'Run with the fox and hunt with the hounds': Managerial Trade-Unionism and the British Association of Colliery Management, 1947–1994

Andrew Perchard and Keith Gildart

> The British Association of Colliery Management was a very British institution in that it seemed to have the freedom both to run with the fox and hunt with the hounds … Although it never really joined in the dispute [1984–85 miners' strike] when it came, it took some getting used to a situation in which people who clearly laid full claim to being representatives of 'management' could, and did, through their union, criticize that management.[1]

Former National Coal Board (NCB) chairman Ian MacGregor's criticism of the British Association of Colliery Management (BACM) reflected the breakdown between the two parties and their distinct outlooks on coal's future in the 1980s. It was indicative of BACM leadership's organizational and occupational locations; BACM was in many ways forged and sustained by nationalization. Many of its members were protective of the

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[1] I. MacGregor with R. Tyler, *The Enemies Within: The Story of the Miners' Strike, 1984–5* (Collins: 1986), p. 151.

nationalized industry, while being occupationally and geographically socialized within coal communities.[2]

This article examines the formation, development and politics of BACM. It explores BACM in relation to R. M. Blackburn's concept of 'unionateness', which proposed seven indicators of trade-union identity. The first three depend on a union's role: in representing members in collective bargaining and protecting their rights; being separate from employers so that it can represent members independently; and willingness to use industrial action.[3] The article also considers how BACM's politics was informed by the changing role and identity of managers who, like colliery deputies and overmen, have been largely neglected in coal industry historiography.[4] It considers debates around the growth of managerial trade-unionism, building on a literature that

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[2] A. Perchard and J. Phillips, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy: Wheelerism and Management of the Nationalized Coal Industry in Scotland', *Contemporary British History* (*CBH*) 25:3 (2011), pp. 387–405.

[3] The remaining points are being registered as a trade union; declaring to be a union; affiliation to the Trades Union Congress (TUC); and affiliation to the Labour Party: R. M. Blackburn, *Union Character and Social Class: A Study of White-collar Unionism* (Batsford: 1967), p. 18.

[4] I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Colliery Managers and Nationalization: The Experience in South Wales', *Business History* 34:4 (1992), pp. 59–78; A. Perchard, *The Mine Management Professions in the Twentieth-Century Scottish Coal Mining Industry* (Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter: 2007).

gradually disappeared as the phenomenon it was studying declined.[5] It questions characterizations of managers and white-collar trade unions.

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[5] B. J. McCormick, 'Managerial Unionism in the Coal Industry', *British Journal of Sociology* (*BJS*) 11:4 (1960), pp. 356–69; G. S. Bain, 'The Growth of White-Collar Unionism in Britain', *British Journal of Industrial Relations* (*BJIR*) 4:3 (1966), pp. 304–55; H. Hartmann, 'Managerial Employees – New Participants in Industrial Relations', *BJIR* 12:2 (1974), pp. 57–65; A. J. Arthurs, 'Managerial Unionism in the Coal, Steel and Electricity Supply Industries' (MA, University of Warwick: 1975); H. Gospel, 'European Managerial Unions: An Early Assessment', *Industrial Relations* 17:3 (1978), pp. 360–71; W. R. Garside and H. F. Gospel, 'Employers and Managers: Their Organizational Structure and Changing Industrial Relations', in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations 1875–1914* (Harvester Press, Brighton: 1982), pp. 99–115; A. J. Arthurs, 'Managerial Trade Unionism', *Journal of Industrial Relations* 25 (1983), pp. 140–52; G. Bamber, *Militant Managers? Managerial Unionism and Industrial Relations* (Gower, Aldershot: 1986); E. Snape and G. Bamber, 'Managerial and Professional Employees: Conceptualising Union Strategies and Structures', *BJIR* 27:1 (1989), pp. 93–110; C. Wrigley, 'From ASSET to ASTMS: An Example of White-Collar Union Growth in the 1960s', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 7 (1999), pp. 57–74; J. Melling, 'Managing the White-Collar Union: Salaried Staff, Trade Union Leadership, and the Politics of Organised Labour in Postwar Britain, *c.* 1950–1968', *International Review of Social History* (*IRSH*) 48 (2003), pp. 245–71; *idem*, 'Leading the White-Collar Union: Clive Jenkins, the Management of Trade-Union Officers, and the Politics of the British Labour Movement', *IRSH* 49 (2004), pp. 71–102.

