but on the understanding that they would be implemented once the overtime ban was lifted (Wilsher et al., p38). During the strike the hard-line attitude of management in the North Yorkshire area to the pit deputies contributed to decision of NACODS to threaten industrial action.

Of course, it is easy to say that it is all the fault of management; it could well be that a militant workforce produces a less accommodating management, but the part played by management in shaping the attitudes of its workforce must not be underestimated. Both the Roman Catholic church (section 4.3.3) and the Church of England (section 4.3.2) stressed, during the course of the dispute, the need for a sense of partnership in industrial relations, underlain by mutual trust and respect. The church, particularly that at the local level, was concerned to minister to those who continued working throughout the dispute and those who returned early (section 5.6.3).

3.4 The Perspective of the Government and the National Coal Board

The term 'uneconomic pit' lay at the heart of the coal dispute and, certainly Government economic policy played a large part in the decision to make cutbacks in coal output and influenced the NCB's conduct during the dispute. Fine and Millar (p9) go so far as to claim that "the rationality of the Government and NCB case rested entirely on **maximising** the rate of profit in the mining industry."

During the Conservative Party's years of opposition (1974-9) "the terms of political debate were increasingly cast according to the agenda of the party's new right" (Schwarz, p53). This included a greater commitment to the free-market economy and monetarism, the privatisation of nationalised industries and a reduction in union powers. Mrs Thatcher spoke of making a radical break with the old post-war consensus, and placing a greater emphasis on the rights of the individual. Many church leaders were to criticise this shift in values (see particularly the Bishop of Durham's enthronement sermon, section 4.5 and also section 6.3).

In order to make the coal industry attractive to potential shareholders it needed to become profitable and the power of the NUM needed to be considerably reduced. The inflicting of a major blow to the NUM was also politically desirable as revenge for their part in the downfall of the Conservatives in 1974. The book, 'Digging Deeper; Issues in the Miners' Strike' (edited by Huw Beynon), argues that in order to achieve their revenge the coal dispute was engineered by the Government, and this theory has been tagged the 'conspiracy theory'. The preparation for the strike is believed to have started shortly after the Conservatives lost the 1974 election.

The Conservatives were determined to learn from the mistakes of the past and a detailed report on the confrontations with the miners was drawn up (Beynon and McMyler, p34). It identified the potential power of well-organised workers in key industries and the vulnerability of the state due to its dependence on electricity (Beynon and McMyler, p34-5) and so Nicholas Ridley developed a strategy to deal with this. This report (The Ridley Report), leaked to 'The Economist' (27.5.1978), predicted trouble in the coal industry and advised a Thatcher Government to: -

- "(a) build up coal stocks, particularly at the power stations;
- (b) make contingency plans for the import of coal;
- (c) encourage the recruitment of non-union drivers by haulage companies to help move coal where necessary;
- (d) introduce dual coal/oil firing in all power stations as quickly as possible."

The report also argued that the greatest deterrent to any strike would be "to cut off the money supply to strikers and make the unions finance them", and advised that a large mobile squad of police be equipped and

prepared to uphold the law against violent picketing (Adeney and Lloyd, p73). It is the close similarity between this plan and the actions of the Conservatives, once in office, which led to the conclusion that the 1984-5 coal dispute was Government provoked.

The choice of Ian MacGregor as the new chairman of the NCB was a Government decision and MacGregor was in agreement with the Government's economic strategy in general and its implications for the coal industry. He was convinced that the industry needed to be slimmed down and to show a better return on capital. He believed that Government subsidies had delayed the essential change and he blamed the economic crisis of the early 1980's on Britain's failure to move from a labour-intensive to a capital-intensive society, with the high-cost of labour resulting in loss of markets. (MacGregor, p65-6). This implies that MacGregor would continue the introduction of high technology into the industry and would press for the closure of 'uneconomic' pits.

In implementing this policy he was to come into conflict with the miners' unions, who since the nationalisation of the mines and, in particular, since the signing of the 1974 Plan for Coal, regarded themselves as equal parties to the major decisions affecting the industry. MacGregor did not see the unions' negotiating position in this light. His comment, "I can't wait for the unions. I work for the Government" (Adeney and Lloyd, p84), made in February 1984 implied that he had already dismissed the meeting with the unions (scheduled for 6 March 1984) "as a waste of time, at least in terms of achieving what it was meant to - agreement on a joint approach" (Adeney and Lloyd, p84). In general, the new Chairman was regarded as having "a very considerable contempt for unions" (Lloyd, p15) and throughout the dispute he argued that management must have the right to manage. From his point of view this was the central issue and it meant that the NCB had to stand firm over the need to close what it termed 'uneconomic pits'.

However, not all of the NCB management were in agreement with MacGregor's approach. Many of the senior staff had worked their way up through the industry, had been members of the unions and some were members of BACMS (the British Association of Colliery Management). They accepted that, whilst they had a responsibility to drive a hard

bargain, the unions also had a right to be consulted; they were committed to obtaining negotiated settlements. To MacGregor's way of thinking it was an anathema for people who laid full claim to being representatives of 'management' to "through their union, criticize that management" (MacGregor, p151) and it was symptomatic of a lot that was wrong with the coal industry. See section 3.2 for further discussion of the management's right to manage and sections 4.3.2 and 4.4 for church comment on this issue.

One of the new Chairman's first moves was to appoint board members from outside the coal industry who "would be more in sympathy with the changes that had to be made" (MacGregor, p139). He also altered the decision-making structure at the top of the industry in a such a way as to prevent senior board officials from formally discussing issues between themselves (Adeney and Lloyd, p66). More power was seemingly given to the Area Directors since they were given greater spending powers but when it came to setting their budgets "they were to have more interference and more direction than they could remember" (Adeney and Lloyd, p68), and as personnel at Hobart House changed rapidly their impression was "that more of the decisions that mattered were being drawn into MacGregor's hands" (loc. cit.).

Despite there being considerable tensions in the upper echelons of the Coal Board, even before the start of the strike, all were united in one thing: "that Scargill must not be allowed to win - ever" (Adeney and Lloyd, p67). The problem was how to stop him from winning. Ned Smith, the NCB director in industrial relations, advocated that the softly-softly approach be continued and for a time MacGregor stuck to that line. However, he agreed to the union's request to state "his intentions for the industry and individual pits" (Adeney and Lloyd, p68), since he believed that facts speak for themselves and, that in the face of them, the unions would have to accept the board's cutbacks. Others on the board felt that by naming uneconomic pits he was giving credence to Scargill's claim that the NCB had a hit-list of pits and it would give the NUM a perfect excuse to escalate their industrial action. However, MacGregor proceeded to uncover his plans on 6 March 1984 by which time strike action over the announcement of the closure of Cortonwood was gaining momentum.

Regarding 'the conspiracy theory', both the Government and the NCB have denied that there was any truth in it. Ned Smith, in his public lecture at the University of Durham (18.11.86), called it a 'mythology'. He attributed the large coal stocks to the 1979 oil crisis which, in the short-run, increased the demand for coal but then triggered a world economic slump, thus causing the demand for coal to fall. He claimed that the new chairman's assessment of the coal industry was that it was going in the right direction, that confrontation and conflict should be avoided and the market should be expanded. Also, the Government had agreed to a substantial improvement in the redundancy terms for miners with effect from 1st April 1984, and had sanctioned the NCB to offer the miners a 5.2% pay-award when it was encouraging the rest of the public sector to settle around 3-3.5%. Lastly, the Secretary of State for Energy, had issued an imperative during February 1984 stating that there should be an avoidance of flashpoints. These actions are hardly commensurate with a Government wanting to provoke the miners.

If Smith and senior ministers who claim "that they knew nothing of the Cortonwood announcement until it became headline news" (Wilsher et al., p51) are to be believed, then it seems that the conspiracy theory is wrong in asserting that the Government deliberately provoked the start of the strike. However, there seems to have been little doubt that the Conservative Party had learnt from its mistakes in 1974 and the suggestions of the Ridley Plan had been acted upon. There was no need to appease the miners this time or call an election; the state could afford a fight until the finish. Furthermore defeat of the miners would very much strengthen the Government policy of eroding the rights of the trade unions as a whole. The NUM was one of the most powerful unions in the country and their defeat would signal to the trade union movement that it was now powerless to resist Government policy towards itself. Whether such behaviour by a Government is morally legitimate is questionable. To a Government attempting to replace the old consensus with the values of the new right it was merely a necessary step, but to those who supported the old consensus and were a party to it, and that included the churches, such behaviour was morally dubious. The Bishop of Durham, in particular, criticised the Government for its determination to beat the miners and many church leaders appealed to all parties to the dispute to negotiate with one another (section 4.5 and also section 6.3).

However, not only was the Government determined to win the strike but it had a strategy to deal with the conduct of a strike, and its strategy was that it hadn't a strategy! The events of 1974 had taught the Government that if it puts "itself forward as the negotiator of the first resort, (it) can too easily be seen as the villain of the piece" (Adeney and Lloyd, p203) so its line for the first few months was "that it was a matter entirely between the union and the board" (Adeney and Lloyd, p207). However, from mid-April daily briefings were held between the Departments of Employment, Energy and Transport, the Home Office and the NCB. This ensured that Peter Walker was kept up-to-date and he also maintained regular contact with MacGregor. The Cabinet, too, formed a committee comprising senior ministers, including the Prime Minister, which aimed to monitor the strike (Adeney and Lloyd, p208).

The NCB's strategy is less clear. At times MacGregor seemed totally unprepared to move on the closure programme, but at others he seemed to be conceding much, including a higher pay offer, whilst ensuring that the small print gave the board sufficient lee-way to close what they regarded as uneconomic pits. He claimed that, "once agreement had been signed the board could proceed to close pits in the knowledge that a work-force on strike for upwards of two months would not be mobilisable again in the near future" (Adeney and Lloyd, p191). This tactic failed because Scargill understood it (Adeney and Lloyd, p192).

By late-summer the Government had broken its silence and both it and the NCB were describing the strike as a battle between tyranny and freedom. This included the Prime Minister contrasting the Argentinian 'enemy without' with the NUM, 'the enemy within', which "was just as dangerous to liberty, and the country was witnessing an attack on democracy and the rule of law" (Adeney and Lloyd, p210) and MacGregor spoke out about the dangers of a society controlled by dedicated militants (Adeney and Lloyd, p192). Very few in the churches saw the coal dispute in such stark and dramatic terms. Many church leaders pointed out that miners, including many of those on picket duty, were law-abiding citizens, and drew attention to their feelings of powerlessness (see sections 4.3, 4.5 and 5.6.1).

About this time Smith claims to have noticed a hardening in MacGregor's attitude. He felt that MacGregor no longer wanted a settlement but saw that there was an alternative way to end the dispute; to entice the miners back to work. Here he had the backing of several of the area directors. MacGregor believed that every time there was a hint that more negotiations might be starting the back to work momentum was lost, and he admits that he was prepared to let the pit-deputies strike (MacGregor, p280). However, when it seemed that the pit deputies would strike the Government started to put pressure on the NCB and Smith, who had by this time resigned as he felt he could no longer work under this new-style management, was brought back to settle the NACODS dispute.

Once the threat of NACODS had died down, and the TUC had demonstrated that it could provide little support for the NUM, Smith felt that the Government's attitude also hardened (Smith, Lecture, 18,11.86). Given comments, such as that from Francis Pym, that "the final outcome of the strike will be a defeat for one side or the other... (and)... let us hope it is a defeat for Arthur Scargill" (Pym, 'The Times', 19.9.84, quoted in Schwarz, p50), Smith's assessment does seem reasonable.

Throughout the dispute relations between the NCB Chairman and his industrial relations chief were strained. In the early days of the strike Smith and his deputy, Kevan Hunt, had spoken against the board taking legal action against the NUM, arguing that it would be hard to keep the Nottinghamshire men working if the NUM was seen to be under direct attack (Adeney and Lloyd, p181). Now, Smith strongly disagreed with MacGregor's attempts to by-pass the unions by writing directly to the workforce, by advertising in the tabloid press, and by bussing men across picket lines into work. Smith believed that it was imperative that the board should "do nothing which would interfere with their ability to manage the industry afterwards" (Adeney and Lloyd, p187) and some local managers agreed. But MacGregor had little time for established customs and practices; "he had come to break the mould, and was looking for a way to win the strike now" (Adeney and Lloyd, p187).

MacGregor refers to the closing stages of the dispute as "laying the final trap" (MacGregor, p341-363). His aim was, that with the assistance of the TUC, a document seen to fair could be produced. If Scargill accepted

it, the strike would be over, but MacGregor's personal view was "that in the end Scargill would refuse to agree" (MacGregor, p347). This would leave the miners totally isolated and Scargill exposed as "a Marxist Revolutionary - going under the guise of a normal trade union official" (MacGregor, p13). It is all too easy, after the event, to say that this was the strategy. Whether it was consciously devised by MacGregor, or thought up after the events happened, we do not know. We do know that the miners returned without a settlement and the board felt that it had now established its right to manage, as subsequent pit closures have proved.

Underlying all the arguments, the tensions and the comings and goings at Hobart House, there was the clash of two different ideologies. Ned Smith represented the party which believed that the final outcome must be a negotiated settlement. This view does not see management's right to manage as being absolute. Smith maintains that people should be managed by respect and that management must be credible. He goes further to assert that "people have a right, preferably a legal right, to be consulted in their industry" (Smith, Lecture, 18.11.86). Smith's approach stands in the tradition of the right of workers to form trade unions and to take collective action in order to press for the remedying of a grievance. This approach stands in the tradition of the post-war consensus. Throughout chapter 4 are instances of how the church's view of the situation very much accorded with that of Smith, and this issue is further taken up in section 6.3.

MacGregor takes a different approach. He sees workers as having rights, but stresses the right of the individual to work over against the right of the collective to strike. Throughout the strike he justified the enormous lengths to which the board and the police went to get individual miners across picket lines on the grounds of upholding 'the right to work'. In MacGregor's reasoning a new interpretation of 'the right to work' emerges. Traditionally, it "is envisaged as consisting of the right to employment at a fair wage under favourable conditions and a means of securing social and economic justice" (Danby, p378) and the right to strike goes hand-in-hand with this right. MacGregor, however, uses 'right to work' to refer to the 'right to go to work'. It refers more to freedom of movement than to actual work. This understanding of the 'right to work'

corresponds with that used in the Conservative Party manifesto of 1979; "We shall also make any further changes that are necessary so that a citizen's right to work and go about his or her lawful business free from obstruction or intimidation is guaranteed" (Danby, p378). The 'right to work' so interpreted actually means the right to cross a picket-line and the right to have protection whilst crossing a picket line. It thus means 'the right to strike-break'; a right which totally undermines collective action by members of a trade-union and has implications far beyond the coalfields. Whilst the church did not spell out this new interpretation of the right to work it did question the use of both legal might and physical force to control picketing (chapter 4 and section 5.6.2).

Despite their attempts to maintain a non-interventionist stance the Government was heavily involved in the strike. Although it took little part in the actual negotiations it had appointed an NCB Chairman who was committed to Government policy and it had created the atmosphere which allowed the dispute to run so long. The dispute cost the CEGB and BR heavily in extra costs for oil and lost freight charges and "private employers would, if placed in the position of BR or the CEGB, have pressed the NCB to settle. As state industries with their losses covered, they have been able to combine in an attempt to break the strike" (Beynon and McMylor, p39).

Further evidence of Government involvement during the strike comes from Lord Denning who has claimed that the decision not to use the civil law, but the police, to control the picketing was a "'high policy decision' (which) had been taken in the Cabinet Office" (Scraton, p256). Lloyd (p31) claims that the Government restrained BSC from using the Employment Law to control picketing at Ravenscraig and pressure from a similar quarter stopped the NCB from proceeding with an injunction obtained against the NUM.

The covert hand of the Government in the dispute has been deduced from the heavy involvement of David Hart in the Working Miners' Committee of Nottinghamshire. Hart "has in the past established himself as an unofficial advisor to the Prime Minister" (Schwarz, p61) and by October 1984 was MacGregor's closest advisor and had written to MacGregor stating "It was not in the national interest for a settlement to be reached, because any

agreement could only be secured by the NCB - and therefore the nation - surrendering to Scargill" (Adeney and Lloyd, p211).

It was not until near Christmas that the Government actually got involved in the negotiations. Their desire for a settlement to be reached was made clear to Bill Keys, the general secretary of Sogat 82 and member of the TUC negotiating team, and he agreed that a formula short of total capitulation should be found (Adeney and Lloyd, p213). However, in the end the document agreed by the TUC and the NCB, and approved by the Government, was rejected by the NUM who, then, had little choice but to heed the demands of their members for a return to work.

Given the Government's commitment to monetarism, the privatisation of nationalised industries and reducing union power, a defeat of the NUM was very much in its interests. Throughout the strike the Government backed 'the manger's right to manage' and interpreted the miners' resistance as a threat to the state. In agreeing the 1984 budget for the coal industry, which meant a non-negotiable 20,000 reduction in jobs, the Government implied that it no longer regarded the Plan for Coal as being binding on either itself or the Coal Board (Scraton, p253). The pursuit of pit-closures in 1984, in contrast to the withdrawal of similar proposals in 1981, was not due to an increased moral legitimacy in the policy, but because job-shedding had become accepted as common-sense and the unions had lost their power to resist (Samuel, p330).

Non-intervention is not neutrality. Whether or not the Government engineered the start of the strike, it did take full advantage of all the opportunities which the dispute presented in order to achieve its objectives. "The Chancellor was correct when he said...that it was 'a worthwhile investment' for the Conservative Party, and for free market principles, there could have been few better" (Adeney and Lloyd, p202). Given its terms of reference of promoting new right policies at the expense of the post-war consensus, the Government achieved its aims. However, there are those, including senior managers in the coal industry and many church leaders, who question the morality of the Government's understanding of free-market principles, the right to work and the right to manage.

3.5 The Policing of the Miners' Dispute

Under the British legal system it is Parliament which makes the law and it is the job of the courts and the police to ensure that it is upheld. However, it is rarely the case that only one law pertains to one particular situation. During the coal dispute little use was made of the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts to control the picketing by civil law, for fear of antagonising other unions. It was left to the police and the courts to do so, using the more widesweeping laws such as preventing a breach of the peace. This resulted in many thousands of miners being charged with criminal offences, police resources being heavily stretched and the courts overworked, as well as provoking many criticisms of police tactics and behaviour.

In England and Wales there are 43 independent Police Forces and each has a Police Authority behind it. The chief constable has 'direction and control' of his force, whilst the police authority is responsible for maintaining an 'adequate and efficient' force which includes financing it (Spencer, p35-6). It was the financing of the police operation in the coal dispute which caused considerable tensions between individual police forces and their police authorities and also between different forces.

Although each force is independent and geographically distinct there are procedures for mutual aid between forces (Kettle, p28). Following the 1980 steel strike and the riots in the St. Paul's area of Bristol, which both revealed inadequacies in the mutual aid system, the Police Support Unit (PSU) system was enhanced, so that in 1983-4 there existed "some 13,500 police in 416 PSU's" (Kettle, p30) and during the course of the coal dispute up to 8,000 PSU officers were deployed in coalfields outside their own area.

The responsibility for the deployment of PSU's lies with the National Reporting Centre (NRC) which in turn is responsible to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and, especially, the Association's President (Kettle, p24). The NRC "is not a permanent centre, but is only 'activated' when its controllers judge that police forces in more than one area are likely to require reinforcements, on a mutual aid basis, to deal with major public order events" (Kettle, p23). During the coal dispute the

NRC was put into 'monitoring phase' on 13th March 1983 and a few days later went into 'full activation' (Kettle, p25). It is the existence of the NRC which has raised fears that the British policing system is no longer a local organisation but a national one, "seemingly under the direction of a tightly knit group of politically motivated chief constables, controlled by Whitehall and the Conservative Government" (Kettle, p23). The Kent and Croydon Industrial Chaplains' Team represented a small church voice raising the question of "the unprecedented movement of police from one part of the country to another, centrally co-ordinated, [which] brings the prospect of a national police-force nearer" and whether the police were "keeping order and upholding the law impartially, or whether they are in danger of moving towards being used directly to serve the interests of the Government of the day." (See section 4.2 for further comment on the Kent and Croydon Industrial Chaplains' Team).

The setting up of road blocks by the police also contributed to the sense that local policing had been replaced by national policing. Road blocks were particularly used to prevent flying pickets entering Nottinghamshire. The 1972 Road Traffic Act gives a uniformed officer the power to stop vehicles, but not to conduct random searches, or to prevent vehicles and their occupants continuing their journey, except where an offence has been committed. However, "the Public Order Act 1936 establishes the authority of a police officer to intervene 'when a breach of the peace occurs or is imminent..'" (East and Thomas, p63) and this was used to justify the road blocks, even though many were a long way from collieries and their legality in preventing an **imminent** breach of the peace questionable. At some road blocks police dragged drivers out of their cars and then proceeded to smash windcreens and door panels (Samuel et al., p219).

Another source of inter-force tension was over police behaviour. Where several forces work together the operational control remains with the home force, for instance, "South Yorkshire police have always maintained that their officers were in charge of other forces assisting them" (Anon, 3.12.84). However, this is contradicted by situations such as occurred on 22nd August 1984 in Armthorpe, South Yorkshire where there was a heavy police presence and much violence when several miners returned to work. The NUM secretary tells of a South Yorkshire police inspector agreeing that an ambulance be sent for injured pickets, but this decision was

overturned by a senior officer from the aiding Manchester force (Anon, 3.12.84)

There have also been complaints of police brutality, some of the strongest resulting from incidents at Grimethorpe where, on 12th October 1984, police with dogs confronted villagers who were riddling coal on the local coal stack. "Men, women and children are punched, kicked and arrested....many of them are left bleeding and bruised" (Samuel et al., p120). Four days later there was a similar incident on the tip, and again the next day, but this last time the villagers did not run away. Fighting broke out and later in the day the police-station was stoned. That evening "600 riot police were running amok in the village, clubbing anyone within arm's reach" (loc. cit.). And the effect on the village? "The brutality of the riot police drafted in from Southern counties has left deep scars on the minds of the people of this village, and an inheritance of hatred and mistrust of the local police. This hatred will take until long after this strike is over to heal - not months, but generations" (Samuel et al., p121).

