



The Durham Miner

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The Durham Miner is the magazine of the Durham Miners' Association, PO Box 6, Red Hill, Durham, DH1 4BB
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DWP Decision Takes Us Half Way

Osteoarthritis To Be Designated An Industrial Disease

Dave Guy

After many years of campaigning by Durham Miners and other mining unions the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) have at last taken the advice of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIICA) and announced that osteoarthritis of the knee will be classed as an industrial disease from July.

The IIICA's recommendation is based on evidence that miners who worked underground are twice as likely to contract osteoarthritis of the knee than other industrial workers.

The symptoms of this condition include pain, swelling, stiffness and reduced mobility.

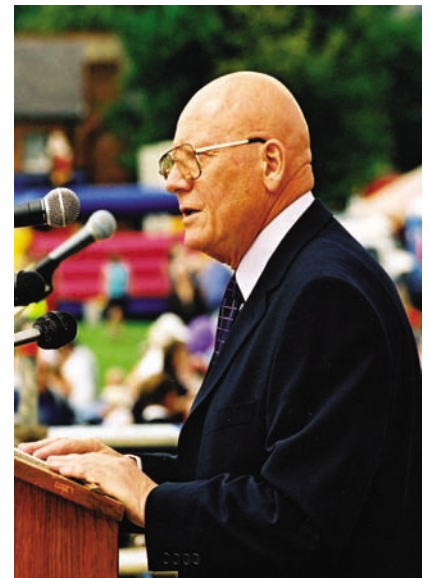
The DWP have not yet stated what prescription will be adopted to determine who is eligible for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB). However, it is almost certain that they will adopt the prescription which the IIICA has recommended.

This prescription is based on the evidence that prior to 1986 mining

techniques were less advanced and miners were subject to working practices, such as heavy lifting, which caused damage to their knees. The IIICA has therefore concluded that a miner who has an aggregate of ten years or more service as an underground miner before 1986 and is suffering from this condition can apply to have his condition assessed.

If a miner has an aggregate of 10 years service part or all of which occurs after 1985 then the service after 1986 must fall within certain categories of work. These categories are: work on non-mechanised coal faces, development workers, belt line cleaners and attendants.

The degree to which the disease has progressed and is affecting a miners knee is an important factor which will determine whether a claim is successful. The degree of disablement is graded from 0 to 4 on The Kellren-Lawrence Scale and the IIICA is recommending that only those miners with a stage 3 or a stage 4 condition will qualify for benefit.



Dave Guy

The DM A considers that this is placing the bar too high and we will be making representation through the National Union to have this altered. We had similar problems with both vibration white finger and chronic bronchitis and emphysema and after a vigorous campaign we were eventually successful in getting the qualifying criteria changed.

It is of the utmost importance that our members, who wish to make a claim consult the Area Office who will issue claims forms when these become available.

As always we will do our very best to ensure that our members are fairly treated and well represented at tribunals.

Compensation Report

Knee Litigation is Kicked Back to Magistrates Court

Dave Guy

It is important that our members understand the difference between the claim for disablement benefit and the present litigation which the DMA is pursuing through the courts for compensation for miners suffering from osteoarthritis of the knee. While the designation of this condition as an industrial disease is very helpful it only takes us half way to a successful conclusion. We have to produce evidence that the NCB were aware that osteoarthritis of the knee was more prevalent in miners than other workers and consequently took no action to protect miners.

It is now over two-and-a-half years since we first embarked on this litigation and progress has been painfully slow. Up to now the case has been heard in the magistrates court in Leeds under Judge Grenfell.

In November last year this Judge referred the case to the High Court to appoint a High Court judge to hear the case. The High Court has now referred the case back to be heard in the magistrates court.

These delays are becoming very frustrating as each adds to the cost of the case. Already the funding bodies have accrued costs of £4M of which £240,000 has been paid by the DMA. However the DMA is determined to continue the fight to get justice for our members.

Now that osteoarthritis of the knee is recognised as an industrial disease we will step up the campaign for the Government to establish a scheme similar to that of VWF so all miners suffering from this condition can be quickly and adequately compensated.