Specifically, and alongside work by Joseph Melling on the Association of Supervisory Staffs, Executive and Technicians (ASSET), the article interrogates earlier claims by George Bain that white-collar workers were not motivated by social location or occupational characteristics.[6]

Following work by Bob Carter and by Erik Olin Wright, we consider what BACM's politics reveal about coal industry managerial employees' identity. In particular, we deploy Wright's concept of managers as occupying a 'mediated class' position of 'contradictory' locations.[7] MacGregor's observations inadvertently alluded to this. In Wright's words, managers are 'organizational assets' deployed by their employers: 'Professionals and technical employees […] can be seen as capitalistically exploited but skills exploiters. They thus constitute "contradictory locations within exploitation relations".'[8] These 'locations' were noted by Howard Gospel: 'Managers cannot be seen in simple terms as either employers or employees, managers or managed, buyers or sellers of labour. Instead, the majority …, in both the public and private sectors, partake simultaneously of *both* of these functions'.[9]

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[6] G. S. Bain, *The Growth of White-Collar Unionism* (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1970), pp. 180–1; Melling, 'Managing the White-Collar Union', *IRSH*; *idem*, 'Leading the White-Collar Union', *IRSH*.

[7] B. Carter, *Capitalism, Class Conflict and the New Middle Class* (Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1985); E. O. Wright, 'Rethinking, Once Again, the Concept of Class Structure', in J. R. Hall (ed.), *Reworking Class* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY: 1997), pp. 41–72.

[8] *Ibid*., pp. 41, 66.

[9] H. Gospel, 'European Managerial Unions', *Ind. Relns*, pp. 262–3.

We also consider colliery managers' moral economic position within the changing political economy of post-war Britain. As Andrew Sayer observes, 'to some extent, moral–political values regarding economic activities and responsibilities co-evolve with economic systems'.[10] During the era of coal nationalization (1947–94), Britain's political economic order changed. Jim Tomlinson has argued that the 1945–70 period between 1945 and 1970 saw the successful reassertion of the primacy of moral economy over political economy, for the first time since the eighteenth century.[11] The Conservative administrations after 1979 prioritized the market over the moral economy, specifically, in Margaret Thatcher's words, targeting the 'public service ethos'.[12]

The pre-eminent scholar of 'moral economy', Edward Thompson remarked upon this changing context:

When I first published 'The Moral Economy', 'the market' was not flying as high in the ideological firmament as it is today. In the 1970s something called 'modernisation theory' swept through some undefended minds in Western academies, and subsequently the

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[10] A. Sayer, 'Moral Economy and Political Economy', *Studies in Political Economy* 61 (2000), p. 81.

[11] J. Tomlinson, 'Re-inventing the "Moral Economy" in Post-war Britain', *Historical Research* 84 (2011), pp. 356–73.

[12] R. Samuel, *Island Stories Unravelling Britain* (Verso: 1996); J. Tomlinson, 'Mrs Thatcher's Economic Adventurism, 1979–1981, and its Political Consequences', *British Politics* 2 (2007), pp. 3–19.

celebration of 'the market economy' has become triumphal and almost universal.[13]

Within this macro political economic narrative, there was, of course, nuance, historical contingency and complexity. As Tomlinson also noted, Keynesian attitudes remained resolute in some quarters, especially in the public sector.[14]

Yet beneath a commitment to a 'public service ethos' in nationalized industries, initiatives to increase centralized control of management functions created tensions between layers of management.[15] In coal, the imposition of centralized production targets, concentration of production on capital-intensive faces, and the industry's contraction, increased tensions between attempts at a unitary management process and local control (and ultimately the industry's survival based on more moral economic arguments). Within this, collieries were viewed by some managers, and miners, as collective assets upon which occupational communities, and the workforce, relied. Almost

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[13] E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (Penguin: 1993), p. 267; see *idem*, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century', *Past & Present* 50 (1971), pp. 76–136.

[14] J. Tomlinson, *Managing the Economy, Managing the People*: *Narratives of Economic Life in Britain from Beveridge to Brexit* (Oxford University Press: 2017).