Again, police behaviour on the picket-lines also left much to be desired (section 5.6.1). "Prior to the strike, the large majority of pickets felt that the police worked with a law that was generally fair,... During it not only did they lose confidence in how justice was dispensed by legal institutions, but they came to see the law itself as something made up by the police as they went along" (Gibbon & Steyne, p96). It was not so much the violence as the arbitrary character of police behaviour which upset the pickets. "We've been arrested for, stepping on the pavement, stepping off the pavement, walking on the grass, sitting on the wall..." (Gibbon & Steyne, p96). Some pickets noticed a recurrent pattern that when the police were outnumbered they were friendly and talkative but when reinforcements arrived the atmosphere changed. "They marched us down the lanes, walking on the back of our legs, kicking us, shoving us" (Gibbon & Steyne, p97). The stories of police provoking pickets by waving £10 notes at them are too numerous for some not to be true and, similarly, the tales of obscene language used to women who came to support the pickets.

Such actions by the police led to the feeling amongst the mining communities that the police were far from impartial upholders of the law, rather they too sided with those trying to defeat the miners. There was considerable concern amongst the clergy about police behaviour with many clergy in mining villages spending time on picket-lines trying to foster good relationships and understanding between pickets and the police (see sections 5.6.1 and 5.6.2), and acting as independent monitors of police behaviour (see section 5.6.2). At times this meant that clergy were on the receiving end of police violence. Senior church leaders condemned violent acts by police as well as those committed by pickets e.g. see remarks made by the Bishop of Manchester (section 4.5).

As the strike moved into its final phases police neutrality was further questioned. With the armoured buses hurtling through the pit entrance, waved on by the police, pickets were denied the opportunity to put their case to the returning men. This added to the feeling that the police were party to those who wished the NUM to be defeated.

Many of those who were arrested went on to experience treatment which was legally dubious. "In Nottinghamshire prisoners were frequently photographed without permission and without any explanation of their right (before the Police and Criminal Evidence Act became law) to refuse this; sometimes this was done forcibly" (Field, p210) In the early days of the strike miners were herded into the dock at Mansfield Magistrates' Court in groups of twelve and often, very vague allegations, without specifying the actual behaviour of the defendants, were made by the presenting officer. (Christian, p124). This impression of 'supermarket justice' was furthered by the use of pro-forma slips detailing bail conditions which were stapled to bail sheets before the magistrates gave their decision! (Christian, p127). This procedure of trying people in groups with blanket accusations only contributed to the sense that a particular group of people was being victimised.

To be fair to the police, for much of the dispute, their behaviour was without fault and many individual officers were having to work very long hours, often some distance from home. Their private life was considerably disrupted, as one officer said, "Blow the money...I have been away from home for ten weeks now and during that time my wife has given birth to

our first child and I have yet to see my daughter" (Barrodale, p5). Some clergy were very aware of this and encouraged the pickets to try to understand what the strike meant to the police (see section 5.6.2).

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CHAPTER 4

National and Regional Church Responses

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how the church responded to the coal dispute through its national and regional decision-making bodies, through its church leaders, through the various boards and committees for social responsibility and industrial matters, through the corporate work of industrial chaplains and through the church press.

In building up a picture of such responses a systematic study has been made of church reactions to the dispute as covered by the 'The Times' (arguably the pre-eminent national newspaper) and one newspaper representing the Anglican Church ('Church Times'), the Roman Catholic Church ('The Tablet') and the free churches ('Methodist Recorder'). The Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England produced various briefing papers which have proved to be useful summaries, and several people have made available copies of letters and other documents which deal with this matter. Discussions have also been held with the Coal Chaplain to the North East Coalfield and members of the Sheffield Industrial Mission.

4.2 Church attempts to establish the truth

In most strikes it is often very difficult for onlookers, and even for those directly involved, to build up an accurate picture of the situation and to put it into some sort of perspective. It has already been noted (section 2.4) that many of the reports in the secular media were subject to heavy bias. Several groups of people, therefore, felt it worthwhile to produce briefing papers which gave a succinct background to the dispute and raised questions dealing with the wider dimensions of the strike.

The Northumbrian Industrial Mission (NIM) was one of the first groups to do this with the production of an Information Sheet in April 1984. This was updated at various points throughout the dispute. It identified the initial issues of the dispute and gave a summary of the NUM'S attitude and the NCB's attitude to them, including areas of agreement. As time went on sections on the hardship caused by the dispute and attitudes to it were added or amended, but right from the first sheet some personal opinions and questions were included. The following month the Kent and Croydon Industrial Chaplains' Team published a short paper entitled 'Some of the issues behind the miners' strike', raising questions and issues for discussion and prayer. This included sections on unemployment, the lack of a ballot, violence and the role of the police. It also suggested that justice, compassion and the common good should govern the Christian response to social and industrial conflict.

In November 1984, Paul Skirrow of the Leeds Industrial Mission, published a briefing paper entitled 'The Miners' Strike - Fact and Fiction'. This gave a concise summary of the events in the coal industry leading up to the dispute, carefully analysed the factors which cause a pit to be described as uneconomic and traced the political context of the dispute. The paper was "intended to enable a deepening of debate and concern within the churches." Another set of papers which were designed to help Christians to wrestle with the many issues raised by the strike were produced by the Work and Society Committee of Quaker Social Responsibility and Education (QSRE), entitled 'The Coal Dispute 1984-5'. Representation to the QSRE General Purposes Committee had been made in late 1984 about the possibility of running a day conference to enable members of the Society of Friends to discuss the implications of the coal dispute. This conference was held in Sheffield on 5th January 1985 and one of its byproducts was this set of papers. They included background notes about energy supplies in Britain, a consideration of the social and historical factors relating to the mining community, extracts from NCB and NUM documents and the Sheffield Policewatch report 'Taking Liberties'. Also enclosed were a report of the conference, a list of relief funds and copies of press releases and letters concerning church initiatives to end the strike. This package was the most wide-ranging set of papers designed to initiate discussion and thought amongst church members which was produced by any church body.

The Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee of the Church of England General Synod's Board for Social Responsibility produced various sets of papers throughout the dispute. The first, working paper 17, 'The Church and the Miners' Strike: a briefing paper' (Brett), published in October 1984, contained three papers which had been written between June and October and gave updates on church involvement in the dispute, with some assessment of that involvement, as well as touching on some of the issues raised by the dispute and an examination of ways forward. The second published group of papers came out in February 1985 (Working paper 18: The mining dispute and the churches: Christian Responses and Initiatives (Beales)). By this time many church leaders and church bodies had spoken out about the dispute and various initiatives had been made to bring about a settlement, so these papers were mainly a summary of such events. In between the publication of these two sets of working papers another briefing paper was made available by the Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee. This paper was prepared for the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and other senior church leaders following a meeting chaired by the Bishop of Lincoln (the Rt. Revd. Simon Phipps, also chairman of the Industrial Committee) at which were present several industrial chaplains, clergy from mining areas and lay people whose work meant they were in some way involved with the dispute. Some of the material about church initiatives was published in working paper 18, but this paper also included a 'General Briefing paper' covering various issues raised by the dispute and some theological reflections, and the Chairman's comments which were divided into areas of immediate, local concern and areas of long-term, economic and political assessment and their moral and spiritual implications (Beales and Phipps).

The church press did much to balance the picture of the dispute as portrayed by much of the secular press (see section 2.4), and to probe some of the underlying issues. The 'Methodist Recorder', in particular, produced many features which studied the effect of the strike in various areas of the country and reported the views of different people. For instance, on 25.10.84 the 'Methodist Recorder' carried a report from the coalfields which included an interview with a former financial secretary of the Yorkshire NUM, an NUM national executive member for the South Midlands area and three chaplains to pits, including one who served both working and striking pits. The following month wives of miners in Kent

were interviewed (Singleton) and in December the director of the Selby coalfield put his view on modern technology in the mines and the future of the mining industry (Anon, 1984u)). The situations in South Wales (Weetman, 1985a) and North East England (Weetman, 1985c) were surveyed and the working miners in the Mansfield area were also given their say (Weetman, 1985b). Most of the people interviewed had some Methodist connection and many spoke about the role of the church and church members in the dispute. Most of these features brought home the fact that many of the people who were caught up in the dispute were ordinary folk, rather than Marxist militants, no-good blacklegs, ruthless managers and the like, as some of the more sensationalist television and press images portrayed.

To a lesser extent the 'Church Times' probed beneath the 'two-sided' confrontation. Its articles included a reporter's visit to several pit villages in Nottinghamshire (Burley) and a discussion of the moral issues behind the strike (Brown). Such coverage in 'The Tablet' was somewhat scanty and tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. Also editorials in 'The Tablet' were rarely able to refer to Scargill without adding some comment about his 'marxist views' (eg. 'The Tablet,' 7.4.84 and 30.6.84).

4.3 What the official church bodies said.

4.3.1 The Methodist Church

The Methodist Conference, the supreme decision making body of the Methodist Church, meeting as it does in June/July of each year, was in 1984 urged to debate some of the issues of the coal dispute. The matter was brought to the attention of the Conference by the Revd. Denis Gardiner, the Superintendent of the Barnsley Circuit, Sheffield district (Anon, 1984c) who proposed a motion, which after considerable amendment received a massive majority vote. The amended motion read: -

"Conference deeply regretted that the dispute in the coal industry remained unresolved. Noting

- a) the continuing need for secure supplies of energy from coal for the foreseeable future;

- b) the damage caused to the common weal of the nation including many mining communities by the present dispute;
- c) the destruction of community life when pits are closed where no concrete plans are being put forward by Government or National Coal Board to provide new sources of employment;
- d) the appalling level of violence which has arisen; and
- e) the dangers and the cost of increasing dependence on nuclear energy;

[Conference] urged the NUM and NCB to resume meaningful discussions in order to seek to resolve the dispute, urged the Government to exercise authority in order that the well-being of all our people may be more urgently sought, and directed that the text of this resolution be sent to the NUM, the NCB, and the Secretary of State for Energy" (Anon, 1984e).

During the course of the debate Gardiner expressed his horror at the scenes of violence shown on the television, especially as he recognised some of the faces as men whose marriages he had conducted or families of babies he had baptised. Generally, Barnsley is not a particularly violent area, and "it was necessary to overcome immediate reactions to scenes of violence in order to understand the reason for such anger and frustration being expressed in that way" (Anon, 1984c). The major fears of the striking miners were for their jobs and their communities. The NCB's argument about uneconomic pits was treated with considerable suspicion since the "Uneconomic pits of 1964 became the economic pits of 1974 and then the uneconomic pits of 1984" (loc. cit.).

Terence Hyde, the seconder of the motion and an employee of the NCB, asked the Conference to deplore the violence and look at the matter in the light of reconciliation. "We are not here to bash the NUM, we are not here to bash the NCB, we are not here to bash the Government, but all have responsibility" (loc. cit.).

Another speaker, the Revd. Anthony Kinch, referred to the lack of jobs in the Wolverhampton region because of the steady demolition of most of the industrial base. He had seen the stress caused to individuals by not knowing whether they or their families would work again. He felt that "unless the Government took the necessary steps, there would be vast areas of the country where there was no proper work and no fulfilling

vision of life for the people" (loc. cit.). A chaplain in the Durham coalfield, the Revd. Barry Morley, urged that the NCB be made to recognise some responsibility for providing work when they moved out. However, the Revd. Peter Stephens, expressed concern about seemingly endless subsidies and felt that the miners' cause should not be reduced to one of one group fighting for its own corner against the rest of the community (loc. cit.).

4.3.2 The Church of England

The General Synod of the Church of England, which meets three times each year, also touched on the coal dispute during the course of its July 1984 session, though there was no formal debate on the subject. This was very much regretted by Mr Cranfield who pointed out that "many thousands of laymen and clergy of all denominations are intimately affected by the cause, effect and future consequences of what can only be described as a terrible blight on the nation" (C. of E., General Synod, 1984a, p390-1). He implored that opportunity be made to debate the miners' strike, with specific reference to public order and the Government's role, in the light of recent violence. The Archdeacon of West Ham replied to Cranfield's request by pointing out that the Synod's agenda is arranged sometime beforehand and if time is set aside then, the matter could well be resolved by the time of the meeting leaving a hole in the agenda. The Archdeacon added that "as events have shown, this would have been the worst possible time to have a debate here" (op. cit., p396). He gave no explanation for this judgement but presumably it was because the NCB and NUM were engaged in negotiations at that very time (Wilsher et al., p135). The validity of this argument and the responsibility the General Synod has of debating such issues of national importance will be considered further in section 6.3.

The only other person to speak out about the coal dispute during this session of Synod was Mr Pogmore who had been a deputy area director for the NCB from 1967-74 (Anon, 1984d). He praised the work of industrial chaplains and clergy in the colliery villages who had done much to win the respect of both sides, but hoped the Standing Committee would not do anything other than pray for the successful conclusion to the current

negotiations (C. of E., General Synod, 1984a, p394).

However, the July negotiations did not bring about a resolution to the coal dispute and by the time the General Synod met again in November many miners were still on strike. Again, no formal debate on the dispute was scheduled, but the Synod was due to debate 'Perspectives on Economics', a report commissioned by the Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee of the General Synod Board for Social Responsibility, and it was during the course of this debate that many references to, and concerns about the dispute were made. This debate, and the report itself, represent a major statement by the Church of England on the nature of the British economy and the place of industrial relations within it.

The report, 'Perspectives on Economics', was formally received and then a motion, affirming certain views expressed within it, was carried. "These were that: -

Economic values were not self-justifying but needed to be set in the larger context of human values.

Short-term and narrowly-conceived economic policies concerned with immediate sectional interest were "dangerously inadequate."

The whole community shared a responsibility for meeting the basic needs of each of its members while each accepted their responsibility for contributing to the common good."

The report was commended "for study and response by the Church Commissioners, the Central Board of Finance, dioceses and beyond" (Anon, 1984o).

Acknowledging that Christian theology can produce no one answer about how the church and the world should relate to one another, the report prefers the Kingdom of God model which sees human nature still in the making and therefore human needs include the need of redemption and a place in God's kingdom. Thus Jesus' teaching about God's kingdom, together with his own example, provide us with an ultimate criterion for assessing the variety of natural and biblical norms (C. of E., GS, BSR, Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee, p17). Peter Baelz, chairman of the report's Working Group and (then) Dean of Durham, finds that H. R. Niebuhr's model of transformation (in 'Christ and Culture') does

greatest justice to the Gospel (op. cit., p18). This model recognises that whilst the pattern and form of the Kingdom of God as can be deduced from the gospels can never be embodied in this world because of sin and lack of human understanding, it does provide a critique of secular life and a challenge to transform it into something more in keeping with the Kingdom of God. At times this may mean support of the secular authorities but at others it may bring us into tension and even conflict with them (op. cit., p17-8). The model also makes clear that the Christian Gospel cannot be divorced from the economic and political life of a nation, but neither can it be translated into a political ideology or an economic programme (op. cit., p21).

The section which analyses business enterprises points out that the three ingredients vital to any enterprise are capital, workers' skills and organising ability (op. cit., p41). It notes the positive side of greater participation by employees in decision making processes and suspects that improved human relations may provide a key to improved business performances (op. cit., p48). See section 3.3 of this work for discussion of this in the coal industry.

Chapter 6 of the report calls for trade unions to take a wider perspective than the immediate needs of their members. They should be willing to consider not just the redistribution of income and resources, but the nature of work itself. Since the mid-1960's long term agreements between employers and unions have tended to be replaced by short-run agreements on pay and conditions. Such agreements militate against worker participation in forward-planning for the enterprise, and the Continental system of industrial relations, involving a greater sharing of control over longer-term development, as well as allowing improvements in labour skills and education, is felt to be a better model. Such a system would involve a major shift in union responsibility, organisation and function as well as challenging the more authoritarian styles of management (op. cit., p54-55). Canon Boulton referred to these points during the Synod debate, and added flesh to the argument, by pointing out that the Plan for Coal had "achieved a real collaboration of government, Coal Board and unions in planning the coal industry" and enabling the closure of over 300 pits through negotiation and consultation. However, the recent introduction of "an alien, harsher, old-fashioned authoritarian" regime had not only upset

the NUM but also completely shattered the industrial relations policy of the NCB. "Thus, out of a just and participatory system of industrial relations, which enabled pits to be closed by negotiation... we now have a confrontational type of industrial relations, where the right of management to manage is regarded as so vital that the police forces of the whole country must be organised to make sure that it works" (C. of E., General Synod, 1984b, p1011). The Bishop of Lincoln had, earlier in the debate, touched on the right of management to manage suggesting that management had no such right, rather it had a duty to manage and this involved maintaining clear channels of communication with the workforce (op. cit., p995).

'Perspectives on Economics' also criticised state intervention in the economy for being too concerned with short-term balancing of resources and demand, and wants this to be replaced by a longer-term view-point, which takes special account of the essential requirements of renewed economic development and a structural response to change, and calls for a participatory structuring of society which gives a voice to the 'have nots' as well as to the 'haves' (C. of E., GS, BSR, Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee, p69).

This criticism of short-term policies is highlighted in the second of the Synod's affirmations of the report. The precise wording of this affirmation comes from the final chapter of the report (p72) in which Baelz draws together many of the themes of the report and puts them into a Christian context. He takes up again the model of the Kingdom of God, and whilst acknowledging that the values and dynamic of the kingdom cannot be directly translated into economic policies and programmes, feels they do point us in the direction of a society which is 'just, participatory and sustainable'; 'just' in the sense that it works to reduce inequalities, 'participatory' in that it encourages individuals to accept responsibility both for their own lives and the ordering of society, 'sustainable' in that it creates wealth for the present and preserves resources for the future (op. cit., p76-7).

The synod debate, in its third affirmation referring to the common good, draws attention to the 'participatory factor.' What it made no attempt to do was to take the 'just, participatory, sustainable' model and compare it

with the events behind the coal dispute, and from this moral basis make a critique of the dispute. No doubt Synod, particularly within the context of that particular debate, felt that this was well beyond its brief, but such an omission shows up the gap, the existence of which the report admits, "that needs to be bridged between Christian insight on the one hand and economic problems and practical decisions on the other" (op. cit., p2).

In the final chapter the response of the churches to the coal dispute will be analysed in the light of the model of a society which is aiming towards justice, participation and sustainability. This analysis will illustrate one way in which the gap between Christian insight and economic problems, and practical decisions can begin to be bridged (section 6.2).

During the February 1985 Synod session there was no reference made to the dispute which, by this time, was clearly in its final stages with many miners back at work. However, during the July 1985 session the annual report for the Board for Social Responsibility was presented and this mentioned the three briefing papers the Board had produced relating to the dispute in the mining industry (C. of E., GS, BSR, 1984, p12).

4.3.3 The Roman Catholic Church

Unlike the Methodist and the Anglican churches, the Roman Catholic Church has no national forum which includes both clergy and laity. However, twice a year there is a conference of all the bishops in England and Wales. The coal dispute did not feature in their conference of May 1984 but in November 1984 it was top of the agenda, and the 42 bishops "discussed the strike in the context of the whole subject of industrial relations, although there had been some concern among the bishops before the meeting not to submerge the issue of the coal strike in generalities" (Anon, 1984p). As a result of their discussion, the bishops published a public statement about the dispute, the full text of which was printed in 'The Tablet', 17.11.84, p1156 (Anon, 1984q).

The statement registered concern at the violent nature of the dispute and the effect the dispute was having on the whole community (point 1). It further noted that in the months prior to the dispute there had been an

increasing tendency for industrial action to spill over into violence whilst the available means of reconciliation and settlement were neglected (point 2). Generally, the established processes of consultation, which lie at the heart of industrial relations, were felt to be under severe strain. The bishops underlined the fact that true partnership requires mutual trust, with the rights and dignities of others being respected (point 3). They also thought that in order to achieve a just settlement, which restored the confidence needed for future industrial harmony, there could be no substitute for negotiation; in particular resort to the law and penal sanctions were felt to be of limited value (point 4).

The bishops' statement placed the coal dispute within the context of ever-advancing technology which had led to job-losses in many industries. This, in turn, had put an increasing strain on industrial relations; those facing redundancy and long-term unemployment had become increasingly determined to protect their jobs. The statement emphasised that no one industry or geographical region was felt to be able to solve this problem on its own (point 5).

In considering the effect of the coal dispute on the country, the bishops noted that the atmosphere of instability and violence which prevailed was gravely damaging to the morale of the country and was putting many family bonds under threat (point 6). They went on to assert that the socio-economic good of a country must have adequate regard for moral values, including the dignity of human labour, good housing, education and social services. Furthermore, industrial relations should take account of moral principles concerning the human person and the legitimate demands of the moral good of society (point 7). They felt that the protracted nature of the dispute was causing economic loss which, in turn, affected both the national well-being and the ability to give aid to poorer countries. In addition, it was damaging police and community relations and causing hardship and division amongst the pit communities (point 8). The bitterness within the mining villages was exacerbated by the stalemate in negotiations towards a settlement (point 9). "As pastors charged with responsibility before God in the work of reconciliation", the bishops believed that it was their right and duty to urge all involved in "this tragic dispute" to seek a swift return to the negotiating table as well as to call on all men and women of good will to pray earnestly that a just

and lasting settlement would be found and that a spirit of forgiveness would heal the divisions and distress that had been caused (point 10).

This statement proved to be the only one which the Roman Catholic Church issued at national level as the dispute ended before the bishops met again. Points 3, 4, 7 and 10 show the bishops to be advocating industrial relations based on consensus. Sections 3.2 and 3.4 consider how consensual industrial relations were being challenged by the Government and the NCB.

4.3.4 The British Council of Churches

Almost immediately after the Roman Catholic Bishops met, the British Council of Churches (BCC) held its 21st Assembly. In his opening address the General Secretary, Dr. Philip Morgan, praised leaders for speaking out on political issues and in particular commended the recent talks between church leaders and representatives of the NUM (Anon, 1984t).

Towards the end of the assembly the debate on the state of the nation developed into a discussion on the rights and wrongs of the dispute. The Bishop of Doncaster (the Rt. Revd. William Persson) was anxious to correct the impression the media often gave of the striking miners. "These men are not manipulative, sinister Marxists, the enemy within or anything else. The average striking miner is a decent, honest and caring man" (loc. cit.). David Bleakley pointed out that trade unions are part of the fabric of the nation; and if that fabric is damaged, so too is the state of the nation. He went on to liken Mr Scargill and Mr MacGregor to two blind Samsons at the pillars on which the stability of society depends, and felt that the Church must be clearly identified with this dilemma (loc. cit.). Bernard Thorogood argued that the strike could only be resolved in the context of the fuel policy of the nation (loc. cit.).

At the end of the debate a motion was passed, on the Chairman's casting vote, which "urged the Government, politicians of all parties, those engaged in industrial relations and the BCC's member churches to encourage patterns of reconciliation" (loc. cit.).

