



EPISODE 4 : Taking on the Unions

Introduction : Tick the correct answer :

Thatcher's second term office consisted in

- a) privatizing coal mines
- b) supporting coal production
- c) curbing union powers

The coal miners' strike :



Under the timeline, indicate the moment when the miners' strike started and the moment it came to an end (month and year). Was it during Thatcher's, first, second or third mandate?

Taking stock of the situation. Circle the correct answers :

- back in the 1980s, the coal industry was soaring
- back in the 1980s, the coal industry was in decline and would soon be without a market.
- coal sales were going down.
- coal sales were going up.
- some pit closures had to be planned by the government.
- the government fought against the closure to save miners' jobs.
- the government handled the situation.
- a National Coal Board was created.
- Ian Mc Gregor's plan was to cut the workforce by 2000 and close around 20 pits.
- Mc Gregor's plan was to cut the workforce by 1990 and close around 10 pits.
- A British Trade Unionist leader emerged : Arthur Scargill to oppose these measures.
- A British Trade Unionist leader emerged : Ian Mc Gregor to oppose these measures.
- He decided to organise a lawful strike with ballot (a majority of unionized workers voted for it)
- He decided to organise a strike without ballot, which made the strike illegal / unlawful.

- The strategy was picketing (prevent non unionized workers from crossing the picket line to go to work).
- The strategy was to set local fires to prevent non unionized workers from going to work.
- Margaret Thatcher accused the miners of being the enemy of democracy
- Margaret Thatcher accused the miners of being the enemy of capitalism
- Other strikes were held in the print industry
- Other strikes were led in the brick industry

The story :

The **Wapping dispute** was a significant turning point in the history of the trade union movement and of UK industrial relations. It started on 24 January 1986 when some 6,000 newspaper workers went on strike after negotiation with their employers, News International (chaired by Rupert Murdoch) : they wanted to impose the end of closed shop and no strike agreements inside the company, as well as the use of new technologies for printing. News International had built and clandestinely equipped a new printing plant for all its titles in the London district of Wapping, and when the print unions announced a strike it activated this new plant with the assistance of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union (EETPU).

All things considered (tick the correct answer)

- a) These episodes confirmed Thatcher's reputation as the Iron Lady
- b) These episodes illustrate the government's failure at curbing the power of the Trade Unions

Vocabulary list. Find a definition in English for these terms :

NUM

picketing

pickets

pit closure

closed shop

no strike agreement