[15] Acton Society Trust, *Management under Nationalisation: Studies in Decentralisation* (Acton Society Trust: 1953). T. Strangleman, *Work Identity at the End of the Line? Privatisation and Culture Change in the UK Rail Industry* (Palgrave: 2004), p. 59, observed in British Rail, especially from the 1960s, similar tensions over whether 'management represented a generic practice or one that was dependent on the process in which it was embedded'.

inevitably managers held a range of opinions on nationalization.[16] To a certain degree, these 'moral economic' arguments were associated with generational differences: the early leaders (1947–late 1950s) contrasted with their successors (see later for details).[17] Differing political economic outlooks (for example, between MacGregor and Phillip Weekes, the NCB South Wales Area director in the 1980s) were also shaped by geographical location, background and experience. The space within which BACM operated was also subject to balancing different coalfield traditions. This formed the backdrop to BACM's politics, strategy and tactics.

The wider relevance of a study of BACM is underlined both by the scale and importance of Britain's nationalized coal industry, as well as its professionalization of management and recognition of a managerial union. In the 1950s, the NCB was Europe's largest single employer, with an output almost matching that of the European Coal and Steel Community.[18] Established in 1947 to represent the industry's managerial personnel, BACM was a new experiment in UK industrial relations.

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[16] Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*; J. Phillips, *Collieries, Communities and the Miners' Strike in Scotland, 1984–85* (Manchester University Press: 2012); Perchard and Phillips, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy', *CBH*.

[17] J. Phillips, 'Economic Direction and Generational Change in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Case of the Scottish Coalfields', *English Hisorical Review* (*EHR*) 557 (2017), pp. 885–911.

[18] L. Hannah, 'The Economic Consequences of the State Ownership of Industry, 1945–1990', in R. Floud and D. McCloskey (eds), *The Economic History of Britain since 1700, Vol. 3: 1939 –1992* (Cambridge University Press: 1994), p. 168; M. Chick, *Electricity and Energy Policy in Britain, France and the United States since 1945* (Edward Elgar, Cheltenham: 2007), p. 42.

Nationalization and professionalization of management formed and shaped the union.[19]

Managers have remained largely absent in coal industry literature. At best, they have been a homogenous grouping; at worst, characterized as shady villains or the 'same crew in different jerseys'.[20] In some cases, it was a well-deserved reputation, but a crude characterization of a complex body motivated by a variety of factors:

Their individualistic, pro-employer orientation stemmed from the scattered nature of the coal industry, the small size and heterogeneous nature of the managerial unit at collieries, promotion possibilities which broke down group solidarity and the resistance of the coal-owners to trade unionism among their staffs.[21]

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[19] Snape and Bamber, 'Managerial and Professional Employees', *BJ IR*.

[20] The same point is made by I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Industrial Relationships and Nationalization in the South Wales Coalmining Industry' (Ph.D, University of Cambridge: 1990), p. 341. For example: R. Page Arnot, *A History of the Scottish Miners* (Allen and Unwin: 1955), pp. 278–91; L. Cooney and A. Maxwell, *No More Bings in Benarty: An Account of the Rise and Fall of Mining in the Benarty Area of Fife, and its Influence on the People who Lived There* (Benarty Mining Heritage Group, Ballingry: 1992); H. Francis and D. Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff: 1998; revised edn), pp. 436–7. For exceptions, see Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Colliery Managers and Nationalization', *Bus. Hist.*; Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*; A. Perchard and J. Phillips, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy', *CBH*.

[21] McCormick, 'Managerial Unionism', *BJS*, p. 357.

As Andrew Perchard has illustrated, even prior to nationalization, this characterization requires qualification. Many managerial employees had been isolated (poorly paid and educated, and with low labour market mobility and lacking in social capital), but were increasingly vocal in criticisms of their conditions and how the industry was run by private companies.[22] The paucity of investment in managers' education was raised well into nationalization.[23] And yet, as Barry Supple has argued, the decision to nationalize the industry, resulted, partly, from the 'tension between colliery managers who wished to plough resources into development and directors who were reluctant to find more money or give up available profits.'[24] Nina Fishman claimed that '"progressive" managers' support for radical change … ensured nationalisation was well received by public opinion.'[25]

BACM's importance extends beyond the coal industry. Its members were 'professional functionaries' in the 'responsible society', in which the Labour government placed so much faith and sought to accommodate. They exemplified 'managerial workers, dependent upon organization

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[22] Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*.

[23] National Coal Board (NCB), *Report of the Advisory Committee on Organisation* (NCB: 1955), para. 38.