Although members of the BCC met with and wrote to both union and coal board leaders on various occasions, this was the only debated official statement that was made.

4.4 The Network of Coal Chaplains

The coalfields of Britain are well served by chaplains, whether they be full-time Industrial Chaplains or local parochial clergy who have a link with the nearby pit. The majority of the chaplains are Anglican but they usually work interdenominationally. The Chaplains all did valuable work at local level but also, through their National Network, were able to act collectively.

Concern about pit closures and the coal chaplains' response to them was expressed by the Revd. Stephen Kendal, Secretary to the Network, in a letter to members of the Network in November 1983, four months prior to the commencement of the strike. The closure of pits had been discussed at their previous meeting and he was concerned that they should attempt to develop a theological response to the closures as well as regretting their closure and "putting forward an ambulance service for community response to a closure" (Kendal, 1983).

During the overtime ban preceding the strike some of the chaplains met and instituted a study into facts surrounding pit closures (Kendal, 1985b, p29). However, this was soon overtaken by the start of the strike. The chaplains met again and sent letters to Scargill (NUM), MacGregor (NCB) and Walker (Department of Energy) "saying that it was going to take goodwill on everyone's part to end the dispute and suggesting that the chaplains were always available to help in any way we could" (Kendal, 1985b, p30). Further letters were sent to the NUM and NCB leaders asking them to make a conciliatory gesture, and meet to end the dispute. Replies were received from all parties but the chaplains' suggestions were not acted upon.

In June the Network met again, with an agenda of hearing each other's accounts of their local situation, assessing the dispute and its impact, and considering whether to take further action. As they were about to begin

they were contacted by the Archbishop of York, asking them for a brief on what might be done to find a solution. With this revised agenda the group went on to suggest that the Archbishop convene an ecumenical group to meet with Scargill, MacGregor and possibly Mrs Thatcher. The aim of any such church initiative should be threefold: -

1. "to put before all parties the churches' concern for the industry which belongs to all.
2. to mobilise strength for the mining communities where suffering is growing and will continue to do so.
3. to say something of our concern for the future" (National Network, 1984a).

The chaplains wanted to stress that negotiations needed to be as speedy as possible both on humanitarian grounds and in the national interest and that the task of church negotiators was to listen and make certain points but not to become embroiled in details about economics, the violence being committed or plans and negotiations to end the dispute (loc. cit.). In an unpublished draft statement the Network "called on Churches, among other things, to help in a welfare capacity", on the parties to "speed up negotiations" and on miners to "refrain from violent actions" (Brett, p11).

The following week negotiations between the NUM and NCB recommenced and so the Archbishop did not need to act on the Network's advice. Kendal feels that he would not have done so in any case, as his response to the Network's briefing was that "it did not give him anything new which he could take to meetings or to end the dispute" (Kendal, 1985b, p30). Kendal goes on to comment that the coal chaplains had no experience of dealing in a dispute as political as this, nor were they used to addressing themselves to the national church. Because of this they made some fundamental mistakes, the most important of which "was to believe that Church leaders, at national level, would take any notice of us unless we came up with views of the political scene which accorded with their own" (loc. cit.). This point will be picked up in section 6.4.

However, the papers which the June Network meeting produced were used by the Bishop of Birmingham in his address to Diocesan Synod and were used by the Church of England's Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee (loc. cit.).

The next meeting of the Coal Chaplains was not until November 1984, by which time various sets of negotiations had taken place and broken down. Prior to this meeting some of the Chaplains met with MacGregor at the NCB's headquarters. There they received a lecture on the economics of coal and were given the impression that MacGregor felt powerless in solving the dispute. "His powerlessness was founded in his total economic view of the industry: unless prices were right nothing else could be done" (National Network, 1984b). The only role he saw for the church was after the dispute, though he had been clearly hurt by the national statements made by the church (loc. cit.).

This meeting with MacGregor was discussed at the Network meeting. A similar meeting with Scargill had been hoped for, but he was unwilling to meet until after the dispute was over. The Network decided to issue a press statement including the plea for a negotiated settlement to the current dispute. The drift back to work was felt to be in no one's long term interest as it would further divide the workforce and would do lasting damage to industrial relations. "As the Churches' official representatives in the industry we appeal to the NCB and the NUM to return immediately to the negotiating table and that the Government should do all within its power to bring this about" (Kendal, 1985b, Appendix 4). However, in England, the press release received very little coverage, although it did so in Scotland. The Network meeting also expressed concern that they had been neither consulted about nor informed of meetings between church leaders of various denominations and the leaders in the dispute, and they wrote to the Bishop of Lincoln to this effect (National Network, 1984c). The next meeting of the Network was scheduled for early March but in the interim several of the coal chaplains met with Douglas Bate, an Industrial Chaplain in South Wales, to learn more about ecumenically based initiatives taken by the Welsh churches to bring the dispute to a negotiated settlement (see further section 4.6 .

Even after the dispute had come to end, it continued to dominate Network meetings. At the May 1985 conference David Holmes, Doncaster Area Industrial Relations Officer spoke about the problems and opportunities in his area and four Sheffield clergy, all based in pit villages, spoke about the effect the dispute had on their communities (National Network, 1985b).

Throughout the dispute the Network, "at all times worked with the desire to end the dispute to the benefit of all within the industry The sympathies of the chaplains lay with the miners, the industry and the principles of consensus" (Kendal, 1985b, p32). The existence of the Network enabled the chaplains to keep one another informed of their local situation and to offer one another support, and from this they were able to pass on their knowledge and understanding to the wider church. However, the work of the Network was hampered by practical factors such as lack of money to enable the chaplains to meet together more frequently. Some of the chaplains also felt that the wider church did not take them seriously and this was partly due to the individualistic nature of the church's theology (Kendal, 1985a). Perhaps a telling factor of the low regard with which industrial chaplaincy is held within the Church of England is that, unlike the universities and armed services, there are no reserved seats in General Synod for those working within industry.

The work of industrial chaplains and their relationship with the wider church will be considered further in section 6.3. It will be suggested in the final conclusions (section 6.5) that industrial chaplains are both under-resourced and under-valued by the church as a whole.

4.5 Church leaders speak out

"I have always believed that there is a time to speak out and a time to be silent," said the Bishop of Southwell (the Rt. Revd. John Wakeling) in the House of Lords on 13 November 1984, in his contribution to the debate on Economic and Industrial Affairs (House of Lords, 1984, p257). His speech dealt primarily with matters relating to the coal dispute, and in it he touched on issues on which many church leaders had spoken out, including the hardship and pain within the pit communities, the conduct of the strike and its political undercurrents, as well as the wider issues of unemployment and economic policies.

Many church leaders felt this dilemma of when to speak out and when to keep silent during the course of the dispute. The Revd. Gordon Barritt, the President of the Methodist Conference, in particular, was very wary of making public statements which, he felt, could easily aggravate the

situation (Weetman, 1984d). The Bishop of Southwell, in his speech in the House of Lords, minimised the importance of pronouncements by bishops, emphasising more the pastoral role of the clergy of all denominations who worked in the strike-torn areas.

However, many church leaders found that there were many occasions when not to have made public reference to the coal dispute would have been singularly inappropriate. The Bishop of Southwell, himself could hardly have ignored the strike when preaching at the annual service for miners in Southwell Cathedral on 6th May 1984. Nor, when being enthroned as Bishop of Durham (21st September 1984) could the Rt. Revd. David Jenkins have omitted reference to the dispute in a diocese which has had a long history of coal mining. Funerals, such as that of David Wilkie, the taxi driver killed as he took a miner to work in South Wales, attracted much media attention. Again the preacher, the Bishop of Llandaff (the Rt. Revd. John Poole-Hughes), was virtually obliged to speak of the wider circumstances surrounding this tragedy, especially the need for the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness (Poole-Hughes, p2).

Other senior clergy felt it was their pastoral duty to visit the areas of tension and hardship, and comments made during the course of their visits became public knowledge. Some made the most of regularly scheduled occasions to refer to the dispute, for instance the Bishop of Birmingham (the Rt. Revd. Hugh Montefiore) did so in his presidential addresses to the Birmingham Diocesan Synod in both June and October of 1984. One or two used the pages of the national and local newspapers to press their understanding of the salient features of the dispute and to speak out on behalf of the people for whom they had pastoral and spiritual responsibility.

Whatever method was used, there was a considerable amount of uniformity (even monotony) in what those in leadership positions in the churches said. The predominant theme was that there should be reconciliation between the various parties and that a settlement be negotiated as quickly as possible. A typical comment of this nature comes from the Bishops of Southwell, Derby (the Rt. Revd. Cyril Bowles) and Sheffield (the Rt. Revd. David Lunn) in a letter to 'The Times' (24.5.84). "While we do not have the knowledge to judge the technical details of policies, nevertheless we

urge on management and unions, her Majesty's Government and other key political leaders the need to enter now into a process of conciliation aimed at finding a just and speedy solution for the sake of all who are affected by this dispute".

The Archbishop of Canterbury (the Most Revd. Robert Runcie) pointed out the need for reconciliation on various occasions. The text he was given to preach on in Derby Cathedral on 15th September 1984 was "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who has made us one, and has broken down the wall of hostility" (Ephesians, 2.13f). The Archbishop went on to say "I appeal to every Christian involved in the mining industry, whether directly or indirectly, whether in management, or union or among the rank-and-file, to work together to consider how a new spirit of peace-making, how a willingness to go the extra mile can begin to work its way into our angry and divided communities, and draw the poison of bitter words" (Runcie, p9). But the Archbishop was well aware that reconciliation was no easy task: "Reconciliation is not papering over cracks, it is a costly business, and it is not believing that there shouldn't be conflict. I think Christians should not be people who are too crisis ridden; they should go on believing in the actual possibilities of reconciliation even when things are at their worse" (Longley & Runcie).

Within this major theme of the need for reconciliation three sub-themes can be identified which were regular causes for comment:

- the effect of the dispute on the pit communities,
- the conduct of the dispute,
- the implications of the dispute for the nation.

From early on in the dispute many church leaders voiced their concern about the effect that pit closures would have on the mining communities. In their letter to 'The Times' (24.5.84) the bishops of Southwell, Derby and Sheffield drew attention to the divisions within families and communities which were being created by the dispute, as well as the hardship being endured.

In an address to his Diocesan Synod in June 1984, the Bishop of Manchester (the Rt. Revd. Stanley Booth Clibborn) pointed out the distress

being caused to all caught up in the dispute, as well as criticising the pickets for their use of violence and intimidation and expressing concern that the police seemed to be using more than minimum force. He also stated that too much intransigence had been shown by both sides and felt that too little had been done to bring them together (Anon, 1984b).

The Bishop of Birmingham, in the same month, asked his Diocesan Synod how they would feel if local major employers such as Lucas, GKN and British Leyland were all threatened with permanent closure. He gave the answer, "It would be the end of our world - and that is how many miners feel about their own threatened closures" (Montefiore, p2-3). He pointed out that despite the violent scenes, many miners were decent, hard-working people. He felt the strike should be ended quickly on the grounds of stewardship for mines were becoming dangerous due to lack of maintenance and this could force early closure upon them (op. cit., p3). All this built up the case for reconciliation, but, before reconciliation was a possibility, both sides needed to answer some questions. The NCB needed to make clear at what point it regarded it justifiable to close a pit: for instance, when coal is $1\frac{1}{2}$ times more expensive than the average, or 2 or 3 times? Also, it needed to clarify what help it proposed to give to the communities affected. The NUM, too, needed to modify the impression that it was demanding what amounted to an unlimited subsidy to keep open all pits which were not exhausted or dangerous (op. cit., p5).

Both the Bishop of Birmingham (Montefiore, p6) and the Bishop of Durham (Jenkins, p5) expressed concern about talk of victory by either side, and also saw the need for the NUM and the NCB to climb down from their absolute demands. The bishops referred to the part the wider society had to play and pointed out the political dimensions of the strike. David Jenkins was particularly critical of the Government, not just because they appeared to be "determined to beat the miners" but because "they also seem to be indifferent to poverty and powerlessness. Their financial measures consistently improve the lot of the already better off while worsening that of the badly off" (Jenkins, p5). The Archbishop of Canterbury echoed these sentiments a few days later; "We live in a society in which the majority are better off, but nevertheless there is growing poverty and despair and a sense of powerlessness" (Longley & Runcie). He also criticised the shift from consensus to confrontation as a way of

ordering society, and spoke of the sense of powerlessness that those faced with poverty and long-term unemployment felt. The Bishop of Birmingham made a similar analysis of the situation in his October Diocesan Synod address saying that an underlying reason for the dispute was fear; "a fear of becoming powerless in a land where those in power don't seem to care" and he felt that the fear for the future would not be allayed "if this Government insists on continuing the politics of confrontation" (Anon, 1984i).

The coal dispute had raised urgent questions about the ordering of society and it needed to be understood and resolved in the light of these. The Bishop of Birmingham had no doubt that it was the duty of the Church to draw attention to these deeper issues, and so he called for a national debate about the real nature of work, as against gainful employment (loc. cit.). Another major issue that was tied in with the immediate dispute was the need for a national energy policy which covered, not only coal but also gas, oil and nuclear power, and the Council of Churches in Wales called for this on several occasions.

For the most part the church leaders took up a major strand in the arguments of the NUM: that they were victims of monetarist economic policies, that Government was not doing as much as it could to alleviate unemployment, that social costs should be given more weight in the decision to close pits. As the Archbishop of York (the Most Revd. John Habgood) wrote, in a letter to Durham miners, "I believe that we owe it to future generations not to close pits before they are properly worked out, just as we owe it to the present generation not to destroy jobs until there is an overwhelming case for doing so. I am fully aware of the serious consequences which might follow the premature closing of pits" (Anon, 1984a).

Although there was considerable unanimity in what church leaders said during the course of the strike, there were some lone voices making rather different comments. Whilst most senior clergy were careful, in their condemnation of the violence, not to apportion blame solely to one group of people, the Bishop of Peterborough (the Rt. Revd. William Westwood) was not so cautious. He "came in on the side of the Government, with

praise for the way it faced mob violence like that seen 'in Nazi Germany during the 1930's'" (Anon, 1984j). There were, too, questions asked of church leaders for speaking out on behalf of the pit communities. Why were the bishops silent when the mill towns of Lancashire were similarly affected in the 1960's and the steel-towns in the 1970's? Will those opposing heavy redundancies in the future have similar episcopal support, wondered a writer to the 'Church Times' (Weatherhead). Another author wrote to 'The Times' accusing the church leaders of "publicly encourage(ing) a crusade led by a bunch of undemocratic rebels who condone civil disobedience" and advising them to keep well clear of politics (Smithers). Whether church leaders should speak up in circumstances such as prevailed during the course of the pit dispute will be considered in section 6.3.

4.6 Church attempts to bring about a negotiated settlement

As we have seen above, throughout the course of the dispute there was a consistent call from church leaders and industrial chaplains of almost all denominations to the parties embroiled to sit round the table and negotiate a settlement. In the early months these calls were made either verbally, at public gatherings, or in letters to the leaders of the NUM and the NCB and the Secretary of State for Energy. As the months passed the frequency of these calls increased and were supplemented with meetings between church leaders and representatives of various parties to the dispute.

One of the earliest of these meetings came in August 1984 when the Bishop of Birmingham met with the Energy Secretary and also wrote to Neil Kinnock and Len Murray, offering the Church's help 'in any way' towards resolving the dispute (Brett, p12). During the summer months several senior ministers were keen to have some direct contact with local people caught up with the dispute, partly to keep themselves informed but also to show a willingness to make more direct intervention if this were felt to be helpful. To this end, the Archbishop of York had discussions with the leader of the Yorkshire miners, and the Bishop of Sheffield visited the pickets at Cortonwood Colliery as well as meeting the Secretary of the NUM along with other church leaders.

On 31 August 1984 the President and Secretary of the Baptist Union (the Revd. Frank Cooke and the Revd. Bernard Green) wrote an open letter to the NUM and the NCB urging the parties "to get together and stay there until you have come to some mutually acceptable agreement on all issues under a trusted chairman" (Anon, 1984g). The Baptist Union President later added that he had not asked leaders from other denominations to join in their approach because that could result in something like an Archbishop's Commission, which did little other than haggle over wording (loc. cit.).

The Bishop of Durham's enthronement sermon, 21 September 1984, which spoke of the need for "a negotiated settlement which is a compromise" (Jenkins, p5) resulted in a correspondence between the Secretary of State for Energy and the Bishop in which the Bishop suggested a 'cooling-off' period and resumption of all possible negotiations. Some felt that the sermon revitalised the stalemate and hastened the beginning of new talks between the NCB and NUM (Kendal, 1985b, p33).

The following month saw MacGregor meeting with the Network of Coal Chaplains and also with the President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd. Gordon Barritt (Weetman, 1984b). Prior to this, the Methodist Division for Social Responsibility had set up a group to advise the President of Conference about the strike, and the President had issued a statement which spoke of the need for Church leaders to avoid further controversy and be involved in working towards reconciliation (Weetman, 1984a).

The Methodist President also met with miners and their families in South Yorkshire and pledged to pass on their view about the dispute to MacGregor (Weetman, 1984b). Although MacGregor made clear that he was prepared to negotiate only with Scargill, he welcomed a further meeting with Barritt and members of his 'Methodist think tank' and some miners (Weetman, 1984c). Scargill refused to meet with Barritt on the grounds of a full diary, but the Methodist President did manage to have discussions with Peter Walker (loc. cit.) and later both NUM President and Vice-President were able to find time to meet the Methodist leader. Barritt's aim in meeting these people was to listen to as many sides as possible and to act as a possible bridge-builder. However, he felt that

church leaders should be very cautious in making public statements (Weetman, 1984d).

Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool (the Most Revd. Derek Worlock), the Archbishop of York (the Most Revd. John Habgood), the Bishop of Lincoln (the Rt. Revd. Simon Phipps) and the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church (the Revd. Bernard Thoroughgood) met with Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield on 21 November 1984. As the meeting was being set up, the Secretary of the NUM commented, "Initially, the important thing is to establish contact" (Anon, 1984r). The meeting was arranged at the request of the NUM, after negotiations with the Coal Board had broken down again, and was an off the record conversation about the dispute in general terms. The main concern of the church leaders was to listen to the NUM leaders in order to understand their case, as well as to see if there might be grounds for the resumption of negotiations (Anon, 1984s). The previous day the Bishop of Manchester met the general secretary of the Lancashire NUM (Sid Vincent) for a briefing about the possibility of further negotiations (loc. cit.). Despite all these talks the NUM and NCB were not persuaded to resume negotiations.

Early in December some church leaders in Scotland visited the coal fields and met with representatives of the union and the coal board. Afterwards they expressed "their sadness at the impasse in the dispute, and the unwillingness of either side to move towards the other" (Beales, p6). They went on to suggest that there be a cooling-off period of at least three months in which work was resumed and the Government, the NCB and the NUM plan together the long term future shape of the industry, with no one tied to former plans or entrenched positions. If any one of these three bodies found the progress to be unsatisfactory then an all-party committee of MP's should work on a way out of the impasse (Beales, p6).

Meanwhile, Welsh church leaders were coming to similar conclusions. Preaching at the funeral of the taxi driver, killed whilst taking a miner into work, the Bishop of Llandaff mooted the possibility of the agreement of some sort of moratorium which allowed for "an immediate return to work without prejudice to tactical gains so far achieved, such as they are. Then an impartial board might be set up to look at the wider issues

involved in an energy policy for the whole country and how to use our national asset of coal to the best advantage, bearing in mind the human elements and the welfare of those people who are dependent on the industry" (Poole-Hughes, page 1-2). This was followed by a letter, on 20 December, from ten Welsh church leaders to the Prime Minister, the Energy Secretary, the other political parties and the NCB and NUM. The Prime Minister was urged to set up an Independent Review Body which would examine the future of the coal industry in the context of a long-term energy policy, taking into account the needs of the coal industry and its customers, and also analyse the issues of development, unemployment and the nature of community. Before putting pen to paper, the Annual Meeting of the Council of Churches for Wales (13 October 1984) had passed a resolution concerning the mining industry in Wales which called for a debate about energy policy and also for 'total costing' which included social as well as economic costs. In taking this further the Welsh churches had held confidential meetings with the NCB and NUM in South Wales and had produced a statement which claimed six areas on which the union and the board were agreed. These areas included community and managerial factors as well as the conviction by both parties of the necessity of a negotiated settlement, and belief that it was possible (Beales, p6-7).

The letter to the Prime Minister was followed by a press statement on 16 January 1985 which again called for the establishment of an Independent Review Body and added that the closure programme should be suspended until the body had presented its report. However, at a meeting between the Welsh ministers and the Energy Secretary on 23 January, Peter Walker rejected their proposal outright, though he welcomed their visit and accepted their pastoral role and concern (Beales, p7). Not deterred, the Welsh delegation met with national NUM and NCB representatives, separately, at the end of January. The NUM national executive endorsed the Welsh churches' proposals, including the Independent Review Body, and this led to further discussions with the NUM and NCB, though only in the South Wales area, rather than at national level (Beales, p8). Commenting afterwards on these attempts at mediation by the Welsh churches, Stephen Kendal applauded the amount of consultation they did (Kendal, 1985b, p31) and added that their initiative "gave both sides the chance to approach the problem from a different angle without jeopardising their stated cases.

Unfortunately the initiative seemed to founder at Government level, after receiving favourable responses from many others in a position to know if the proposals had any life in them" (op. cit., p32). The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cardiff (the Most Revd. John Ward), one of the clergy involved, at the time said that "the church was seeking reconciliation and not just meddling in politics. He saw himself as being able to give a voice to Wales, which, he felt, had been neglected by the national Government" (Anon, 1985c).

The British Council of Churches (BCC) similarly thought that an Independent Review Body should be established and, following their executive meeting at which they welcomed the proposals by the Scottish and Welsh churches, the Moderator of the Executive Committee wrote to Peter Walker calling for "the setting-up of regional working parties to detail the economics of the industry pit by pit, including data on direct mining costs, research costs, closure costs, overhead national costs, investment needed and all other cost factors..... At the same time, the Department of Energy to set up an Independent All-Party Review Body to examine the future of the industry in the context of a national energy policy taking in gas, oil and nuclear power" (Kendal, 1985b, Apendix 6C). This letter led to a meeting between delegates from BCC and Peter Walker at which the delegates received assurances that the Government was committed to a negotiated settlement, however the suggestion that an Independent Review Body be established was again rejected (Anon, 1985b and Anon, 1985d).

The Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland and the Scottish Churches' Council, together, were also urging the Energy Secretary to use his "good offices, at this critical stage of the dispute, to show that magnanimity which will pave the way to a negotiated settlement between the Board and the Union". This plea was contained in a letter to Peter Walker on 24 January 1985 (Beales, p9).

This was followed by an ecumenical appeal issued by church leaders in England, Scotland and Wales, on 1 February. It read: -

"We regret the failure to reach a negotiated settlement of the damaging coal dispute.

The issue now is not for support for one side or the other but the urgent need for negotiations to be resumed immediately (sic). It is surely not the nature of the process of consultation to require decisions by any one party before the process begins.

While the agenda for such negotiations must clearly include the central issue of economic policy in the mining industry, we believe that neither party should seek to impose its own interpretations in advance of negotiation" (Beales, p9-10).

However, no negotiations took place, and by early March the NUM had decided to abandon the strike and their members returned to work without an agreement. All the church leaders could now do was to "issue a plea for reconciliation and magnanimity on all sides" (Anon, 1985e), a plea made by the BCC, individual bishops and church leaders and local clergy.

4.7 Financial help for those suffering in the dispute.

As will be shown in Chapter 5, many local churches and small groups of people set about providing help for those in hardship because of the coal dispute. Their help included the provision of food parcels and vouchers, the establishment of food kitchens and the giving of presents at Christmas. Most of the church aid for those not working was organised at the local level but there were some national schemes and national organisations which took some initiatives in this area. Both the Church of England Children's Society and the Methodist Relief Fund sparked off a storm of controversy when they started to make funds available to the families of miners suffering great hardship.

It was early in June 1984 when the Revd. Brian Duckworth wrote to the 'Methodist Recorder' on behalf of the Methodist Relief Fund, which is administered by the Division of Social Responsibility (DSR) of the Methodist Church. He stated that the fund had received requests for grants to assist miners and their families suffering hardship. He went on to invite donations, designated for use in this way, from individuals and from Methodist churches (Duckworth, 1984a) and made clear that "It is not proposed at present to make any grants from the general, undesignated resources of the fund."

In August it became known that the Children's Society had given grants of £500 to each of four dioceses in the Church in Wales and around £4,500 to extend the work of a family centre in Maltby, South Yorkshire (Halsall). The money had come from a sum of £10,000 which the society had "ear-marked for distribution for the benefit of 'children and families in need'" (Anon, 1984h). The need had been identified by clergy working within mining communities, who had approached their bishops for help and the bishops in turn had approached the society (Stone).

The actions of both these organisations provoked a storm of protest. A typical comment was that of Mary Seymour, "The NUM have called their miners to strike. They pay strikers to picket which ends in violence. It is that organisation which should be helping their members' children, not voluntary organisations using money raised by the hard work of ordinary people". John Probert objected to the Methodist appeal for funds on the grounds that, "The miners have brought this suffering upon themselves, unlike those poor souls in the Third World who are trapped by poverty." The giving of money to miners' families was interpreted as a political act which charities had no right to make.

There were others, however, who felt that the Methodist Relief Fund had not gone far enough. Alan Powers asks, "Isn't it time that we put our money directly from Methodist Relief Fund into the miners' food stores so that we show our solidarity with them?". For Powers and others the action of the DSR was not political enough; after all, the Methodist Conference had committed itself to a Mission alongside the Poor, so why was generous provision not being made for those being oppressed or about to be oppressed? (Slack).

Brian Duckworth replied to his critics by explaining the background to the DSR's decision to invite donations specifically earmarked for miners' families. He argued that the basic criterion in allocating money from the Methodist Relief Fund can only be need. The DSR, however, had recognised that the dispute has aroused deeply divided opinion and had felt that to make a grant from the general fund would alienate many supporters, but they also felt that they could not ignore requests for help with pressing local needs. They thus opted to offer the fund as an

administrative channel for those who wished to help relieve the need (Duckworth, 1984b).

The Children's Society, whose chairman Peter Bottomley is a Conservative M.P., quickly issued a statement distancing the Society's action from active support of striking miners. "We are aware through our existing work with children and families that at the present time the children of some miners are suffering actual hardship... The Society takes no view either way on the rights and wrongs of the strike but we are concerned for the children suffering as a result. Money is entrusted to us to help children in any kind of need and so, alongside helping many thousands of other children, we are trying to make some small contribution to help miners' children at this time.... We do not see miners' children as a special group. It is simply that at present they need help as do the children of the long-term unemployed or of single parents or broken homes and the children who are severely handicapped, emotionally damaged or drifting into crime" (Children's Society). It was also made clear that none of the money had gone to miners' lodges to be distributed only to families of striking miners, but to clergy who know of particular cases of hardship, not all of whom are miners (Anon, 1984f).

Other hardship funds organised at national level, with varying degrees of church support, aroused much less criticism. They included the fund set up by the Christian Organisations for Social, Political and Economic Change (COSPEC), launched in October 1984 after talks to resolve the dispute had once more broken down (Anon, 1984l) and after hearing about the plight of mining families, particularly in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Kent (Anon, 1984k). Church leaders who agreed to sponsor the fund included the Methodist Chairman of the Liverpool District (the Revd. Norwyn Denny), the Methodist Chairman of the Birmingham District (the Revd. Chris Hughes Smith), the Bishop of Durham and the Moderator of the URC of the West Midlands (the Revd. Fred Kaan) (*loc. cit.*) but the Bishop of Sheffield refused to, not because such schemes were not welcome, but that there was a limit to the number of schemes with which one could be personally associated (Anon, 1984l). COSPEC raised money by asking Christians to make a personal commitment of £1 per week (waged) or 50p (unwaged) (Anon, 1984k) and by mid-December they reported that they had raised over £3,000 (Anon, 1984v).

A second scheme was the TUC Miners' Hardship Fund, established early in November 1984, and which included amongst its trustees the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool (the Rt. Revd. David Sheppard), the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool (the Most Revd. Derek Worlock) and the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council (the Revd. Howard Williams). The two Bishops issued a joint statement stressing that this fund was separate from the mineworkers' fighting fund and their agreement to be trustees did not mean that they were taking sides, rather they "wished to act as reconcilers to ease the bitterness. No lasting solution could be achieved by one party being ground down or by mere surrender by one side" (Anon, 1984n). The Bishop of Liverpool added "If people talk of a creeping return to work because of despair, that is a prescription for bitterness for a long time into the future. The Church... has a very real contact with mining communities, and the churches really do understand something of how important reconciliation is going to be. We should attend to need and human distress" (Anon, 1984m).

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CHAPTER 5

Local Church Responses to the Coal Dispute

5.1 Introduction

The involvement of the church with those directly affected by the coal dispute was at its greatest at the local level. Indeed, it was hearing one vicar speak of his experiences during the dispute which aroused my interest in this study.

This chapter draws on material which I have collected by visiting clergy in various mining communities in South Yorkshire and County Durham. I restricted my interviews to Anglican clergy because the Anglican church sees itself as having a ministry to all, rather than to just its church members. However, I will refer to other churches. This restriction has worked well since many mining communities are fairly distinct entities in which both the parish church and the pit winding gear are clearly visible. The populations are such that there is usually one (rarely more) Anglican minister living in and serving each community. This is not the case, say for the Methodist Church, where ministers often have responsibility for several chapels, or the Roman Catholic Church, whose parishes often cover several communities. This means that only some of the clergy of these churches will be living in mining communities, whilst others may well be living some distance from the communities directly affected by the dispute and thus not have the same ready access to the people so involved.

In the course of my research I have worked closely with the Working Party set up by the Social Responsibility Committee of the Diocese of Sheffield which produced the report 'The Church in the Mining Communities' and presented it to the Sheffield Diocesan Synod in March 1988. The report was "an investigation of the Church's role during the strike in order to learn how 'to be the church better in these communities'" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p1). I joined the Working Party for some of their interviews and, also, listened to recordings or used transcripts of some of those I missed. They, in turn, have used notes of my interviews to aid

their research. Our focus of interest differed slightly but there was sufficient overlap to make a sharing of material worthwhile.

In my interviews I usually limited my discussions to the clergy as my primary concern lay with discerning how the church's officials saw themselves responding to the dispute, though on two occasions, having met with the clergy, I returned to meet a wider representation of the local church. In a further parish I was able to talk to an NUM representative. The Working Party met with members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC), usually with the vicar present, and then separately met with local leaders of the NUM.

Before visiting any parishes the Sheffield Working Party prepared a set of questions (see Appendix A), but rather than work formally through them we tried to instigate a free discussion, though guiding it so that most of our questions were covered. We started each discussion by encouraging those present to describe their parish, and the relationship between the church and the mining community before the dispute started. We tried to discover what proportion of the congregation had been directly involved in mining during the recent past. We then moved on to the dispute itself and heard how the relationship between the church and the local community changed during that year: had the church, perhaps, become a focal point in the community because the hall was being used as a canteen or had the ministry of the clergy widened to include those on the picket line? We listened whilst the people told us what they actually did during the dispute, then attempted to probe why they did certain things, e.g. enable a Women's Support Group to use the hall rent-free and not others, or hold a collection for the local hardship fund. We discussed whether their action, or inaction, had caused any disagreements within the congregation and how these were handled. Worship during the dispute was analysed to discover whether this had, or had not, been shaped by events outside the church. Finally, we encouraged the church members and the clergy to assess whether the dispute had a lasting impact on them personally, and on the relationship between the church and the community. The assessment included comment on where their performance fell short and what help or stimulus would have been required to have improved this.

A similar technique was used for our discussions with the NUM representatives. Again we initiated the discussion by hearing their views on the place of the church within the community before the dispute started. We then went on to discuss what the local church did to help miners and their families during the dispute and whether this changed the relationship between the miners and the church. Lastly, we invited comment on how the church could improve its ministry within mining communities.

Similarly, I had a prepared list of questions (Appendix B) to guide my discussions with clergy, based very much on the Working Party list, though I also asked for comment on the part the national church played during the dispute; were the statements by various bishops helpful, or had they said and done too little, or too much?

South Yorkshire and County Durham were chosen as the main areas in which to conduct my research as they share many characteristics. Both regions have had a long history of coal mining, and both have experienced a decline in the number of small pits leading to a concentration of mining at a smaller number of locations. Although the miners of South Yorkshire are traditionally more militant than those of Durham, and indeed in a local ballot of the Durham Winding Enginemmen a 55% majority to support the strike-call was not obtained (Ottey, p78), in both regions the vast majority of NUM members withdrew their labour until the final weeks of the dispute. Unlike some of the Midland regions, in particular Nottinghamshire, there was not the same division between working and striking miners. Ease of access to these two regions and some prior knowledge of their geography also assisted research in these areas.

Before I commenced my investigations at the parish level, the Working Party team had already chosen "a sample of six mining parishes, defined as communities in which the coal industry was dominant and where a substantial proportion of the families had connections with the industry. The sample was balanced to take account of the concentration of mining families, church traditions and location in the coal field" ((C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p2). Their visits were made to: -

Church Councils

Askern
Brampton Bierlow (t)
Conisbrough (p)
Thurnscoe St. Hilda
Wales (p)
Woodlands (p)

Miners groups

Askern
Cortonwood (t,w)
Denaby (p)
Hickleton
Kiveton Park (p,w)
Brodsworth (p)

p : I was present at the interview
t : I have heard a recording of the interview
w : Members of the Women's Support Group were present.

The group also interviewed the Reverend John Packer, Vicar of Wath and the Reverend Rodney Marshall, Vicar of Goldthorpe. I have read transcripts of both these discussions.

I selected my parishes with the help of the Senior Chaplain of the Sheffield Industrial Mission (SIM) and the Coal Chaplain to the North East Coalfield. In total, I visited seven parishes. I also interviewed the person who was Team Vicar/Industrial Chaplain in Maltby, South Yorkshire, during the dispute.

The parishes visited were:-

Brampton Bierlow, South Yorkshire
Bolton-on-Deerne, South Yorkshire (c)
Rossington, South Yorkshire
New Rossington, South Yorkshire (c)
Easington Colliery, Durham (e)
New Seaham, Durham (n)
Seaham Harbour, Durham

c : I met with church members as well as the clergy
n : I met an NUM leader as well as the clergy.
e : I interviewed an electrical engineer who worked at the pit but lived and worshipped a few miles away, in addition to meeting the clergy.

In making the selection we attempted to include some parishes where the involvement of the church during the dispute was known to have been considerable (Brampton, Bolton-on-Deerne, New Rossington, Easington Colliery and New Seaham). We also chose a pair of parishes in each region which, although adjacent geographically, produced markedly different responses (New Seaham/Seaham Harbour and New Rossington/Rossington) in order to attempt to study why responses differed.

A further factor taken into account was the socio-economic mix of the parishes. The parishes can be sub-divided, albeit rather roughly, into two

groups. Bolton-on-Deerne, New Seaham and to a slightly lesser extent, New Rossington and Easington Colliery are all parishes in which mining has very much dominated local industry and where almost every person in the recent past has had a close contact with the pit. In these parishes there was little black-legging and the communities were united in the stand they were taking against pit-closures. However, it would be unfair to see them all as militant strikers. They were pro-miner rather than pro-strike. Many were deeply uneasy about taking strike action but felt that there was no alternative.

The other parishes had a wider socio-economic base of which the local pit was only a part. A considerable proportion of the population either commuted out of the parish or worked in other local industries. Some contained modern housing estates which housed few miners except those of managerial status. Those who were (or had been) underground or surface workers tended to live on estates of poor quality housing usually near to the pit, and within the community there was an awareness of an 'us and them' division.

In Rossington the two parishes follow the 'us/them' division fairly closely with New Rossington being the model village built to house the miners and now has the feel of an amorphous, fairly run-down, housing estate. The old village of Rossington is a mixture of very old houses with individual character intermingled with the modern owner-occupier estates which house commuters and a few higher grade miners.

In Wales and Brampton the 'us/them' division occurred within the parish. In both cases the church was situated at the better end of the communities and so was perceived to serve 'the middle class' - 'those who wear hats'. Presence of an 'us/them' division within the parish has proved to be a major factor in shaping both the response of the church to the local mining community, and the perception of the church by miners and their families.

Obviously, no two parishes can ever be the same, but some had special features on which it is worth commenting. Both New Rossington and

Maltby included model villages which were built early this century to house the miners who were to work the newly sunk pit. Both, also, had churches which were endowed by the South Yorkshire Coalfield's Extension Committee specifically to serve the new mining community. Cortonwood Colliery, whose threatened closure prompted the dispute, lay within the boundaries of Brampton Bierlow, and much attention was focussed on the colliery. Also, the clergy of the parish were members of the local Labour party and this was an added dimension in their relationship with the local community.

In addition to these interviews I have also received several written accounts of experiences during the dispute by clergy, obtained through personal contacts and response to a letter in the 'Church Times'. These have helped to give a fuller account of what the church was doing during the dispute. An essay which has proved particularly illuminating is by Brian Barrodale, the Rector of Cotgrave in Nottinghamshire. Although he was ministering within a community which was considerably more divided in its attitude and behaviour during the strike, reactions to what he did during the dispute have much in common with those in South Yorkshire and Durham and so have been used to illustrate points and in drawing conclusions.

The rest of this chapter uses the findings of these investigations to describe how the church in the mining communities was affected by the coal dispute, and how it responded to it. Some preliminary conclusions will be drawn in the final section of this chapter. Chapter 6 will then analyse these findings, together with the response of the national and regional churches, and will attempt to classify the different types of response and comment on them.

5.2 Worship

Despite the havoc the coal dispute wreaked amongst so many aspects of daily living in the mining villages, regular Sunday and weekday worship continued much as normal. It was a great source of strength and comfort for those who participated in it, and many have told how their

public worship and their private prayers kept them going amongst so much turmoil.

Although churches varied in how much they felt able to discuss the dispute or to have sermons which touched upon it, in the vast majority of services in mining parishes, reference was made to the dispute during the intercessions. General petitions which recurred regularly included requests for a just settlement, cessation of violence, relief of hardship, and strength for all who were suffering as a consequence of the dispute. As well as general petitions, specific needs and people were mentioned. NCB and NUM officials, both at national and local level, were regularly named, though "a few chose not to mention local managers and NUM officials by name, feeling that selection might be misleading" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p15). Clergy and congregation (often the intercessions are led by members of the congregation) were careful to phrase their prayers to avoid alignment with either side, and some varied the order in which they prayed for the leaders of the various parties to the dispute, but most people recognised, that however much they disliked Mr Scargill or Mr MacGregor, they still had a duty as Christians to make public, corporate prayer for them.

In a situation where many felt victims of a chain of events over which they had no control, praying, and particularly praying together in an act of worship, restored confidence and gave some hope. Here was something they could actually do. Many of the people interviewed felt that the one thing they could do throughout the dispute was pray and their prayers played a vital part in enabling them to keep going at times when the situation within the mining community seemed utterly hopeless. This need for public, corporate prayer was reflected in an increase in attendance at early morning weekday services in some churches.

Concern about the dispute also affected other areas of church-life. In one church which was preparing for a mission, the PCC met early in the morning to pray together, primarily for the mission, but as this meant that they were walking to church at a time when the streets were thick with pickets and police, they witnessed several violent incidents which most people missed. Because of this their prayers broadened out to include not just the mission but the situation in the local community.

The public, corporate prayers of the worshipping community not only helped the individuals praying, but others outside the church walls were strengthened by them. One lady reported that during the dispute her husband would demand to know why she had not gone to church if she missed a Sunday. Her normal church attendance was somewhat irregular, and her husband never darkened the door of a church except for baptisms, weddings and funerals, but whilst he was on strike it was as though her attendance gave them both strength.

Prayer, however, is not just public and corporate, it is also private and individual. The personal prayer of the individual gave the opportunity to broach subjects and concerns which could not be spoken about elsewhere. One lady spoke of her nephew who had been sacked after an incident outside a colliery. During the strike she could not talk to anyone about the sacking as she was so ashamed of it, but she continued to pray "all the time" for her nephew. Many others have commented on how much strength they received from their private prayers during the dispute.

Throughout the whole spectrum of churchmanship people were praying, whether it be in open prayer meetings, early morning masses, or in the privacy of their own hearts. Their prayers were the one place where the names of the 'opposition' could be mentioned, where the 'us - them' divide could begin to be bridged. "It was very clear that the commitment to daily prayer by a nucleus of lay people was a significant element in the parishes' responses to the dispute, and supported their peace-making within the community" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p16).

The Archbishop of Canterbury has commented on the importance of prayer in such situations: "Christians can pray and ought to pray sensitively, and I have been encouraged by the amount of prayer that has created a readiness to understand the issues at stake, and certainly in mining communities to give some people a sense though it may take generations to rebuild the life of their community, there are roots which if cherished can achieve that. The praying church in every sort of community should be praying for those locked in this apparently insoluble dispute. A person prayed for may be a person understood, and a person understood may be a person enlarged" (Longley & Runcie).

Even in places where virtually no explicit reference was made to the strike the regularity of normal Sunday worship was valued. At times, it may have appeared to have been little more than escapism, and one congregation went as far as to say that they "tended to pretend that the strike was not happening", but even this escapism had its positive points. Many churches functioned as "islands of peace" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p19) within the chaos of the community. They enabled people to escape from the trauma of the dispute and then return, somewhat refreshed, in order to struggle on for another week. When questioned about their worship during the strike the vast majority of people said how grateful they were for the normality of regular worship when all around was abnormal. The church gave them comfort, security and peace. Since no one knew when the strike would end, the church was the only stability they had. Sermons directly bearing on the strike would not have been greatly appreciated as they would have stirred up more controversy and that was something they came to church to avoid. A lady who worked in a shop testified to the tension in the community, "You daren't open your mouth for fear of offending someone", for the issue was not just about the miners' cause, but as much about picketing, the role of the police or whether there should have been a ballot. Another gave up going to bingo, not through financial hardship, but because there was too much bickering about the strike. If the church had become another arena for the ceaseless debate it would have lost a valuable function.

So the peace of mind which worship enabled was a great help to many, though, at times, this peace had a negative side to it. The maintenance of silence about the dispute prevented the congregation from attempting to make sense of the situation about them, nor were they better equipped to foster gestures of healing. Fortunately, this was not always the case and for some "the peace was a more positive experience, which then spilled over into their lives in the community" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p19). Connections between Christian belief and public behaviour were being made, and numerous people spoke of their abstinence from violence because they felt, as Christians, that it was wrong. Others bore condemnation within the community because, as Christians, they refused to ostracise those who returned to work early. The peace achieved in worship also drew people into the church, and one congregation felt that the sense of unity and fellowship which continued throughout was a major

factor in the increase of their congregation from 100 to 140 during the year of the dispute (op. cit., p19).

An example of worship enabling some peace-making within the community comes from the parish of Maltby. Here, an act of worship, held before the dispute started, was felt to have reaped considerable benefits both during the dispute and afterwards. The service was held in 1983 to commemorate the anniversary of the 1923 pit disaster in which 27 people had been killed. The church building has a screen dividing the worship area from the hall and in the latter the Local History Society had placed an exhibition. The preparations for the service and the exhibition enabled the church to build new relationships with people in the community. Many miners attended the service and spoke of how moving it was. Others, who came just to view the exhibition, wandered into the church area (which includes a memorial window to those killed in the disaster and the old NUM banner) and found just being in the church personally helpful.

The Secretary of the Local History Society spoke of the benefits from this commemorative service and exhibition at the Sheffield Diocesan Synod in March 1988. Amongst them she included:

- better than average community relations during the dispute, for instance the church was used to supply meals,
- a strong desire for reconstruction after the strike, in particular, the church initiated a village festival,
- jobs being created for the local community project because the parish industry group now had a higher profile,
- closer co-operation between the church and the local history society,
- the impact on individuals; working on the exhibition led to the secretary herself being drawn into the worshipping congregation.

Here we see a church enabling positive acts of reconciliation within the community at large. The breaking down of barriers between different sections of the community enabled greater co-operation between people and the fostering of a communal spirit.

Other churches found that reconciliation could be achieved within the church family; people affected in very different ways by the dispute were able to overcome their differences and work and worship together in

harmony. In one church, one reader was on strike but the other not, as the latter was a member of the coal board management. Yet, despite this, the two men maintained a close relationship right through the strike and were even interviewed on television, in their readers' robes, showing that feelings other than hatred existed between those on opposite sides of the dispute. Their Vicar commented, after the dispute, how these two men, with their liturgical high profile, acted as a kind of symbol for the rest of the congregation.

In another church, striking miners knelt to receive communion next to men who had left the pit and started their own businesses, ventures which were being brought perilously close to bankruptcy by the dispute. One, whose fish and chip shop was only just surviving, was asked after the service whether he realised that he was kneeling next to those who were threatening his livelihood.