Gala 2008

Photo: Keith Potts



Vibration White Finger

We informed our members in the last issue of the Durham Miner that the DWP had agreed that sensorial loss and tingling of the fingers would now be taken into account when determining the degree of disablement for claimants suffering from VWF. We have now been informed that the DWP are now saying that they will only take this into consideration if the sensorial loss or the tingling of the fingers is continuous.

This means that members wishing to have a previous assessment reviewed can only do so if they meet these new conditions.

What is Osteoarthritis ?

Osteoarthritis develops when changes in cartilage (soft tissue that protects the bone surface) occur that affect how joints work.

1. Cartilage becomes pitted, rough and brittle
2. Underlying bone thickens and broadens to reduce load on cartilage
3. Bony outgrowths form at the outer edges of the joint, making it look knobbly
4. Synovial membrane and joint capsule thicken, and space inside the joint narrows
5. Joints stiffen and become painful to move and sometimes become inflamed

Sometimes part of the cartilage can break away from the bone leaving the bone ends exposed. These may then rub against each other and the ligaments become strained and weakened. This causes a lot of pain and changes the shape of the joint.

Carbon Capture The Way Forward

Dave Hopper



Dave Hopper

The Labour government have announced the building of four new coal fired power stations fitted with carbon capture techniques — this is a concept for which the NUM has been campaigning for the last three decades.

As old coal-fired power stations become obsolete and nuclear power stations now long past their sell-by-date are decommissioned, the only way to plug the energy gap in the next ten years is to build coal-fired power stations. After years of prevarication the government has at last accepted this conclusion

The environmentalist may object but coal will be burned on a world scale for the foreseeable future. No amount of protest is going to prevent this happening because there is no other viable alternative. Since burning coal is a major cause of global warming then the development of clean coal technology must be a made a priority.

Even the President of the USA, a country which has for decades denied the concept of global warming, is now championing the cause of carbon capture. Obama has correctly concluded that the country who masters this technique will have a huge commercial advantage in supplying the world with carbon-capture power stations.

The energy policy of any country has to be a long-term strategy which takes into consideration the world reserves of energy and not just the ebb and

flow of the market. Thatcher's energy policy, however, was something different. It was driven by her desire to destroy the strength of the National Union of Mineworkers and devastate mining communities for purely ideological reasons. In doing so the Tories abandoned the enormous wealth which lies undisturbed below our land and as a result Britain is importing nearly 50m tons of coal the cost of which doubled in 2008. The price of this folly was paid by working class families 5 million of whom were plunged into fuel poverty.

It is time a new energy strategy was developed which is not determined by the short-term considerations but the long term needs of people. There is now a real economic argument for the opening of new mines using new mining techniques which will re-establish an industrial base producing jobs for now and the future.

When Wearmouth colliery closed in 1994, 195 million tons of coal was abandoned a large proportion of which was in seams 20 ft thick. As the developing world demands more energy the value of these reserves will increase. We call upon the government to engage in a feasibility study with a view to drifting into this wealth which was abandoned in 1994.

If the government can find trillions of pounds to rescue bankers who have never created any real wealth in their lives then surely they can find a way to create lasting jobs for future generations.

What is Carbon Capture?

Carbon Capture Technology (CCT) involves several stages.

First the coal is burnt in a more efficient manner by enriching the oxygen content of the air. The flue gasses are then passed through solvents to remove the carbon-di-oxide (CO₂) and other harmful gases. This is known as scrubbing.

The third stage is to liquefy these gasses and to pump them into the strata in former mines or gas and oil fields.

The technique of introducing CO₂ into gas fields in order to force out more natural gas is already well advanced.

Scientists believe that in some strata the CO₂ will combine with some forms of rock to form carbonates which will fix the CO₂ for thousands of years.

Much research is still needed so we have no time to lose.

Looking Back

The Battle of Orgreave June 18 1984



On June 18, 1984, a warm summer's day, 8,000 police armed to the teeth with batons and riot shields faced 8,000 miners wearing trainers and jeans. Throughout the morning groups of mounted police charged into the pickets wielding batons and cracking heads.

At midday the whole body of police charged at the miners in what must be the worst display of police violence ever seen in Britain. There were many bloody injuries.

Yes it really did happen!