"'Was I? It makes no difference to me, not here.'

'There's no resentment among you.'

'Resentment? This time last year I'd 'ave killed 'em, ruining my business like that. That shows yer 'ow much I've changed. These are my brothers. How can I 'ate them?'" (Guinness, p217).

Whatever else was falling apart within the community, the church continued with her worship. At its worst, it was routine and escapist, but for much of the time it was far more than this. Regular, normal worship enabled many to survive the chaos and hardship of the dispute. When some felt so overwhelmed that in desperation they resorted to violent acts and words, worship helped others maintain a standard of behaviour they knew to be right. At its best, the worship fostered reconciliation both within the walls of the church and without. As one Vicar wrote in his magazine shortly after the dispute ended, "Our great task is our worship. There at every service we lifted our mining community to God in our prayers. In worship we proclaim the message of hope and reconciliation which flow from the Gospel of Jesus" (Hodgson, 'REX', April 1985).



5.3 Preaching in local churches

Whilst controversial issues can be regularly mentioned in prayers without raising hackles, the same does not apply to sermons. There is a fairly widespread belief among lay people that politics and religion should not be mixed and this particularly applies to words from the pulpit. This unwritten rule applies whether or not the views being expressed are in agreement with those of the recipients. Since this particular strike had strong political dimensions, many clergy felt that it was a taboo topic for sermons.

The ease with which congregations take offence at sermons which hint at political dimensions is illustrated by an incident which occurred early on in the dispute in a mining parish in South Yorkshire. There, a member of the Sheffield Industrial Mission was a guest preacher and during the course of the sermon he "said some things against the Coal Board, which went down like a lead balloon!" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p16). The people in the pews were not wanting to hear about the dispute on Sunday mornings, even when the views of the preacher were sympathetic to their own.

Many clergy felt there was little they could say which could not be misconstrued as overtly supporting one side or the other, and, therefore, alienating some of the congregation and destroying any sense of unity within the fellowship. In support of this view, it has to be said that it is far from easy to develop a coherent argument about an emotive subject in a ten minute sermon. One parish spoke of the bitter consequences of an Armistice Day sermon, some years earlier, which had stirred up an immense amount of controversy in the community. The present incumbent felt the one thing he must not do was to make the church a focus for any form of controversy. So some clergy made a point of not referring to the dispute in their preaching. One put it this way, "I cannot tell the congregation how they can be a Christian in the midst of the miners' strike" (op. cit., p16-17). He felt that any public utterance from himself would be "persuading people to accept one side or the other" (op. cit., p16). A further hesitation for the clergy was that they might appear to be handing out advice about a situation in which they were not directly involved, provoking the reaction, 'Who's he to tell us what to do; he's not on strike?'.

Despite the difficulties involved in raising such an emotive topic, some clergy were able to touch upon it in sermons. Special services often provided such opportunities. In one particular church, in the heart of the South Yorkshire coal field, there is an annual industrial service. The Vicar there usually attempted a balancing act in the sermon and during the dispute he spoke about how the local community perceived that it was being denied its means of being creative. He went on to look at the future and mentioned the right of all people to a creative way of life. He then wove in the Marxist accusation that religion is the opium of the people, but countered it by attempting to make Christianity relevant.

Some were able to mention the effects of the strike in Christmas messages. The plight of families with their menfolk on strike at Christmas had aroused the most unsympathetic of people; even those who were firmly against the strike dug into their pockets so as to enable the children to have a reasonable Christmas and the practical response of the church peaked at this time, so some clergy took this opportunity to say something about the turmoil in the community. The parable of the Good Samaritan was adapted with scabs and pickets, rather than the Samaritan and the religious hierarchy being juxtaposed, though even here the need to maintain balance was recognised, so the sermon was preached both ways!

The ability of those in the pews to misconstrue sermons is illustrated by a Christmas message in a mining parish in County Durham. Here the Vicar had spent a considerable time on the picket line and had travelled with some of the NUM activists on trips to gain support in other areas of the country. Shortly before Christmas the husband of the Sunday School Superintendent had returned to work at a nearby colliery and because of this the windows of their house had been smashed. The Vicar referred to this in his Christmas Eve sermon, speaking of the hardship being endured by many on strike, but reminding that God was in the situation and so we should still refer to one another in love and not break windows! These comments caused some people to walk out of the service saying that they would only return to the church when the 'Communist Vicar' had left!

Out of the eight parishes visited by the Sheffield Diocesan Working Party only two reported any regular teaching via the sermons on the issues

of the strike. In one of these a layman reported that the strike was mentioned nearly every Sunday (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p16). A clergyman in Durham said that the dispute was touched upon in his sermons both implicitly and explicitly, but he went on to add that the content of sermons should be dictated primarily by Scripture and only within this framework can one refer to national or local situations. He also added that in what he said he erred on the side of caution so as not to be misunderstood or alienate any section of the community. A great fear of upsetting a part of the congregation or a part of the local community was a major reason given by the churches for being cautious in the many ways in which they responded or failed to respond to the coal dispute. They felt that they had a duty to maintain some sort of neutral stance and not be seen to side with one group against another. This issue will recur in this chapter, particularly in regard to church provision of relief to those suffering hardship during the strike (section 5.5) and the presence of clergy on picket lines (section 5.6.1), and will be considered further in the final chapter, especially sections 6.2.3 and 6.4.

5.4 Comments about the dispute in Church Magazines

Another vehicle often used for expounding the Christian message is the Church Magazine. A glance at the magazines of the coalfield parishes showed that some made no reference to the dispute, whilst others included appeals for clothing and food for miners, and others contained articles about the issues raised by the dispute and the part the church should be playing.

In some ways the written word, as oppose to the spoken word, is a much better medium for raising controversial issues. It is less easily distorted as people can more easily refer to what the vicar actually wrote, rather than to what they thought they heard him say. Also, it reaches a far greater number of people, as many subscribe to the magazine who never darken the door of the church.

Yet, despite its advantages, some clergy were extremely reluctant to use their magazine to express thoughts, or raise questions, about the dispute which was affecting all their readership. Indeed, one Vicar, who willingly

appeared on television and spoke out on behalf of the local community, said he deliberately did not commit anything to paper. This hesitation, I suspect, arose from a feeling that the written word was too concrete, and if he expressed any view he would be restricted in his attempts to minister to all sections of the community.

This contrasts with another Vicar who was most adamant in not speaking out in church about the dispute but who, after a violent incident in the parish, wrote, in his magazine, an article condemning the violence. His point was that it was the violence he condemned, and only the miners in so far as they were the perpetrators of the violence, and he felt that this point would be grasped better if it was expressed in writing.

The written word was, occasionally, used to elucidate the spoken word. One Vicar used his church publication to summarise his Christmas Eve sermon (which had caused people to leave part way through) and to answer accusations that he was a communist (Holland, 1985a). Prior to this, the dispute had featured in the magazine; the Vicar then describing the view from his landing window of the pickets quietly gathered at the pit entrance. This view contrasted sharply with the violent scenes seen on the television. He went on to discuss the rights and wrongs of the dispute, but came down on neither side, though criticised those who put profits before people; "People do matter, the forces and conditions in which they live matter. Clearly Jesus taught us these great eternal truths" (Holland 1984).

The January magazine included a review of Christmas events and recalled with pleasure the way in which everyone had helped each other (Holland, 1985a). It also told of the Vicar's trip, with some NUM members, to the students of North London Polytechnic who had done much fund-raising for the local victims of the coal dispute (Holland, 1985b). In February the Vicar, in response to unpleasantness towards himself and the church from a working miner, felt it necessary to explain that his prime concern was for the local community and jobs for the people who live in it. This meant that he was in favour of the strike. The reason he visited the picket line (which is "all rather wearying and time-consuming") is to "do what little I can to keep it peaceful and friendly and to try to relieve the tensions between the pickets and the police." He concluded the article with an

offer to working miners to meet with them and hear their point of view, "especially if by so doing I can help to reconcile and heal some of the wounds in this community" (Holland 1985c).

During the year of the dispute another Vicar touched on the dispute six times in his magazine. "In April 1984 he appealed for Christians to get involved in the arguments but to understand each other's viewpoint. In August he asked people to be determined and cheerful in the face of hardship, and to have courage to speak out about right and wrong. In November he explained why Christians including clergy and bishops should be involved in politics. This theme reappeared in the magazine for May 1985, especially in reference to the Bishop of Durham's controversial enthronement sermon. In December there was an appeal for forgiveness to overcome bitterness 'without turning away from the search for justice', and in April 1985 a report on the charitable donations to miners' families" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p17). Throughout all these articles there was a consistent attempt to connect Christian faith to the issues of the day.

In one of the Durham mining communities the monthly magazine, 'REX', which has a circulation of nearly 800, has for many years carried general community news and comment from the Vicar, as well as church information. In January 1982, shortly after Arthur Scargill was elected President of the NUM, 'REX' carried a piece about Mr Scargill's Christian faith. A year later a review of a report on the cost of Nuclear Energy appeared, pointing out some of the hazards of nuclear power as well as its implications for a mining community. Reference was also made to Bishop John Habgood's book 'A Working Faith' which touches on the nuclear issue. In August 1982 'REX' welcomed the new chaplain to the local colliery and added "The colliery and its workers are regularly remembered at the Altar in our prayers at the Eucharist" and on the same page the Vicar thanked the local NUM Lodge for allowing him to join them for the Durham Miners' Gala; "it was a great privilege to be associated in this way" (Hodgson, 1982).

Within the first few weeks of the coal dispute the Easter edition of 'REX' (April 1984) spoke of the need for signs of hope within the community. "We need signs of hope at the present. Many people are worried about

making ends meet with their menfolk on strike. (Please contact the Vicar if you have problems where you think he might be of use!) The strike is due to fears for the future - of the effect of pit closures on jobs for the miner and his sons and on the community where he lives" (Hodgson, 1984a). The article went on to speak of the Risen Christ spelling hope for each person and for the world.

A few months later the Vicar explained that he had written to 'The Guardian' "to defend the good name of our menfolk by pointing out that picket line violence (which is wrong) is out of character with the Durham miner and that we should ask why it is happening" (Hodgson, 1984b). The letter had resulted in many letters from all over England and donations totalling £400 to help needy families, as well as the Vicar being asked to appear on television. In October there was a report of money sent to the parish from 'Church Times' readers, again in response to a letter published therein from the Vicar, as well as clothes brought to the parish by the Chapter Clerk to the Cathedral. 'REX' commented "Views on the strike may differ, but when people suffer there is only one Christian viewpoint...HELP THEM" (loc. cit.).

The previous month carried a plea for the preservation of our communal life. This followed the intimidation of some not supporting the strike. Included in the article was the request from the local NUM secretary for his members to stamp out such victimisation. All this was put in the context of the more positive side to the strike: we are learning to live more simply, largely because everyone is helping each other - no matter what their personal view of the strike.

As Christmas approached 'REX' appealed for toys for children and commented on the pressures families faced particularly from television advertising. Taking on debts was not the answer! Perhaps, 'REX' hoped, the hardship experienced would enable the community to get back to the real meaning of Christmas (Hodgson, 1984c). 'REX' also had harsh words for those who administer heating allowances for refusing help to a family with four children, two of whom are asthmatic, because the father was on strike. "What kind of society is it that treats these dependants less generously than it does those of convicted criminals in prison? Our Lord

has stern words to say about those who cause children to suffer" (Hodgson, 1984d).

The New Year saw an appeal for reconciliation within the community, but noted that the cross reminds us that reconciliation is costly. "It is not a case of 'shaking hands and going for a drink together'. It means facing up to the causes of disunity; possibly facing the genuine hurt and injustice of which division is the result. Reconciliation is always costly and difficult. When the strike is over these will be our tasks, and we should be starting now" (Hodgson, 1985a). This was followed the next month with a piece about the relationship between Christianity and politics and recognised that Christians are rarely united on how best to tackle social and moral problems. "Justice must regard a pit closure programme which creates mass unemployment and destroys communities as morally wrong. But to solve this there are many possible ways. The Strike is one, but Christians from their common principles will rightly have differing attitudes to it. We need to recognise this frankly and respect those who differ from us" (Hodson, 1985b). However, 'REX' does not leave the matter there; it goes on to suggest an initiative the church could take. "The Church could provide the kind of forum where people with such differences can meet, discuss and debate - thereby learning from each other. Sadly we are afraid of splitting the Church by 'mixing religion with politics.' However, if we recognised these principles we should forget our fears. Then the church could make a real contribution to that world which God loved so much that he sent his own Son to die for it. And how much we need this kind of Christian witness!" (loc. cit.).

As the dispute came to an end 'REX' reviewed the way the church had been involved during the coal dispute. The church had attempted to minister to the whole community. This had occurred in worship, with the mining community being lifted to God in prayer at every service, and in practical ways with many church members giving food to those in need, helping in the meals service or being involved with the local Advice and Community Centre. A show and a pantomime had been produced with profits going to the local Churches' Miners' Hardship Fund. The vicarage had been used as a store for food and toys and the Vicar had talked with the media, negotiated with the electricity board and given financial help to those in desperate need. The review concluded that for the Vicar it had

been a privilege to serve the community during the dispute, and a letter from a miner's wife, in the same edition, paid tribute to the contribution of the local church and clergy throughout the year of the strike (Hodgson, 1985c).

'REX' illustrates how well a church magazine can be used to maintain links between the church and the community. Its production bears all the hallmarks of an over-used church duplicator, but with a cover price of five pence and a content which consistently covers all sorts of community issues and news of local interest, it is a publication a parish resident can not afford not to buy!

The two themes which are common to all these publications are: -

- First, the need for reconciliation within the community, which includes respecting the right of others to respond to the same situation in different ways, and
- Secondly, the need to make connections between faith and actions which may have a political dimension.

These are both themes which have a specifically Christian dimension and they were taken up by many national church leaders (see especially sections 4.3 and 4.5). Section 6.3 will argue that the church was well within its legitimate sphere of responsibility in giving these themes a high profile.

What impact the writings in the church magazines had on their recipients is very difficult to assess. The clergy who wrote regularly about the strike earned themselves a reputation for caring for the community, though so too did the Vicar who deliberately did not write, but who expressed his care in many other ways.

One way to have seen how far congregations had begun to connect their faith with the situation around them and how far they were reconciled to views other than their own, would have been to take up the suggestion in 'REX' that the church provide a forum for discussion and debate. Alas, this rarely, if ever happened. Informal discussion did take place after services or even in house groups but these were probably little different from those in the Post Office queues or family gatherings. On the whole there was no special effort to initiate discussion groups, or get the dispute

on to the agenda of existing groups including the PCCs (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p17). This was partly because the clergy had discovered from previous experiences that "enabling a good discussion or debate in large, more formal groups (like a PCC) is difficult and unpopular in these communities" (loc. cit.).

5.5 Church responses to local hardship

The responses of the churches to the hardship experienced by their parishioners varied greatly and these variations were due to a host of factors. In some villages the NUM, supported by the wives of miners, set up canteens in their own premises within the first few weeks, even the first few days, of the strike. They also ran a well-organised food parcel distribution service. In such cases the churches tended to support the NUM initiated ventures and there was little need for them to set up a parallel service. In other places the local NUM was slower to respond. For the first few weeks of the dispute most families had enough of their own resources to be able to manage, and with the hope that all would be settled by the next week, there seemed little point in organising communal relief. However, as the dispute dragged on more and more local canteens and food distribution schemes began to spring up, and many churches played a major part in these.

Some churches collected food and clothing and, very occasionally, money then sent it all directly to the NUM to distribute as they felt fit. Others ran a totally church based scheme but usually with some liaison between the church and the union. Often the church was asked by the union to deliver a parcel to someone known to be in great need but who dare not come to the union base to collect one because, maybe, his brother was still working or his father blacklegged in 1926! Many union schemes felt they had to treat everyone equally, or could only give extra resources to those who did picket duty, but the church was felt to be able to be more discriminating than the NUM and give more help to those with least support from families and friends. Thus the union and church schemes complemented one another.

A Vicar in South Yorkshire received several thousand pounds as the result of a letter placed in the 'Church Times'. Much of this he turned into food vouchers or used to pay off electricity bills. He had a close relationship with the union, to the extent that they had developed a system of coded phrases in letters of referral so the Vicar was able to discriminate between those whose need the union saw as urgent, giving them material help, and others who received only advice in the first instance.

Overall, there was very little opposition within the congregations to attempts to alleviate hardship, though one church reported that the box at the back for food and clothes was occasionally hidden and another said that there were a group of people who moaned about the box cluttering up the church! But many church-goers were already supporting their friends and relations with gifts of food and money. Grandparents gave their children and grandchildren 'proper' meals, helped with the washing, even providing hot water for a bath, for in a coal dispute the supply of free NCB coal stops and there is little money to spend on electricity to heat water, even if the house has an immersion heater!

So the church, in providing parcels and vouchers, extended the extended family network that bit further. However, where the church's response was channelled through lay people taking out food parcels or offering to help in the kitchen it was rarely perceived in the community as 'help from the church'. One NUM secretary claimed that his local church did virtually nothing for the miners. In fact this church had a well-developed food parcel scheme which was run through its house groups, but because it was not the Vicar taking the parcels around, nor did people have to come to the church or the vicarage to sign for parcels, those on the receiving end claimed, "That nice Mrs ___ from number 18 brought us a parcel," rather than "St. ___'s sent us a parcel."

On the whole the need was great. One Vicar was particularly struck by the total cessation in demand for parcels the day the strike ended; he saw this as indicative of how great the hardship was, and also how difficult it was for people to accept charity.

As harvest gifts were distributed some noticed the difference between the mining families and the regular recipients of harvest gifts. Many of the latter "complained as usual that there was not enough, they didn't eat bananas, they would rather have something else. But mining families were grateful for the tiniest offering" (Guinness, p212), though the last statement needs some qualification as often the menfolk were reluctant to receive handouts from the church. Their wives, however, soon persuaded them otherwise; 'for the sake of the children,' was a powerful argument.

The profile of the local church was considerably raised if their hall was being used as a canteen. Rent was rarely, if ever, charged and given that providing hot, two course meals, several times a week for maybe a few hundred people uses a fair amount of gas and electricity this proved to be a costly venture for the churches concerned. On the whole it was representatives of the union who approached the churches for use of their premises. For some union men this took a fair amount of courage as they were very unsure of the reception that they would receive:

"I went to the vicarage to ask for the use of the hall. I was a bit scared of the Vicar. I knew who he was but I didn't know him as a person and I didn't think that he would agree to the hall being used. I asked the Vicar what I should call him and he said 'Peter'. I thought that was all right and since then we've got on very well" (An NUM activist).

That particular hall was used to provide meals for 700 people once or twice a week, as well as tea for the pickets every day. When meals were being produced every socket in the hall had a boiler or cooker plugged into it and by the end of the strike the hall needed to be rewired.

When approached by the miners for the use of the church hall the vast majority of clergy gave their immediate assent without consulting their church wardens or the PCC. The minister of one church explained this thus, "We felt that if we said 'No' then we would lose all credibility with the mining community." He was fairly sure that the PCC would not have given unanimous assent to the request and may even have turned it down. This feeling did occur in parishes where mining was still the dominant industry, but was more prevalent where there was a wider socio-economic mix. The presence of the canteen in the hall went on to cause certain tensions, for instance the playgroup resented miners' children

playing with their toys, and the Women's Support Group complained that the playgroup had left sand in the sink.

The one clergyman I spoke to who did raise the matter of the church hall with his PCC before allowing it to be used did get their agreement, though he admitted that he put his weight firmly behind the request and thus did not enable the PCC to discuss the issue through; had he not backed the request so strongly he felt the PCC could well have voted against it. In this case it was an informal women's support group which approached the church. The local branch of the NUM was doing a good job of looking after their activists but these women were wanting to be serve a wider need. None were church-goers, but they allowed the local Council of Churches to keep a watching brief on their funds and to give them an initial fifty pounds. After that they raised their own funds and as they were very resourceful and efficient there was rarely a shortfall.

These women were not particularly politically motivated and by the end of the strike no longer supported Arthur Scargill. This meant that the church became distanced from the political aspect of the dispute, so although the local community thought that the church was wonderful as it was seen to feed the needy, the local Labour Party paid little attention to it and the local NUM felt that they did not have the church's political support.

Where did the money and resources come from to support all these ventures? Much of it came from the local congregations and meant "considerable personal sacrifice, echoing the extended family generosity all around them" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p12). The little people had, they were willing to share with those around them.

Some churches received help from churches further afield. Often there was some sort of personal link between the churches; churches where vicars had served curacies would write and ask their former curate how they could help, or would send money and clothes. Occasionally money was designated for a specific purpose such as milk tokens for the children. In this instance this was too complicated to administer and the money was put into the general hardship fund, and the sending church informed of this. No more money was received, perhaps indicative of a fairly general trend of people wanting to help those in need, particularly children who

were seen as innocent victims, but not wanting to give any form of support to the miners' cause.

Letters in the press, particularly in the church press raised considerable sums of money. Much of this came as small donations, many from pensioners, but adding up to several thousand pounds in total. "It was incredible - the vast majority came from the South in £5's, £10's - mostly in £1's. Somebody sent £150, it was all very moving - OAPs sending £1 and saying I can't afford more, wish I could send more!" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p15).

Some individual clergy administered the funds directly themselves, others set up a specific hardship fund. The Northumbrian Industrial Mission (NIM) Hardship Fund was started after a Quaker sent the coal chaplain an initial £100 to help miners' families, and then had a letter published in 'The Friend', the Quaker newspaper, saying that the chaplain would be pleased to receive donations (Kendal, page 28)! Help was also at hand from further afield. The Bishop of Durham, acting on behalf of the NIM Hardship fund, received £15,000 from the Synod of Moers, part of the churches of the Rhine, just before Christmas 1984. Thereafter, these German churches sent a constant supply of food and clothing until the dispute ended.

In the Dearne Valley in South Yorkshire the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist churches there grouped together and set up 'The Dearne Valley Churches Hardship Fund' which was designed to serve not just the Dearne Valley but all those in need in South Yorkshire because of the dispute.

On the whole all these funds were raised by personal subscription. Very little money was taken from church accounts and given directly to alleviate the hardship of miners. During our interviewing, when we asked what would have been the reaction of individual PCCs if someone had proposed that a sum of church funds be given to the miners, the answer was always that there would have been considerable opposition to such a move. Special collections for miners and their families were, however, acceptable since they could be supported by those who wished to contribute and ignored by those who did not.

There was also tension over whether money should be given to church funds when there was so much obvious need in the community, but very few churches were able to debate these issues through. When church collections fell it was understood, but not questioned, that the church, like local businesses, was yet another victim in the community of the dispute. In one church there was a suggestion that fund raising for the church renovations be suspended until the dispute was resolved but they decided to continue with the church fund raising, partly to counter the feeling in the community that if the pit never opened again the community would die. Work being done on the church was seen as a sign of hope for that particular village.

Another source of income was from local trust funds, many of which had lain dormant for years. Often local clergy were amongst the trustees and were instrumental in releasing the funds, sometimes having to overcome the reluctance of Labour councillors who were also amongst the trustees and were hesitant about using the funds directly to provide food, and therefore to support the strike.

The effect of the clergy having this money at their disposal was much greater than just enabling the relief of some hardship. The money was symbolic of the fact that the people behind the money cared. Michele Guinness, an author married to a clergyman working in a Yorkshire mining village received a cheque for £1,000 from a person in Surrey. She commented, "It was not the amount that mattered though it helped. It was the knowledge that someone had remembered us, and cared" (Guinness, p233). Another comment illustrating this point came from a man who had reluctantly received a food parcel from the church, " "I'm just thinking, it is nice to know that someone cares" " (Guinness, p213).

It is hard to appreciate the depth of the feeling of isolation in many of the mining communities. They thought that almost the whole of the establishment, the coal board, the government, the police, the press, the vast majority of the general public and even some of their neighbours were against them. They felt that they were beleaguered communities and as the dispute continued their sense of lack of worth grew. A gesture of concern and practical care was worth far more than its financial value.

The funds raised by the NIM Hardship Fund enabled the local Coal Chaplain to get alongside the people at the centre of the dispute on the miners' side. He tells with sadness of the reply he received from a lady at a food centre when he went to give some money... "I didn't think people like you were interested in people like us" (Kendal, p29). He goes on,

"At times it must have seemed to those watching my activities that I had become nothing but an ambulance service distributing help. There were times when I did feel like 'Lady Bountiful' giving help to the well meaning poor. In fact it really was not like that at all. ...the fund opened doors and I was able to have very meaningful relationships with many people whom I would never have met. These relationships educated me about the industry, the church and political life in a way that would have not been possible otherwise" (Kendal, p29).

Having funds available to distribute to food centres, to provide food vouchers and parcels, gave the clergy considerable opportunities to minister to those most involved with and affected by the dispute. The local community felt the church was doing its job properly and the church's credibility as an important and relevant force within the community rose. Also greater heed was taken of the voice of the national and regional church (see section 6.2.3), although one clergyman felt that the voice of the national church further confused a complicated situation as the situation was different in every mining community. Alas, where the church was seen to do very little in providing tangible help to alleviate the hardship it was perceived as being part of the forces of the establishment against which the miners were fighting, and it was dismissed as an irrelevance except for those (not us) who like that type of thing!

Often, those churches which did little were attempting to remain neutral in a situation of intense tension. They did not want to be seen to be helping some and not others, and there is a body of opinion which regards the giving of money, food, and clothing to those on strike as a political act which helps to prolong any dispute and compromises the neutrality of the benefactor. Some national charities received considerable criticism along these lines when they offered assistance to miners' families (see section 4.7). Indeed it was such thinking which led, in 1980, to the reduction in supplementary benefit for the families of those on strike (see sections 3.2 and 3.4). The clergy who did enable vast quantities of aid to

be given, did not regard their actions as implying that they were definitely taking sides in the dispute and enabling the miners to continue the strike. One replied that such an argument is blackmail! His attitude was that if people are hungry they should be fed, and the question 'Why?' should not be asked (at least not at that initial stage). He pointed out that it is often the least deserving who are in greatest need; it is the people who drink, smoke, gamble and who generally cannot manage their money well who are the first to experience hardship and their families need more support, not less. This view was echoed by others (though perhaps not always with the same force) but many took a pragmatic view towards the hardship; feed those who are hungry and never mind the politics. This point will be taken up again in section 6.3.

5.6 Ministry to those directly involved in the dispute

Ministry to those who were involved in the dispute included visiting the picket lines, and crossing the picket to visit those still working at the colliery. Standing at the colliery gate brought the clergy into contact with ordinary miners, trade union leaders and activists, and the police. Inside most collieries, pit deputies and managers were the only people to be found. Normal parochial visiting continued as usual, and this brought the clergy into contact with those on strike and those who continued working. Occasionally, someone would turn up at the vicarage to discuss a particular problem, such as whether to return to work or the strain being on strike put on a marriage, and, infrequently, the vicar would be asked to visit an individual who was known to be having problems stemming from the dispute.

5.6.1 On the picket line

Many of the clergy who took an active role in the dispute made a point of regularly visiting the local picket lines. Some made twice-weekly visits, others once a month or slightly less. All said that their presence was welcome, though one Vicar pointed out that, for most of the time, there was very little for the pickets to do, so they were grateful of anything which relieved the boredom. The clergy also shared a common purpose in

visiting the picket line; that of being with their people in their hardship, to show concern and, most importantly, to listen to their understanding of events. Quotations from two clergy illustrate this point; "I'm here because you are here and I want to be beside you if I can", and "The job of a parish priest is to be with his people".

Some were rather unsure about precisely what they could and should be doing, particularly when the situation outside the pit gates seemed volatile, but ignore it they could not. "I did not know what to do. And yet there was a sense in my heart and in my mind that I could not stand on the edge of this potential disaster, wringing my hands and uttering platitudes; that what was happening deeply involved my people, and, in some way, I had to be there. Everytime there was a major picket...I would drive out and walk in front of the pit and around the paths leading to the colliery.I had no clear plan; what I simply wanted to do was to be with my people in their agony, in their fear, in their confusion" (Barrodale, p3).

Most of the clergy had their dog-collars clearly visible so that people knew who they were. "If it was right that I should be there then it was right that I should be seen to be there" (Barrodale, p3). However, one clergyman deliberately did not have any clerical identification, much to the concern of the police who were somewhat worried that they might arrest him by mistake. He argued that he did not want any special treatment, and if he deserved to be arrested then he should be, and if not then they should not be arresting him.

Most of the clergy found that their presence with the pickets helped to defuse any violence, and several said that they attempted to keep up morale and foster an element of humour, both of which reduced hostile tension. One commented that when he was with the pickets there was never any violence. Indeed, the local trade union leader used to call him out if he suspected that there may be some trouble brewing. Another said that at times of increased tension he tried to defuse the situation by walking slowly, speaking calmly and by getting to the front and acting as a block. When the dispute was over a union steward thanked him for visiting regularly,

' "because when you were here, those bastards", he said, pointing to the

police, "kept their truncheons in their pockets, whilst those bastards", he said, pointing to his own pickets, "kept their stones in their pockets" ' (Barrodale, p6).

However, some clergy did get caught up in violent clashes between the police and pickets. One, whilst on a routine visit to the picket line, was chased by police dogs through woodland surrounding the colliery. This was in the early days of the return to work and the police had laid an ambush for the pickets. By letting their dogs loose, the police appeared to be making no attempt to discriminate between those who had a legitimate right to be in the vicinity, and those who could possibly have been accused of attempting a breach of the peace. This was a very frightening experience for all who were chased, but it enabled the Vicar concerned to experience what the pickets were going through and so share with them.

Of all the actions of the clergy during the dispute, their presence on the picket line was probably the most effective. Since, on occasions, there was the risk of danger to anyone amongst the picket, the personal estimation of the clergy rose in the eyes of the miners. Many miners who had no active contact with the church felt that the church, and the clergy in particular, did not regard them as important. The presence of the clergy at the colliery gate showed that the church did care for the working miner. "It certainly made the Vicar highly visible in the community, almost restored to him the status of Parson of the whole village, not just Pastor of the gathered congregation" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p15).

Clergy who never visited the pickets were perceived as not caring about miners, and even to be against them. However, these perceptions did not accurately reflect the motives of these clergy for most of the clergy who did not join the pickets were desperately trying to appear neutral. They felt that their presence amongst the pickets would appear as positive support for the miners, both their case and their methods. To a certain extent this fear was reasonable for "visiting the pickets was perceived by many miners (often wrongly) as implied support" (op. cit., p15), but many clergy found that as time went on and they had established a relationship of trust with the local leaders of the striking miners, they were able to discuss the dispute and question some of the miners' methods and help the

miners start to understand other points of view about the dispute. "The more these Vicars became involved in community groups, the more they could state their own judgements, and express their sense of neutrality" (op. cit., p22). One even managed to draw individual miners and policemen together to discuss what the dispute was doing to their families. But it did take time before this could start to happen. If challenging questions were asked too early then clergy presence was seen as a threat and interpreted as hostility.

Everyone we spoke to recognised that the church should, and must, be able to minister to all sections of the community during a major industrial dispute, and this meant the church taking some sort of neutral or non-aligned stance. The key dilemma that the clergy faced was how to do this. For those people who were only marginally affected by the dispute, silence from the clergy was seen as neutrality. But for those heavily involved, a silent church and vicar meant that the church had deserted them and was therefore aligned with the forces against them. This was particularly so in areas where some parishes were providing a lot in the way of relief of hardship and their clergy had many contacts with the striking miners. Then the silent churches, or less active ones, were compared with the active ones and it was concluded that the former were against the miners' cause. This issue of how the church can best minister to the whole community, and how it can maintain some form of neutrality will be followed up in section 6.2.3.

5.6.2 Police

Contact with the police was mainly limited to the picket lines, and many clergy felt that it was important for them to be seen by the pickets to talk with the police. This was a symbol of their ministry being to all people.

In one village in Nottinghamshire, early on in the dispute, the officer in charge approached the local clergyman to ask whether the church hall ^{could} be used to provide rest, warmth and refreshment facilities for the police on picket duty. Agreement was given, but with the stipulation that whenever the police left the picket line and came down to the hall they offered a

lift and the opportunity of warmth and a drink to the pickets. The Vicar commented "I felt it terribly important that at the outset the Church should not be seen as being identified with one group, whoever they may be, against another. The offer was made and the police accepted on those terms and I went out to the picket line to make sure that the pickets also understood the nature of what was on offer. In fact, none of them ever did come down with the police, but I felt that it was very important that what we were doing should be clearly seen to have been done, and my attempts at even-handedness be understood" (Barrodale, p3).

On various occasions the clergy acted as spokesmen either for a group of pickets or for the community as whole. One NUM activist reported that their Vicar had accompanied them on a visit to London to lobby their MP and also to form a local delegation to Hobart House (NCB Headquarters). The Vicar became their unofficial spokesmen as he was calmer than the miners, spoke well and his collar commanded respect. Outside Hobart House the police would almost certainly have moved the miners on had they not had their Vicar with them.

When a hostile barricade had been built outside a South Yorkshire colliery, trapping about six members of management inside, following rumours that the police were bussing in miners from outside in unmarked vans, it was the Vicar who visited the police and emphasised that there were many women and children assembled close to the barricade and that there would almost certainly be people seriously injured or killed if the police attempted to clear the road. After several hours, when much of the crowd had dispersed peacefully, a single police van was allowed into the colliery to rescue the management. Then those on the barricade (many of whom were not miners) entered the colliery yard and destroyed buildings. There was no attempt by the police to regain control.

In another village, when the Vicar heard that there was a likelihood of a riot in the area that evening, he, along with some local councillors and trade union leaders visited the police station and pleaded that the riot police be kept away. They had seen the damage that had resulted when riot police were brought in to control a situation in a nearby village and felt that the presence of the riot police had escalated the situation. The result was that the miners, along with various gangs of young men with a

reputation for trouble-making, lined up on one side of the village green, the police were on the other side and the Vicar and his colleagues sat in the middle. They sat there until the crowd dispersed at around three in the morning.

During the time when there were many violent clashes outside the coking plant at Orgreave, tensions in many of the South Yorkshire communities were running very high. Street violence occurred in one small town centre late on Friday and Saturday nights with shops being damaged and raided, including those belonging to people supporting the strike relief efforts. The police acted swiftly and effectively to curb the violence and some of those charged were released on bail on the condition that they did not visit public houses and were indoors at certain times. This led to rumours that a curfew was operating in the town, and there was considerable unease, both about this and, also, the way in which the police controlled the violence. One of the local clergy was a Vice-chairman of the Police Liaison Surgery and he was particularly concerned to dispel these rumours, so he and other representatives from the community, including a trade union leader and another clergyman, met with the police and a poster was designed and distributed which claimed that there were no curfews in operation and that only South Yorkshire Police were present in the town.

The behaviour of the police, in particular that of outside police forces which were called in to assist local forces in controlling large pickets, and their lack of public accountability caused considerable unease. In an attempt to monitor what was happening on picket lines Sheffield Policewatch was established early in April 1984. Three groups were established and, by working on a rota, sent out two or three voluntary monitors with the pickets on a daily basis. The monitors were clearly identified by marked badges and at the picket lines asked the officer in charge for an independent position, standing neither with the police nor the pickets (Field, p208). The volunteers included two of the chaplains from Sheffield Industrial Mission.

It is difficult to assess overall how the clergy related to the police as every situation was different. No doubt, in the same way that many of the union leaders were grateful for clergy presence on picket lines as it helped reduce tensions, the police were glad to see anyone whose presence

lessened the likelihood of violence. On occasion the clergy were able to speak out on behalf of the police and remind people, that although there were times when the behaviour of the police left much to be desired, on the whole they were there because it was their job to be there and they were doing their job well. However, many clergy did have bad experiences with the police. One minister said that they fed him a pack of lies. Others spoke of being eye-witnesses to unnecessary violence and authoritarianism and themselves being treated with open hostility. One even discovered (much to the particular police officer's embarrassment) that a policeman had been instructed to tail him "and see that I didn't get up to too much trouble" (Barrodale, p8).

5.6.3 Working miners

Contact with working miners was considerably less than with those on strike, as they were at work and, therefore, less available. Many clergy who regularly visited the picket line often crossed them, usually having asked permission from the pickets, and visited those who were still at work. Their reception was not as welcoming as from those on the picket line, but those within the colliery, particularly management, had a job to do and had less time to talk to visitors. One Vicar who had had a good relationship with the local management before the dispute found that he was rebuffed during the strike. The regular management he had known well was replaced by new men and these people were not prepared to enter any form of dialogue; they just reiterated the official NCB line.

On the whole, it was accepted that it was the job of deputies and management to work during the dispute and there was little intimidation of such people, although there was considerable resentment towards the deputies, particularly after they settled their grievances with the Coal Board and called off their industrial action before it commenced. Men who were NUM members but who continued to work were not so fortunate and both they and their families suffered various forms of intimidation. In Nottinghamshire, where whole communities were split, one minister reported that he spent many hours sitting in his study, listening to miners tell how frightened they were of going to work because others had been beaten up, or they had received threatening telephone calls and their

windows had been smashed. He saw that his task was to give a confidential ear to those whose self-image of the strong male made it very difficult to admit to being genuinely afraid. The wives of miners also came and voiced their concerns for their husbands, grateful merely for a sympathetic and confidential reception.

Working miners and their families were visited in the normal course of duty, as the dispute did not stop the usual demands for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Occasionally, there were specific requests that a working miner be visited and these were followed up and support given. One Vicar commented that it was rare for the miners to open up in their own homes; discussions about the dispute more often occurred on a one-to-one basis, when he met someone whilst out shopping. Then he would usually ask how they felt about the dispute, but was always careful not to express his personal opinion.

Some miners sought out their local Vicar to discuss whether to return to work before the dispute ended. One clergyman who was sought out in this way later explained that he was very careful not to give direct advice but, rather, he tried to get the man to talk through the reasons why he should return. In particular, he attempted to get the man to see how the community would view his actions if he did go back. "I also wanted to say (to him) that if he went back I would honour that as being a decision which had been taken for conscientious reasons - for good reasons - and that I certainly wasn't going to criticise him for going back".

An engineer, who returned to work just before the strike ended, said he felt it necessary to talk over his decision to return to work with his Vicar because people around knew that he was a churchgoer.

In one South Yorkshire community, the strike was broken by a group of contractors who were sinking the shaft to a new coal face. Despite being independent contractors, they had been required to become members of the NUM before commencing the work and for the first six months of the dispute had honoured the picket line. In September, feeling very much victims of the dispute, they returned to work and several violent clashes between the police and the pickets resulted. Anger against those contractors in the local community was fuelled by the fact that some

months prior to the dispute the contractors had their own jobs secured in a separate, unrelated dispute by the same union secretary whose picket they were now flouting! One of the local clergy did visit them, though he went feeling that their actions had put at stake the sense of community, solidarity and trust within the village. However, he heard their view that since they were doing development work they were helping to safeguard the future of the community.

In all this we see clergy attempting to foster opportunities for reconciliation by encouraging those on opposite sides of the picket line to start to understand the point of view of the other. Their "presence created tiny islands of peace, laughter and at-one-ment" (Barrodale, p7). Merely by their presence, the clergy helped to keep the flame of hope flickering amongst the darkness of bitterness, violence and futility which so often engulfed those caught up in all sides of the dispute.

5.7 Some Preliminary Conclusions

Chapter 6 will analyse the national, regional and local responses to the coal dispute in a systematic way, however, there are some significant findings which arise from the responses of the local churches.

First, there was an enormous amount of appreciation for the support the churches gave to the communities during the dispute. This was despite the fact that most of the parishes could be described as "a mining parish but not a mining congregation" (C. of E., Diocese of Sheffield, p6).

Secondly, co-operation between the church and the community during the dispute flowed that much earlier and more easily where the church was already seen to be there to be serving the whole community, eg at Maltby (section 5.2) and where local clergy had enjoyed regular contact with the colliery. Churches which operated strict baptism policies or where the vicar had maintained a low public profile were taken "to imply a deliberate distancing of the church from the miners' community" (op. cit., p7).

Thirdly, the socio-economic mix of the parish did seem to affect the way the local church responded to the strike. Where the parish was dominated by the mining industry the church usually got involved with little hesitation. If there was a greater socio-economic mix, particularly if the mining population was concentrated in one section of the parish, then the church response was more hesitant, though, in many cases, still considerable. Part of this was due to geography; the estates housing the miners were often furthest from the church, thus making the establishment of a canteen for the miners impractical.

Finally, the actions of the clergy during the dispute were judged relative to one another by the miners. If one clergyman in an area became highly involved and maintained a high public profile then his fame spread rapidly and others were compared unfavorably with him, despite the fact that they might be almost as heavily involved. Instances of this occurred in both the South Yorkshire and the Durham areas.

References

Much of the material for this chapter has come from interviews conducted by myself or alongside the Sheffield Working Party. Where no reference is cited for direct quotations this is because they are oral statements made during interviews. As a condition of obtaining the interviews, I undertook not to disclose the identity of individuals. It is, therefore, not possible for me to acknowledge many of the quotations.

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CHAPTER 6

Analysis and Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

All those who responded to the 1984-5 dispute, and there could have been few church members who at the very least did not hope and pray for a peaceful settlement to it, were attempting to put their Christian principles into action. Particularly in situations which are as complex as was this industrial dispute, there are bound to be times when the same Christian principles suggest very different courses of action. This point was acknowledged by the report 'Perspectives on Economics' (see section 4.3.2) and was illustrated by the many different ways in which Christians did respond to the pit strike. The task now is to attempt some sort of classification of these responses in order to analyse the situation more fully (section 6.2).

Attention will then be turned to two particularly problematic areas in the churches' response to a major industrial conflict. The first is the role of church leaders who, whenever they speak out on anything verging on the fields of economics or politics, arouse loud cries that they are meddling in affairs about which they know nothing and that these matters are beyond the legitimate sphere of comment by Christian leaders. Given that many church leaders made comments about the dispute during its lengthy course and received criticism for so doing, the case for church statements and the mechanisms by which they are made will be examined (section 6.3). Secondly, the tension that exists between peace (i.e. settling the dispute as quickly as possible) and justice (i.e. reaching a settlement which is fair to all parties) in a major industrial conflict will be scrutinised (section 6.4). Finally, lessons which can be learnt from the response of the churches to the coal dispute will be highlighted, including areas where there was room for improvement, but also drawing considerable encouragement from the part the churches did play (section 6.5).

6.2 Classification of church responses to the dispute

6.2.1 Background to the typology

In attempting this classification, the typology devised by Drs D.G.A. Koelega in the project 'Unemployment: work for the churches' will be used. Koelega argues that looking at unemployment should not be an isolated activity. Borrowing phrases from the World Council of Churches, he claims the churches' concern is for a 'Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society' (JPSS) or, as the phrase was later revised, for 'Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation'. This means that it is important "to discern which measures and ideas are appropriate for the relief of unemployment problems as part of this comprehensive concern" (Koelega, p6). Similarly, an industrial dispute, particularly one which had as many dimensions as the 1984-5 coal dispute, should not be treated as an isolated dispute, but needs to be understood and responded to in a much wider context, for it may well have roots which lie deep in the past, and the manner in which it is resolved will have implications for the future.

Koelega's typology has been devised "in order to enable a structural description and comparative analysis of the wide variety of church statements and projects. The typology consists of three types. Their differences lie in the degree to which they pay attention to structural and long-term aspects of the unemployment crisis or - in the words of the World Council of Churches - in the degree to which actual church responses imply a concern for 'justice, participation and sustainability'" (Koelega,p9).

Koelega then goes on to suggest amplifications of JPSS in this context; a church reflects concern if it addresses not just unemployment itself but also "the relationship between the unemployment crisis and the more comprehensive issues of:

- a just national and world-wide distribution of income and the benefit from natural resources, (1)
- just and participative working conditions, (2)
- the production of socially useful commodities and services answering real human needs, (3)
- criticism towards the dominant belief in the need for economic

growth as the way out of the crisis, (4)

- the (sic) criticism towards the dominant work-ethic which stresses duty, discipline, achievement and consumption, (5)
- types of production which do not pollute our environment, (6)
- a sustainable social order, that is a social order which can be perceived as legitimate and lawful by the people involved, (7)
- criticism of the dominant confidence in technocratic solutions for socio-economic problems and of the (sic) technological science and its influence on society (8)" (Koelega, p10).

Whilst it could be argued that all these issues have implications for the running of the mining industry, some seem to be more pertinent than others. Also a strike, even one as long as the 1984-5 coal dispute, is a much shorter crisis than unemployment as a whole, and consequently there is less opportunity for long-term issues to be addressed. I would therefore wish to comment on and modify Koelega's list as follows:

(1) unaltered

the just distribution of income is highly relevant since the closing of pits means a considerable reduction in income for those made redundant and also for the community as a whole, as there is less work available for the next generation, and reduced spending power threatens other businesses. More crucial is the just benefit from natural resources since coal is a non-renewable resource and the ethics of rendering coal seams sterile on the grounds of short-term economics is highly questionable (see section 1.3).