Looking Back

North East Area NUM 25th Anniversary Reunion



Reunion Photographs above by Keith Potts



The North East Area NUM has assembled an impressive display of photographs of the Miners strike 1984/85. The display was first shown at the Shaw Theatre London during the production of the play *Maggies End*. It is due to be exhibited on the Race Course during the Durham Miners Gala on July 11.

June 1984

This is a strike which should never have happened. It is based on a very serious misrepresentation and distortion of the facts. At great financial cost miners have supported the strike for fourteen weeks because your leaders have told you this.....

That the Coal Board is out to butcher the coal industry. That we plan to do away with 70,000 jobs.

That we plan to close down 86 pits, leaving only 100 working collieries.

IF THESE THINGS WERE TRUE I WOULD NOT BLAME MINERS FOR GETTING ANGRY OR FOR BEING DEEPLY WORRIED. BUT THESE THINGS ARE ABSOLUTELY UNTRUE. I STATE THAT CATEGORICALLY AND SOLEMNLY. YOU HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY MISLED.

**Ian MacGregor
Chairman of Coal Board**

Ian MacGregor died of a heart attack in April 1998. Thatcher said in her tribute to him, 'He had a tremendous way of putting things'.

Yes it's called lying through your teeth!



Kosova Says Thank You to Durham Miners

Alan Johnson, DMA executive member and Dave Temple, Editor of the Durham Miner, attended the twentieth anniversary of the Mitrovica Miners' strike which marked the start of the last stage of Kosova's long fight for independence.

In 1989 the Serbian dominated Government of Yugoslavia withdrew the autonomous status of Kosova causing the miners of the Trepca company to strike and march on the capital, Pristina, in protest. Thousands joined this demonstration and the Serb authorities retaliated with a wave of violence, shooting 14 miners and jailing hundreds. Both management and miners were sacked and in the weeks that followed Kosova was occupied by Serbian state forces and almost the entire ethnic Albanian population of Kosova, which comprises 90% of the population, were sacked for refusing to swear an oath of loyalty to Serbia.

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT

On hearing of the brutal repression of the Trepca miners a message of support was sent from the Murton Mechanics lodge of the NUM and although this letter was intercepted by the Serb police contact was finally established and a delegation of two Kosovan miners came to Durham in December 1990 as guests of the NE Area NUM.

On a visit to Parliament these miners warned that if the rights of the Kosovan people were denied then Yugoslavia would fall apart with bloody consequence for the whole of Europe. These words were sadly prophetic. By 1992 the federation was falling apart and war raged throughout the provinces of the former Yugoslavia.



Lead miners at rally marking the 20th anniversary of their 1989 strike against Milosevic

At first it appeared that Kosova would escape the worst excesses of ethnic cleansing. Then in 1998 the Serb army and paramilitary forces began to burn and destroy villages forcing the population into the larger towns. Many escaped over the border to find refuge in other European countries.

MINERS HOUSES BURNED

It was under these circumstances that contact was again renewed with the Durham NUM and Dave Temple visited Kosova in December 1989 and witnessed the devastation. He toured the mining region of Mitrovica speaking to miners whose houses had been burned and taking statements from many widows and orphans whose husbands and fathers had been shot by the Serb paramilitary organisations.

After giving a report to the Durham

NUM the union immediately set up The Kosova Miners' Aid Fund and appealed to the Trade Union Movement to help the people of Kosova.

Recalling that time Dave Guy, President of the NE Area NUM and President of the Kosova Miners Aid Fund said,

'When we heard the eyewitness report of the terrible things that were happening in Kosova we felt we had to do something. At the time we thought we had problems with the pits closing and the union on the verge of bankruptcy but we could not imagine the suffering that the people of Kosova were enduring. Although the aid we sent was just a drop in the ocean compared with what was needed they told us that our efforts gave them hope that they had not been forgotten'.

Internationalt Report

Dave Temple's Speech to Rally

In 1998 I saw the devastation caused by the aggression of the Serbian paramilitaries'.

I saw houses of poor families that had been burnt and shelled.

I spoke to families who had had their loved ones shot.

I saw children educated in schools, with no heating in the middle of winter, by dedicated teachers who were not paid.

I saw doctors who tended the sick with insufficient equipment and medicine.