(2) unaltered and (5) unaltered

Both these issues are highly relevant. The right of management to manage as understood by the NCB (see sections 3.2. and 3.4) implies a reduction of worker participation in working conditions and places considerable emphasis on workers' duties and discipline.

(3) and (4)

The case against coal, either as a raw material or as a source of energy, not being socially useful or answering real human needs is not strong, at least, not in the first instance. Similarly, the

criticism of economic growth is not an immediate issue raised by the coal strike. Perhaps, what is more relevant is the need for decisions about the coal industry to be taken in the context of an integrated energy policy. Such a policy, in turn, should take account of the wider issues of (3) and (4). For the purposes of this study (3) and (4) will be replaced by:
the need for an integrated energy policy.

(6) unaltered

This relates to (1) above and the careful husbandry of coal resources and also relates to an integrated energy policy which must give prime consideration to the dangers and polluting effects of the various forms of energy.

(7) unaltered

The way the miners' strike was policed was regarded by some as neither legitimate nor lawful so this issue is of great relevance (see section 3.5).

(8) unaltered

The shedding of labour in the coal industry as a whole, in line with the introduction of new technology and the integration of collieries into 'super-pits,' was one of the factors which led to the onset of the strike, so again, this is a relevant issue (see section 3.2).

Comparison of how churches responded to the coal dispute and to the issues raised by this list suggests that three types of response can be distinguished (after Koelega, p10-11):

- a '**relief response**' which focussed on the hardship suffered by those affected by the strike and sought to offer welfare assistance.
- a '**reformist response**' which too offered relief but also began to address the social, economic and ethical questions raised by the dispute, and attempted to provide assistance in the formulation of a negotiated settlement.

- a **'transformative response'** which pressed for a negotiated settlement but in the wider context of an integrated energy policy, and with full realisation of the social costs involved in closing pits and taking into account the non-renewable nature of coal i.e. there was some effort "to achieve a transformation of the existing social and economic system so that it may answer the criteria of JPSS as much as possible" (Koelega p11). This response also delved more deeply into the ethical issues raised by the dispute.

As Koelega points out (p11-12), any typology overemphasizes some characteristics at the expense of others, but this is necessary in order for the different types to be distinguished. Furthermore, no typology can be exhaustive; there is always the possibility that more types can be discerned. It should also be stressed that it is unlikely that, in the real world, a response which exactly matches any one of these 'types' will be encountered, but some will tend more to one 'type' than another. There may also be a shift of response from one 'type' to another as time elapses. Finally, it should be noted that a typology is an analytical tool and as such is non-judgemental, though as conclusions are drawn from the analysis then value judgements about the appropriateness of the different responses are made. This will be done in section 6.2.3.

Koelega's typology has been adopted partly for practical reasons. As has been seen above, the basic criteria on which it is based have required little modification from their original context of responding to the issues of unemployment to the context of an industrial dispute in an extractive industry and they pick up many of the ethical dilemmas raised in chapter 3. Also, the underlying theology (and Koelega (p13) makes clear that the participants in 'Unemployment: Work for the churches' favour the transformative response with its closeness to the criteria of JPSS) is in line with that of 'Perspectives on Economics', the report accepted by the General Synod of the Church of England in November 1984 when the coal dispute was at its height (see section 4.3.2). This report identified a gap "which still needs to be bridged, between Christian insight and moral conviction on the one hand and economic problems and practical decisions on the other" (C. of E., BSR, Industrial Committee, p2). The issues on which Koelega's typology has been based start to bridge this gap and go on to suggest actions which could be taken by the churches in order to

further the creation of a 'Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society' in a particular situation.

6.2.2 Constructing the Typology

Koelega (p23) provides a summary diagram of the types he identifies. Since this work is drawing heavily on that of Koelega this diagram is reproduced (Figure 1). Figure 2 is a similar diagram illustrating the variations in the factors which make up the types of church responses to the coal dispute and providing a summary of this section.

As can be seen from Figure 2, four factors have been used to distinguish the '**relief**', '**reformist**' and '**transformative**' types. Further comment on each factor follows.

6.2.2.1 Church Actions

The starting point for classifying the responses of the churches is to attempt a distinction on the grounds of what they actually did during the dispute (see chapters 4 and 5). Unlike unemployment, for example, which manifests itself gradually within a community and thus gives the opportunity for considered analysis and reflection before any alleviating action is taken, a strike, particularly one which is highly localised, has very immediate effects on the local community and alleviating action is taken very quickly in an ad hoc fashion. In this dispute it became quickly obvious that many people were struggling to afford basic necessities. The close-knit character of mining villages, combined with the sense that not just the pit but the whole community was under threat, led to an enormous mobilisation of neighbourly spirit and mutual help. Virtually all Christian congregations in mining villages were caught up in this, in the sense that all contained people whose families and neighbours were suffering privation, and these people went on to help their loved ones in whatever way they could. This typified the '**relief response**'; the pastoral care by individuals for those in need. This response was also seen well beyond the coalfields with many individual Christians giving to the various hardship funds and appeals on behalf of the miners (section 5.5). The dispute also impinged on worship with prayers being made for a speedy settlement. These were phrased in general terms with individuals rarely being named (section 5.2).

Figure 1: A Typology of Church Responses to unemployment
(Koelega, p23)

<u>Types:</u>	<u>Relief Type</u>	<u>Reformist Type</u>	<u>Transformative Type</u>
Aspects of church responses	Aiming at direct help for the casualties of unemployment and at relief of the misery inflicted on them by unemployment	Aiming at reintegration of the unemployed people in the employment system and at a reform of the existing socio-economic system and policies	Aiming at a structural and radical transformation of the present socio-economic and cultural system in the direction of JPSS
Analysis	Little analysis	Start of more structural analysis	Extensive analysis
	Short description of the bad unemployment situation	Extended description of the situation and its consequences	Long-term and complex character of unemployment crisis stressed
	No criticism of government, business, or other powerful policy makers	Criticism of all policy makers	Social and economic order criticized
Theological reflection on values, the work-ethic & the role of the church	Charity	Justice, solidarity	Justice participation & sustainability
	Traditional work-ethic	Revised work-ethic	New life-ethic.
	Church has primarily a diaconal and pastoral role	Church must also ask attention for neglected problems	Prophetic & political role for the church; organise the poor
Recommendations on policies in general	Present policies must be more effective	Reform in existing socio-economic policies and system	Radical structural changes
Recommendations on church action to fight unemployment	Particular pastoral care for individual unemployed people and extra diaconal help	Schemes for unemployed people (education, creation of work, training)	Alternative activities aimed at structural and radical changes: political action without neglecting short-term help to victims

Figure 2: A Typology of Church Responses to the Coal Dispute
(After Koelega, p23)

<u>Types:</u>	<u>Relief Type</u>	<u>Reformist Type</u>	<u>Transformative Type</u>
<u>Factors</u>			
Church Actions	Pastoral care for individuals and extra diaconal help.	Organised relief and protest at local level, debate about community life.	Organised relief, political dimension to protest, debate on nature of work and stewardship of non-renewable resources.
Analysis	Little analysis.	Start of more structural analysis.	Extensive analysis.
	Description of hardship individuals are suffering.	Description of effects of dispute on all parties to it.	Attempts to put dispute in historical, social & political perspective.
	No criticism of participants in strike, except perpetrators of violence.	Criticism of all directly involved.	Criticism of social & political order, especially energy consumption. Concern about wider issues raised e.g. policing policies.
Aims of church responses	Direct help to those caught up in the dispute.	Direct help plus a negotiated settlement which took account of social costs of pit closures.	A negotiated settlement, in the context of an integrated energy policy.
Theological reflection on values, the work-ethic & the role of the church.	Charity ----- Traditional work-ethic. ----- Church has primarily a diaconal and pastoral role.	Justice, solidarity, peace. ----- Revised work-ethic. ----- Church role to highlight neglected people and problems. Voice for the powerless.	Justice, participation & sustainability. ----- New life-ethic. ----- Prophetic and political role for the church. Organise the powerless.

The '**reformist response**' was characterised by organised church action such as the establishment of a church food parcel scheme or a hardship fund, or church premises being used for a canteen, or the local church giving active support to Miners' Wives Groups or Trade Union relief action (section 5.5). The church was also seen to care about the crisis in the community with clergy, including some regional and national church leaders, spending time with pickets (sections 4.5 and 5.6.1) or writing about its effects in the parish magazine or local paper (section 5.4). Public platforms, including pulpits, were used to express concern about community life with protest being made that the social costs of pit closures were not being given enough consideration (section 5.3 and 4.5). Many church leaders felt they had a duty to speak out on behalf of the people for whom they had pastoral responsibility. This will be discussed more in section 6.3. An urgency was felt about the need to resolve the dispute and many worked hard to attempt some sort of reconciliation between the various parties (section 4.6). Within worship prayers were regularly offered for those caught up in the dispute, for the cessation of violence and for a just and speedy settlement (section 5.2).

The '**transformative response**' included both individual and organised relief (section 4.7 and 5.5) but the emphasis was more on protest at the way the mining communities were being treated (sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 5.3). This protest included a strong political dimension and took a wider view of the issues including debate about the nature of work and stewardship of non-renewable natural resources. Prayers in worship reflected these wider concerns, and occasionally sermons were used to raise these issues (sections 5.2 and 5.3). Attempts to bring about a negotiated settlement were felt to be a proper role for the church, but only in the context of coal being part of an integrated energy policy and stress was placed on proper negotiating and participating rights of the employees being retained (section 4.6) ; management's right to manage was seen as far from absolute (4.3.2, 4.4 and 4.5).

6.2.2.2 Church Analysis of the Situation

As the coal dispute continued beyond the initial few weeks, the need for some sort of analysis of the situation from a Christian perspective was discerned within the church press, by industrial chaplains and by various

church boards concerned with industrial matters, as well as by some individual clergy.

The **'relief response'** was typified by a description of the situation, whether locally or nationally, with the emphasis placed on the suffering being caused by the dispute. There was little actual analysis of the issues involved and there was no criticism of the various parties to the dispute, except those seen to be committing acts of violence. Articles in 'The Tablet' and some in the 'Church Times' fell into this category (section 4.2).

Articles, such as those which appeared in the 'Methodist Recorder' and papers by some industrial missions and church boards (section 4.2), which gave detailed descriptions of the effects of the dispute on different sections of the mining communities and which went on to give some analysis of the socio-economic background to it and to probe the many issues raised by it come under the **'reformist'** category. Some criticism is made of Government and NUM policy as well as the behaviour of both striking and working miners and the police. It is believed that there are possibilities for all parties to reform their behaviour and attitudes in the interests of justice and the common good.

'Transformative' analysis goes that much further and particularly highlights the political dimensions to the dispute, with criticism being made of those using the situation to further their own political ends. The effects of the way the strike was policed and their implications for law and order within society are considered. Emphasis is placed on the need for responsible stewardship of coal and short-term economic policies are severely questioned. The morality of modern, highly technical, but wasteful, extraction techniques is raised and it is argued that decisions about sources of energy should not be taken in isolation but an integrated energy policy should be drawn up. Energy conservation should be encouraged and the assumption that there should be continued economic growth matched by increased output of energy is questioned. Reference is made to the underlying ethical criteria on which the analysis is based, and these criteria tend in the direction of a just, participatory and sustainable society. This type of analysis was made by the Kent and Croydon Industrial Chaplains Team, the Leeds Industrial Mission and the QSRE set of papers (section 4.2).

6.2.2.3 Aims of church responses

Because many of the church actions were ad hoc responses to a crisis situation the following can only be tentative suggestions about what were the underlying aims. However, it seems that the **'relief'** response was attempting to offer direct help to those suffering during the dispute, irrespective of whether or not they were deemed to deserve help. Some argued that since the miners could solve all their immediate financial problems by abandoning their industrial action they did not deserve any assistance from others (see sections 4.7 and 5.5), however, the **'relief'** response put aside the question of moral eligibility; the fact a neighbour was in need was sufficient to justify assistance from those able to offer such. There was, however, considerable concern that the church (local) try to remain totally neutral in the dispute, so it was left to individual Christians to make the relief response whilst the local church was careful not to make an organised response or to comment publicly on the dispute (see section 5.5).

The **'reformist'** response went that much further in its attitude to relief with churches organising relief or aligning themselves with local relief efforts (section 5.5). Considerable emphasis was placed on the need for the church to be seen, if not quite neutral, at least still concerned for all parties, particularly that it should not be seen to discriminate against anyone. Clergy were also aiming to act as agents of reconciliation both in the local community (section 5.6) and at a national level (section 4.6). To this extent many called for, and some actively tried to ease the path to, a negotiated settlement, particularly one which took account of the social cost of pit closures.

Those aiming in a **'transformative'** direction still worked in whatever way they could towards the dispute reaching a negotiated settlement but their prime concern was that the settlement be in the interests of Justice, Participation and Sustainability: this was more important than getting the coal industry working again as soon as possible. The peace proposals of the Welsh churches (section 4.6) most nearly mirror this response.

6.2.2.4 Theological Reflection on values, the work-ethic and the role of the church

Because of the crisis nature of an industrial dispute there is little time for

considered theological reflection before making an active response to the local situation. However, those interviewed stressed that much of what they did during the dispute was governed by concern for Christian principles. The Christian values which seemed to be most pertinent in this dispute all tended in the direction of JPSS and also included charity, human equality, concern for the powerless, and peace, both in the community and in the coal industry. There was also considerable concern that the church be seen as having a ministry to all, whether or not they be churchgoers and however they were caught up in the dispute (see especially sections 5.3 and 5.5). As Koelega discovered, when studying unemployment, the differences between the various responses lie not so much in different responses espousing different Christian values, but in the emphasis that is placed on the various values (Koelega, p18). Furthermore, there is a high degree of similarity between the theological values which lie behind the various responses to unemployment and this industrial dispute.

The **'relief response'** was motivated particularly by a concern for charity, especially towards the powerless, in order to express the equality of humanity. Underlying this is an acceptance of the traditional protestant work-ethic and the desirability of continued economic growth. The church's main social role is that of a caring agency, offering assistance to those in need. This role is not seen as having a political dimension; indeed there is much concern that the church remain neutral in the face of a divided community, hence the reluctance of some churches to formally align themselves with a union relief effort (section 5.5).

In the **'reformist response'** motives of charity were significant but much of the organised relief effort was an attempt to serve the interests of justice. Considerable sections of the community were seen to be suffering unfairly and it was therefore proper that the church be seen to support them. However, lest the church be open to accusations of being partisan, many churches offered their premises for canteens on the basis that their facilities be available to the police, as well as to all striking miners and their families, whether or not they undertook picket duty. The interests of justice were also served by the churches drawing attention to the social costs of pit closures and calling for a revision of the closure programme, in which profit was not the main criterion of assessment (section 4.3 and 4.5). The desire for peace prompted many clergy to visit pickets and to try to

act as agents of reconciliation between the various factions, both in local communities and within the mining industry as a whole (sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 5.6).

Those tending towards a '**transformative response**' were clear that the role of the church includes a prophetic call, with a strong political dimension, to society to organise itself in a way that is just, participative and sustainable. Quality of life for all takes precedence over economic performance. Church action includes a strong defence of the oppressed and the powerless, and emphasises assistance which leads to self-help and increases self-respect. The church still stresses the importance of a ministry to all, but this does not take priority over the championing of a just cause. Many of these values underlie the issues raised and the questions posed by papers written by the industrial missions (section 4.2).

6.2.3 Conclusions drawn from the typology

In comparing the various responses of the church (chapters 4 & 5) with this typology it is noticeable that different levels of the church tended to respond in different ways. Those who most typified the '**relief**' response were individual Christians; ordinary members of churches. Most lived in the mining communities or had some link with a particular community, though a considerable number were from other areas, even abroad, who responded with Christian charity to a perceived need.

The response of many clergy in mining communities, together with sections of their congregations, could be categorised as '**reformist**'. These are the people who provided church relief in an organised fashion and attempted to act as local symbols of reconciliation and at-one-ment (atonement). They also used church magazines and the local press to try to probe the many issues involved in the dispute and give hints on Christian behaviour in these circumstances. A few church leaders were involved in relief funds, mainly as trustees rather than in the day-to-day administration of the fund. Many more took the trouble to provide carefully worded public statements about the rights and wrongs of the dispute, as they understood them, from their Christian perspective. These statements, together with the church pleas for negotiated settlements, have many of the hallmarks of the '**reformist**'

category. So too the various papers offering some description and analysis of the dispute produced by the various boards and committees of the differing denominations which were concerned with industrial matters and by some industrial missions (section 4.2).

On the whole, the analysis of the industrial missions went further than that of the church boards and committees and tended towards the **'transformative response'**. Two examples of this are the paper produced by the Kent and Croydon Industrial Chaplains' Team and that by the Leeds Industrial Mission (section 4.2). Some church leaders also raised issues in the **'transformative'** category; this was particularly so of those involved in aiding the resolution of the dispute, for instance the suggestion of the Welsh churches that an Independent Review Body be established, but to work in the context of a National Energy Policy (section 4.6).

Of course, there are some exceptions to these generalisations, but in most cases it was the local church which typified the **'relief response'**, with some verging on a **'reformist response'**, the regional and national church bodies and leaders who typified the **'reformist responses'** and, to a lesser extent **'transformative responses'**, with the work of some industrial chaplaincies illustrating many traits of the **'transformative response'**.

There thus seems to be considerable correlation between the type of response and the level of the church making the response. This is, perhaps, not too surprising for the level one occupies within the church has a bearing on the effectiveness of one's response. For instance, any individual so motivated can make a gesture of charity which will reach its target, and that, in essence, is the **'relief response'**. However, those wishing to make a response which is either reformist or transformative soon find themselves needing to make some sort of criticism of organisations and structures, and here the position one occupies within society makes a great deal of difference to whether that criticism reaches its target. Any individual can write a letter to a newspaper, a trade union leader, a secretary of state, a chairman of a company, but the contents of that letter will have more impact if they are from someone in a position of authority, e.g. a bishop, rather than from a concerned member of the public.

The implications of this are twofold: first, this piece of research may have considerably underestimated the number of individuals within the church who espoused reformist and transformative responses as their voice was not heard. Secondly, it suggests that the various levels of the church are differently equipped and are, therefore, better suited to making different responses. However, there will be some overlap in the types of response because the response types, as identified by Koelega, are not mutually exclusive, but rather, to a considerable extent, cumulative; for instance, the reform type includes a considerable relief operation, and the transformative type extends the analysis of the reformist. This became particularly apparent in the coal dispute through the question of how the church should maintain a ministry to all, whilst proclaiming justice and acting as an agent of reconciliation.

Some local churches felt that the best way to maintain a ministry to all sections of the community was for the church to remain totally neutral and therefore, say virtually nothing about the rights and wrongs of the dispute (see sections 5.3 and 5.4). If they were not aligned they would be better equipped to serve as a symbol of reconciliation, particularly once the dispute had ended. This meant that their maximum response was that of **'relief'** by way of extending the family network. However, especially in areas where other churches were seen to be organising relief operations and clergy were known to be regular visitors to the picket line, the lack of action by these 'neutral parishes' was interpreted as meaning that the church was against the striking miners. This was even the case where a considerable relief operation was mounted but carefully executed by members of the congregation, as individuals and via house-groups (section 5.5). Only when clergy took a public lead, i.e. they made a reformist type response, was the relief perceived as being from the church. In such reformist parishes the proclamation of justice and concern for those in need seemed to be more important than remaining totally neutral. However, this public action actually enabled a considerable work of reconciliation within communities. It was rarely construed as a political act implying that the church was condemning the Coal Board or the working miners, rather, it was accepted that it was a proper role of the church to help those in need. Indeed, the church was often asked by the NUM to help those perceived to be in greatest need (section 5.5). Many new relationships between clergy and miners were forged and, as trust grew, it was possible for the deeper

issues of the strike to be discussed, for clergy to draw together those on both sides of the picket line for a few moments, so each could try to understand the effects the picketing was having on the families of the other (see section 5.6.1).

Furthermore, the action of the local church gave authority and credibility to the regional and national church. For instance, where the local church was publicly engaged helping the community cope with the upheaval of the dispute, any church leaders who spoke out were listened to with great interest. They were less likely to be dismissed as 'pulpit pontificators', who operated in a different world from the miners. In some cases they were in danger of becoming folk heroes for, with so few establishment figures giving any support for the cause of the striking miners, those who did so were given a rapturous welcome. At times this meant that only part of their message was heard; it had to be emphasised to one group of miners that the Bishop of Durham had words of criticism for Arthur Scargill as well as for Ian MacGregor. However, where the local church was seen to be mounting an active response to the dispute, the pronouncements by the agents of the church at national and regional level were given that much more credibility.

There were, however, those, as letters pages in many papers witnessed, who were troubled by the way many church leaders spoke out during the course of the coal dispute. Church leaders, it was argued, should be spiritual leaders and concentrate their energies less on matters political (section 4.5). This argument is often used whenever church leaders stray into the field of matters political. Since senior clergy have such a public position in society and since they received considerable media coverage during the course of the coal dispute, it is worth considering what their proper role should be in circumstances such as a major industrial dispute.

6.3 The Role of Church Leaders

"I have no doubt at all of the right and duty of the church to speak out on political matters..... (and) for those from the Catholic tradition the Church speaks primarily through the bishops." That is the view of John Selwyn Gummer MP, as expressed in 'The Guardian', 29.4.85, but almost every

time a bishop does speak out, particularly on political matters, Mr Gummer is often among the first publicly to criticise the bishop's comments.

Over the last ten years there seems to have been an increase in the outspokenness of bishops. This is happening not just in Britain but throughout the world (Lee and Stanford, p100). In Britain, however, this has coincided with government by the Conservative party and the coal dispute is just one of many issues whereby some church leaders have criticised Government policy. Under Conservative rule the post-war political consensus has been challenged on many fronts (Lee and Stanford, p20). Furthermore, "a reappraisal of thinking and mood has taken place across a wide range of economic and social ideas leading to a depreciation of collective responsibility and enhancing the values of individualism" (Catholic Church, p12). Given that the post-war political consensus embodied many Christian principles, particularly those concerning wealth redistribution, it is hardly surprising that church leaders have not allowed this to happen without voicing some protest. The bishops maintain that they are responding on behalf of their people and that they only speak out when an issue obliges them as Christian leaders so to do (Lee and Stanford, p20).