I spoke with your leader Professor Agani, that dear, gentle, cultured man who was later dragged off a train and shot by the Serb Army and I concluded that this was a nation of extraordinary people.

You have embarked on nationhood after centuries of repression.



Dave Temple addressing rally

The time is not good for nation building. The world economic climate is bleak for us all. But if the spirit of those teachers and doctors I saw in 1998 is still with you. If the courage of the Trepca miners endures. And if the fighting spirit of all those young people who went up into the mountains to defend their communities. If that spirit is still here in Kosova then you will succeed. Long live free Kosova'.



Kosova (Albanian spelling) Kosovo (Serbian spelling) is a small land locked country of 2 million people bordered by Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia. 90% of its people are ethnic Albanian the remainder are Serbs.

For five centuries before 1912 Kosova was ruled by the Ottoman Empire.

In 1912 Balkan War Serbia and Montenegro invaded Kosova in a war of conquest.

Between 1912 — 1920 Kosova was under military occupation

In 1920 Kosova was made part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes which became known as Yugoslavia in 1929.

1945 after the defeat of Germany Socialist Yugoslavia was declared by Marshal Tito creating a federation of six nominally equal republics — Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia.. Kosova was not given equal status and remained a province of Serbia.

In 1974 a new constitution of Yugoslavia made Kosova an autonomous region with its own parliament.

1989 Milosevic dissolved Kosova's parliament and occupied country.

1998 Serbia begin to kill ethnic Albanians and burn and shell their communities.

1999 NATO intervention.

2008 Kosova parliament declared independence and was recognised by 60 countries.

Left: Alan Johnson presenting a miners' safety lamp to the Deputy Prime Minister of Kosova, Hajredin Kuqi.

He explained that the lamp had been down the mine thousands of times keeping miners safe and he hoped it would bring good luck to Kosova. It was inscribed with the words: From the Miners of Durham to the people of Kosova. E Tenebris Lux - After Darkness Light.



George Simpson 1947 -2009

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of George Simpson, member of the NUM North East Area Executive who died of pneumonia on March 9 at the age of 61.

George began his employment as

an apprentice fitter at Brandon Pit House colliery. When Pit House closed in 1968 he transferred to Tursdale workshops where he worked until it closed in 1994.

From an early age George took an interest in the union and in 1974, at the age of 27 he became one of the youngest mechanics to be elected as both a lodge delegate and a secretary. George was a prominent member of the Durham Colliery Mechanics Association for many years serving on the Area Executive Committee on several occasions.

In the aftermath of the 1984/85 strike George had a particularly difficult time when British Coal withdrew recognition from the Tursdale Mechanics Lodge in favour of the scab union. As part of

the fight to win back members and regain recognition the Mechanics Lodge sought leave to join the NUM Durham Area and George became a member of the Miners' executive, a post he held until his untimely death.

After the closure of the workshops George continued to serve the union representing miners at tribunals a job for which he was particularly skilled.

Always popular with his colleagues George was a sociable man who was devoted to his family. He is a great loss to his family, the union and to the community.

He is survived by his wife Beryl, his daughter Leesa, sons Wesley and Warren and grand children Connah, Jorge, Tia and Evan.

Maggies End

The North East Area NUM in conjunction with UNITE, UNISON, RMT and GMB sponsored a 11 day run of the play Maggies End in the Shaw Theatre, London.

The play which was first performed at the Gala Theatre Durham is all about the politics of New Labour. A young and ambitious woman MP is the Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to the Home Secretary with whom she is having an affair and will do anything to advance her carrier.

When Thatcher dies New Labour decides to give her a state funeral which brings the PPS into conflict with her left wing father. Her father is shaken out of the cynical-drink-fuelled stupor into which he has descended to mobilise the masses to disrupt the funeral. What follows is hilarious.

Understandably this play has proved a big hit amongst trade unionists especially miners on the 25th anniversary of the miners' strike.



Durham Miner's Gala

July 11th 2009

speakers

Dennis Skinner MP

Ian Lavery
President NUM

Len McClusky
Assistant General Secretary, UNITE

Matt Wrack
General Secretary FBU

Bob Crow
General Secretary RMT

We are hopeful that Mariela Castro, daughter of Fidel Castro will be speaking this year.