But should church leaders speak out in this way? Since apostolic times the task of bishop has involved caring for, guiding and leading the church (Lee and Stanford, p125). Particularly in order to lead, but also in order to guide and care for their people, bishops need to have a public voice. It also means being concerned about their concerns and speaking out on their behalf. David Sheppard (Bishop of Liverpool) feels that belief in a creator God who cares about the quality of life that all human beings experience, means that providing a voice for those "with very little clout", when damaging things are happening to them, is part of his job as bishop (Lee and Stanford, p134). Similarly, the Bishop of Durham explained why he touched on the coal dispute in his enthronement sermon, "It seemed to me clear, quite apart from the long tradition of the bishops of Durham with the mining community, that if you're going to speak in a great and ancient cathedral you cannot avoid addressing one of the most painful living issues that we are in the midst of" (Lee and Stanford, p21).

Recent Roman Catholic teaching concurs with this. In 1980, Bishop Kelly, speaking during the run-up to an election in America said, "Human dignity is the criterion of a just economy and a humane world. It is protected by a set of fundamental human rights. These include the right to basic necessities without which full human development is impossible" (Lee and Stanford, p100). Pope John Paul II, in enumerating basic rights to human dignity included the rights to employment, food, housing, health care and education. He added that all persons have a right to these, and the Government, as provider of last resort has the responsibility to ensure that they are made available to all (loc. cit.).

There does seem to be a strong case for bishops speaking out in circumstances such as the announcement of a major programme of pit closures which will cause severe unemployment in many small communities. But what should the bishops say and how should it be said?

An important ground rule is that courtesy must be maintained (Gummer, op. cit.). Any remark which can be deemed as even mildly offensive makes the headlines and detracts from the substance of the message. The Bishop of Durham soon discovered this when he referred to Mr MacGregor as an "imported elderly American" in his enthronement sermon (Jenkins, p5). Church leaders need to be aware that they, by their very position, possess considerable 'star quality' and the media are all too ready to make headlines out of anything they may say or do.

Gummer (op. cit.) is also right to stress that bishops should be committed to the truth otherwise their message will be lost amid the argument. However, this may not be as simple as it seems. In a strike, the situation is perceived very differently by various parties and it is often difficult to get to the true heart of the situation. Advice must be sought on many sides and evidence weighed carefully before a bishop expresses his view. It is no bad thing if church leaders are seen to be taking advice, talking to those at the pit gate and those within the pit yard, and assessing the situation for themselves, as did the leader of the Methodist Conference (see chapter 4.5). This helps prevent what the church leaders might say as being dismissed as 'pulpit pontification.' It also visibly expresses the church's concern for those caught up in the situation and it portrays the church leaders as reconcilers. In the old Roman Catholic rite of

consecration the bishop was anointed with oil as a sign of his ministry of peacemaking and reconciliation (Lee and Stanford, p14). Society still perceives reconciliation as a right and proper role for bishops. Paul Routledge, when commenting on the bishops' peacemaking attempts, pointed out that they have the advantage of starting from scratch; they have no entrenched position to defend nor political face to lose (Routledge, 'The Times'). Also, because bishops are thought to be above personal interest, and because their very office carries considerable weight, they command attention from all parties. Furthermore, since they do not have to be re-elected every few years, they have nothing to lose by speaking out.

So, it seems that what is needed are church leaders who are committed to reconciliation, who can speak up, particularly on behalf of those with little voice, with politeness and accuracy. On the specific issue of the coal dispute, there appeared to be a strong moral obligation for church leaders to take up the cause of the threatened communities, to point out the social costs of the pit closure policies and also to be agents of reconciliation.

In general, Lee and Stanford, would go further than this and see a role for bishops as Her Majesty's opposition, not quite in the political sense, "but because good government **requires** good opposition, it needs to be called to account, it needs to have its conscience pricked" (p104). Unlike political opposition, which can be accused of being partisan, church leaders are well placed above party politics to probe the human costs of government policy and also to give appreciation to the benefits brought by it (p104). The key to doing this successfully is for church leaders not to allow themselves to be pressed for concrete solutions to every legal and political problem (p99) but, when making any contribution to the political arena, they press hard the theological dimension of what they are saying. The Roman Catholic publication 'A threefold knot; a Christian Approach to Trade Unionism', did this with a fair degree of success, for whilst making very specific criticism of Conservative policy of restricting workers' rights to organise, did so in the context of Catholic moral teaching. The reaction of the Department of Employment was to take the report seriously, for the bishops had changed the nature of the debate (Lee and Stanford, p32). The Church of England's report 'Faith in the City' was less successful, for as the Archbishop of York admitted when urging the Government to take

notice of the report's sociological insights, "theology was not the document's strongest point"(loc. cit.). Section 6.4 gives some suggestions on how the church could have employed its theology during the coal dispute.

Church leaders also have an important role to play in lobbying politicians and this can be a very effective role as Cardinal Hume's efforts on behalf of those convicted of the Guildford pub bombings have proved. "Given that the majority of the present Government are Christians, and to different degrees practise their faith, they have a natural predisposition to listen rather more attentively to bishops than the general public is led to believe" (Lee and Stanford, p29).

Anglican bishops have an advantage over other church leaders when it comes to lobbying; their twenty-six seats in the House of Lords can make them a real threat to the Government of the day. On the other hand, the leaders of the free churches are at a disadvantage for their office does not carry the status and symbolism of bishop, and, also, they are elected to office and serve only for short periods of time in senior positions (Lee and Stanford, p24). However, where there is ecumenical co-operation, and church leaders speak out together, the impact of what is said is that much greater. Since the mid-1970's the combined voice of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool and the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, often joined by the Moderator of the Free Churches on Merseyside, has made the church in that city a force which is taken very seriously.

What emerges from this is that there is a fairly general consensus, both within church circles and within the nation as a whole, that church leaders have an important role to play in matters such as major industrial disputes. Many of the church leaders, themselves, lacked neither the will nor the effort to take on this role during the 1984-5 coal dispute. Where things started to falter was over the organisation of their response.

There was a considerable degree of underlying unity, in that many church leaders were attempting to act as agents of reconciliation and to enable a negotiated settlement to the dispute as they saw fit, however there was virtually no co-ordination of their action. As has been shown in section 4.6, senior officials in the NUM, in the Coal Board and in the Government

all received letters and visits from a whole succession of Christian leaders. Some acted as individuals representing one denomination, whilst others came together as an ecumenical delegation representing a specific region such as the Welsh Churches. Each had their own suggestions on how best the dispute be resolved but the amount of common ground contained in the various proposals was considerable. Those on the receiving end of these suggestions cannot help but have been confused by the various church groupings who kept claiming their attention for their similar, but different, proposals. How much more effective their effort would have been if it had been channelled through one representative group, as had been suggested by the Coal Chaplains Network (section 4.4).

Most denominations lack the necessary mechanisms to make a corporate response to a crisis affecting the country, whether it be a major industrial dispute, or something even greater, such as the threat or event of war. It has already been shown (section 4.3.2) that the General Synod of the Church of England failed to debate the coal dispute, and similarly, its predetermined time-table meant that in November 1990 discussion of the crisis caused by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was minimal.

Furthermore, there are few opportunities for bishops to consult, one with another, about how to make a corporate response to such matters. More often than not they find themselves having to make an individual response either to the press, or at a local event, such as preaching at the funeral of a picket. Likewise, structures for ecumenical co-operation on such matters are lacking; there are no formal channels of communication between the boards and committees on industrial matters of the various denominations.

It is perhaps at the level of the industrial chaplains that there is greatest co-ordination of response and also ecumenical co-operation. Most industrial chaplains work as part of an ecumenical industrial mission team and are seen as ecumenical representatives within the individual workplaces that they serve. This means that any papers they produce contain reflections by members of the denominations party to that mission. Within the coal industry there also exists a Network of Coal Chaplains which meets regularly and comprises representatives of the coal chaplains. This Network proved to be a valuable communication channel between the

various coal chaplains during the coal dispute, and enabled those at the very heart of the Christian involvement within the industry to make some co-ordinated statements during the course of the dispute. However, the response of the Network was limited, partly due to lack of funds which meant that travelling costs could not be met for frequent meetings, and partly as there was no established route by which the deliberations of the coal chaplains could benefit the wider church. It was up to individuals to make personal approaches to the Network for information and guidance; the Archbishop of York was one of very few to do this.

If the church is to respond more adequately to major industrial disputes it needs to be more ready to listen to the expertise of its chaplains. It also needs to provide the chaplains with the resources to build up their expertise and to provide channels by which it can be imparted to others, both to those ministering at the local level and those in positions of leadership and public prominence. The Sheffield Diocesan Social Responsibility Committee, by commissioning the report 'The Church in the Mining Communities; a reflection on the experiences of parishes in the Diocese of Sheffield during the Mining Dispute 1984/5' has begun this process. The Report has been followed up by the organisation of training days for clergy in mining parishes by Sheffield Industrial Mission.

It is nothing less than a scandal that the timetable of the General Synod of the Church of England is such that major industrial and political events of the day cannot be debated. What witness is this to society, that events which dominate the daily news and affect a considerable proportion of the congregations, receive barely passing reference? What support does this give to those who are attempting to minister to those directly caught up in the events of the day? The argument that a hole would have been created in the Synod timetable had a debate been scheduled and then the dispute resolved in the interim is feeble. It had already been pointed out (C. of E., General Synod, July 1984, p389) that because the agenda was so crowded there was no slot for motions from Private Members or the Dioceses. Surely, these could have been debated had such a hole emerged?

6.4 Peace and Justice

Whenever a major industrial conflict occurs, the most urgent task seems to be to resolve it as soon as possible. The coal dispute meant enormous suffering to those on strike, it was highly stressful for those who remained at work, many coal faces were lost by lack of maintenance, and the effect on the economy was by no means negligible. In the light of this a speedy settlement, which brings peace to the industry as soon as possible, seems to be a worthy aim. Against this is the recognition that a hasty peace formula which fails adequately to redress the feeling of injustice which prompted the dispute can lead to industrial relations which are far from harmonious, to the detriment of the industry and the wider community.

In any industrial dispute there seems to be a tension between peace and justice. Because strikes are highly newsworthy, particularly if there is violence, there is an enormous pressure to get the workers back to work and to stop the violence. It is then assumed that because there is lack of conflict, peace has prevailed and all will be well. Justice, however, is not given the same priority as peace and is all too easily neglected.

The Christian understanding of peace goes a good deal deeper than the absence of conflict. It recognises that peace without justice is a false peace, for either it will be only a matter of time before conflict will break out again, or it involves the oppression of one of the parties. Peace must include justice if it is to be true peace (Dowell).

Over and over again church leaders made pleas for a negotiated settlement to end the coal dispute (see chapter 4). They recognised that any settlement which was imposed rather than negotiated would be doomed to failure; it would bring a false peace, lacking justice. They acknowledged that the miners' cause was, to a considerable extent, a just cause, but they also recognised it was unrealistic to keep pits open until every coal seam was exhausted. However, some public appeals for a negotiated settlement contained little more than an appeal to negotiate, eg. that of the coal chaplains (section 4.4) and the statement issued by the Roman Catholic Bishops (section 4.3.3). In some the cause of justice appeared to be secondary to that of peace e.g. the resolution passed by the Methodist Conference (section 4.3.1) and the Bishop of Llandaff's call for an

immediate return to work, followed by the setting up of an impartial board to consider the wider issues of the dispute (section 4.5).

Despite the many pleas for a negotiated settlement, from many other quarters as well as church leaders, no such settlement was reached. The miners eventually returned to work having gained none of their aims. The Coal Board then went on to close many pits and to make thousands of miners redundant. The coal industry has been streamlined and made much more economically efficient and it has been the pit communities which have borne the brunt of the cost of this.

There is little doubt that the coal dispute was not merely an economic dispute. It was also a highly political dispute, in which the stakes were high. The personalities of Ian MacGregor and Arthur Scargill were such that a spirit of negotiation was not fostered; both scented victory and were unwilling to compromise.

It is easy to be wise after the event, but the political complexities of the dispute do seem to have been underestimated by the church authorities, as was the absence of a desire to compromise amongst the protagonists. Francis Bridger feels the church leaders failed to grasp that the strike was about a power struggle as well as about jobs and communities. The church peace proposals were based on the view that the dispute could be settled by concessions from either side but this view failed to recognise that, given Scargill's marxist ideology, reconciliation was impossible. The church leaders were well meaning but politically marginal and concerned with the effects of the dispute rather than its deeper dimensions (Bridger, p108-115). However, Bridger's analysis stems from his viewpoint that the miners' prime motive was that of furthering the class struggle and the state was morally right to use its full power against this struggle. Many would disagree with this viewpoint.

However, this raises the point that in disputes of this nature Christians, as much as any other group of people are politically divided and this is a factor in the response they make to the situation. Stephen Kendal has already pointed out (section 4.4) that the chaplains underestimated the different political understandings of the dispute which were held by the

church leaders and this, in turn, affected their ability to take notice of what the chaplains were saying.

Given this and given that there were many groups of people, other than the churches, calling for peace, perhaps the churches would have been more effective had they concentrated their efforts on debating the grievances and demands which lay behind the dispute in the light of a Christian understanding of justice, exposing instances of injustice and exploring more thoroughly the many ethical dilemmas that faced the different parties to the dispute. This may have enabled the political complexities of the strike to have been more clearly exposed and assessed in the light of Christian values. It would have meant the church grappling more thoroughly with the moral issues within the dispute and ensured that Christian theology made a contribution to the practical decisions that had to be taken during the course of the dispute.

These tasks tended to be neglected, with the causes of the strike being pushed into the background by media concentration on the conduct of the dispute and the prevalent feeling that the most urgent task was to get the coal industry working normally again. The churches might have done better to have given greater priority to pressing for justice and fostering greater understanding which, in turn, could have opened the way to the possibilities of a true peace. Furthermore, this could have been a distinctly Christian contribution to the situation which no other organisations were in a position to offer, unlike some of the peace proposals which bore close similarities to those advocated by the politically central ground. It may, too, have changed the nature of the debate. In the course of this process it may have appeared that the church was aligning itself with one side against the others, but the theological reasons for any such alignment would have been made clear for all to see, and critics would have had to counter these arguments rather than rely on the argument that the church should remain non-aligned.

The only peace proposal to have received a certain amount of backing by both the NUM and the NCB was that of the Welsh Churches (see section 4.6). This included the suggestion that an Independent Review Body be set up whose purpose would be: -

"to examine the future of the coal industry in the context of a long-term energy policy.

to note the needs of the coal industry and its customers - the receiving and producing communities.

to analyse the issues of development, unemployment and the nature of community" (Beales, February 1985, p7).

Perhaps the relative success of the Welsh churches' package and its greater emphasis on considering the justice of the wider issues are not merely coincidental.

6.5 Conclusions

The position of the churches in situations of conflict is that of tightrope walkers. If they do nothing they are accused of not caring; if they take an interest they are accused of meddling in affairs of which they know nothing; if they promote peace they are accused of papering over deep cracks; if they attempt to promote justice and they are accused of being partisan!

However, there are lessons to be learnt from the considerable effort that the churches made in ministering to those caught up in the 1984-5 coal dispute: -

1. First and foremost, the contribution of the church was greatly valued by many who came into contact with it during the dispute. In many pit communities the church (or chapel) was no longer a mere building, but came to mean people who cared for their neighbours who were suffering. People who cared and acted, in turn, pointed to a God who cared and was relevant to their situation. The church also offered a sense of stability and security in a situation of great turmoil. This enabled many people, both churchgoers and non-churchgoers, to find sufficient inner peace to cope with the stress of the conflict.
2. The relief work of the church gave credibility to the voice of the church. Where tangible help had been mobilised by local clergy and congregations, the comments of the bishops and senior ministers were

listened to with interest and sympathy. Once the church had proved itself to be a caring agency, criticism of the conduct and causes of the dispute was more likely to be taken seriously and the steps towards reconciliation, at least at local levels, became possible.

3. Clergy serving in parishes where the mining industry dominated tended to make a greater response to the dispute, particularly where they had a close relationship with the mining community before the start of the strike. Some who became heavily involved in the relief operation and who were well known on the picket-line achieved almost 'folk hero' status in mining circles. This led to the accusation that other clergy, who kept a lower public profile but who were still doing their utmost to minister to the whole community, and especially, those suffering because of the dispute, did not care or were against the miners.
4. Church leaders were welcomed by all parties to the dispute as having an important enabling role in the peace-making process; however, lack of communication between the various leaders, and their church boards and committees on industrial matters, led to much duplication of effort and weakened their peace-making role. Furthermore, they were seen by society as having a moral duty to speak out on events of national importance, particularly where people were seen to be suffering and justice was in danger of being compromised.
5. The church may have made a more distinctly Christian contribution to the debate, and been able to give new insights into the situation, had she probed more strongly the ethical issues raised by the dispute and commented on them in the light of Christian values, particularly those of justice, participation and sustainability.
6. The industrial chaplains have a vital contribution to make in major industrial disputes; however they are heavily under-resourced and under-valued by the church as a whole.
7. The inability of the General Synod of the Church of England to make space in its timetable to respond to current events of national importance, such as the coal dispute and more recently the Gulf

Crisis, deprives both the church and the nation of a specifically Christian debate on the issue. Other denominations are similarly unable to have a wide-ranging debate about such events, with the possible exception of the Methodists when the crisis co-incides with their annual (summer) conference.

8. Compared with the rest of the media, the church press offered the least sensational coverage of the dispute. It probed the effects of the dispute in human terms and was careful to offer commentary from many different points of view, thus offering its readers the fullest and most accurate coverage available.

At a time when the trend in church membership, at least of many of the main-stream churches, has been steadily downwards for many years, the fact that the church was able to respond in so many different ways to the dispute and that this was welcomed and taken seriously by so many should serve as an encouragement to those who comprise the church. The church within Britain still has a great deal of influence and power within society. This is because of its local presence through church buildings and active congregations throughout the country, its respected position in industries such as the coal industry through the work of industrial missions, and its national and regional voice which is loud enough to receive media attention and hold sway in Government circles. The church needs to recognise this and build upon it, in order to further its mission. Its response to the coal dispute was considerable, although very much ad hoc. It is only when the various aspects of the response are pieced together that the complexity of the response and the size of it can be appreciated.

So often the Christian Church is accused of being irrelevant to modern society, of fossilising the past, of being so heavenly minded that is of no earthly use. The response the churches made during the 1984-5 coal dispute is a testimony to a church which is very much alive, a church which still has an enormous contribution to make to society, and a church which, both at its institutional level and at the level of the individual Christian, is earnestly struggling to make the connections between her faith and the events which surround her which are necessary in order that Christian values be promoted and society be ordered according to them.

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APPENDIX A

Questions prepared by the Working Party set up by the Sheffield Diocesan Social Responsibility Committee for use in their interviews (see section 5.1)

(Note: these lists of questions were working documents used by the committee. They were not issued as questionnaires.)

Parish

Date

The Church in the Mining Communities

To the Clergy

1. How would you characterise the relations between yourself and the mining community in this parish before the strike?
2. Did it change during the strike? Can you give us examples?
Did you welcome the change? What were the pressure points?
3. What did you actually do during the strike?
visiting homes pickets police managers
NUM office canteens
4. In what ways were members of the church involved in the strike?
How was that related to the life of the church?
5. How did the congregation react to your activities?
How did you help them understand?
How were the inevitable disagreements within the parish handled?
6. Have any of the changes during the strike had a lasting effect on your relationships with the mining community in the parish?
7. Did you need any particular ministerial skills during the strike?
Did you have any help in developing and using them?
8. How did you inform yourself about the issues and events of the strike?
Was it difficult to discover the truth of the situation for yourself?
Was it difficult to pass this on to your congregation?
9. Were there any theological issues that became important to you at the time?
Was it a new theological territory? Has it caused you to rethink some of your beliefs about how God relates to people and communities?
10. Is there anything in what happened that made you rethink your ministry?
Is this relevant to others in similar situations?

Parish

Date

The Church in the Mining Communities

To the PCC members

1. How many of you work in, have relatives in mining? Are there any mining families in the congregation?
2. What did the church do during the strike to help these families? (not just welfare - help in understanding the issues etc.)
3. What did the church do for the whole community and for non church members during the strike? Did you join in? What did you think?
4. Were you helped to think about the issues in the strike, and to connect them with your Christian faith? (Preaching, groups, individual counselling, articles in magazines etc.)
5. Did the people who do not attend church see the church in a new way? Has that made a lasting effect on the place of the church in the community?
6. Have these experiences caused you to think about the future of the the church here? How could the church's ministry and mission be better in the coal communities?

Parish

Date

The Church in the Mining Communities

To the NUM representatives

1. What was the place of the church in the community before the strike?
2. In what ways did the relations between the church, the miners and the whole community change during the strike? If the answer is about the clergy, then ask about the church congregation.
3. In what ways did the church (churches: we should know about the presence of the other denominations in the place we are visiting) help miners and their families during the strike?
Financial - from church funds, and by passing on other funds
Individual welfare other than money
Use of buildings for canteens and offices
Support for sacked and charged miners
Public support for the campaign against pit closures
4. Has all this changed the way the miners think of the clergy? the church?
5. What do you think the church should do to improve its work/ministry in mining communities?

APPENDIX B

Questions I prepared as a guide whilst conducting interviews

Parish
Clergy

Date

To the Clergy

1. How would you characterise the relations between yourself and the mining community in this parish before the strike?
When was the church built? Was it a mining church?
What is the socio-economic structure of the community? Has it changed much recently?
How long have you been in the parish?
2. Did your relationship between you and the mining community change during the strike? Can you give examples?
Did you welcome the change? What were the pressure points?
3. What did you do during the strike?
visiting homes pickets police managers
NUM office canteens
When?
4. In what ways were members of the church involved in the strike?
How was that related to the life of the church?
Were just a few active or most/all?
Did other churches (both nearby and further afield) offer assistance?
5. How did the congregation react to your activities?
How did you help them understand?
How were any disagreements handled?
6. Did the strike have any impact on your worship?
If prayers, what was prayed for?
7. Have any of the changes during the strike had a lasting effect on your relationships with the mining community?
8. How did you inform yourself about the issues and events of the strike? Was it difficult to discover the truth of the situation for yourself? Was it difficult to pass this on to the congregation?
9. What did you perceive the national church was saying, especially the Archbishop of Canterbury, and your diocesan bishop.
10. Were there any theological issues that became important to you at the time?
What basic theological model do you base your ministry on?
Did this change?
How can the church handle conflict?!

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