[24] B. Supple, *The History of the British Coal Industry, Vol. 4. 1913–1946: The Political Economy of Decline* (Clarendon Press: 1987), pp. 403–4.

[25] N. Fishman, 'The Beginning of the Beginning: The National Union of Mineworkers and Nationalisation', in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds), *Miners, Unions and Politics, 1910–47* (Scolar Press, Aldershot: 1996), p. 273.

asset' who have remained 'one of the great mysteries of British history'.[26] If nationalization can be interpreted as a crowning peak for 'the rise of the professional society' – rather than the 'commanding heights' of a socialist vision – it was also fundamental to granting an independent voice to the technocratic expert; by 1980, one-quarter of British managers were union members, of these 60% were in the public sector.[27]

The politics of BACM

Formed in August 1947 – from the merger of the 7,000-strong British Association of Colliery Officials and Staff and the colliery under-managers' association – BACM was by no means the pre-eminent 'experiment' that its president claimed for it.[28]

The Electrical Power Engineers' Association (EPEA) had represented managerial and professional employees in power generation from 1913; and ASSET, organizing managers, higher technicians and professionals in engineering, was recognized by the Engineering Employers' Federation in

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[26] M. Savage, J. Barlow, P. Dickens and T. Fielding, *Property, Bureaucracy and Culture: Middle-class Formation in Contemporary Britain* (Routledge: 1992), p. 49.

[27] Bamber, *Militant Managers?*, pp. 7–8.

[28] BACM, *National News Letter*, 21 January 1948, p. 5, BACM-TEAM offices, Doncaster (now archived at University of Nottingham; McCormick, 'Managerial Unionism', *BJS*, p. 358; Arthurs, 'Managerial Unionism', p. 3.

1944.[29] The emergence of managerial trade-unionism was heavily dependent on employer recognition and union density. It is not surprising that density among managerial employees was highest in the nationalized industries, where a separate voice for managers was enshrined in the formal machinery of arbitration.[30]

Coal industry professionals and managers had long been organized into professional associations – the National Association of Colliery Managers (NACM) (formed 1887) and the Institution of Mining Engineers (1889), among others – but these principally focused on technical matters and safety. Their members included coal owners and agents, alongside colliery managers and under-managers. Nevertheless, NACM attempted (fruitlessly) to negotiate wage claims for managers in the 1920s. Coal owners side-lined NACM and reduced managers' wages after the 1921 miners' lockout. By the 1930s and 1940s, the tensions within NACM were all too visible, and it haemorrhaged members. This helps to explain the enthusiasm among some managers for nationalization and the formation of a new body to represent them over pay and conditions, as well as generational differences.[31]

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[29] Arthurs, 'Managerial Unionism', pp. 2–3; J. Slinn, *Engineers in Power. 75 years of the EPEA* (Lawrence & Wishart: 1989); C. Wrigley, *British Trade Unions since 1933* (Cambridge University Press: 2002), p. 22.

[30] Wrigley, *British Trade Unions*, pp. 18–39; H. Gospel, 'European Managerial Unions', *Ind. Relns*; Snape and Bamber, 'Managerial and Professional Employees', *BJIR*; Bain, *Growth of White-Collar Unionism*.

[31] Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*, pp. 23–135.

Underlying the transformation of management within the industry was a sense that 'moral imperatives', rather than 'simple market advantage', be placed 'at the centre of discussion of what are traditionally thought to be "economic issues"'.[32] Unlike the empty rhetoric of the Mining Association of Great Britain (the coal owners' body before nationalization), which had promised 'to raise the profession of mining engineers to a level at least equal to that of any other scientific and technical profession', the NCB transformed managers' status.[33] Managers saw an immediate improvement in salaries, conditions, and opportunities for professional development. Moreover, they now had an independent voice, distinct from the professional associations. This initiative owed much to the commitment and support of Labour government ministers.[34] The NCB's treatment of managerial employees, which contrasted sharply with the private companies, helps to explain the increasing, if qualified, support among many mine management professionals for nationalization.

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[32] J. Tomlinson, 'Re-inventing the "Moral Economy"', *Hist. Res*., p. 361; N. Tiratsoo and J.Tomlinson, *Industrial Efficiency and State Intervention: Labour 1939–1951* (Routledge: 1993), pp. 44–9, 57, and 111–12.

[33] BACM, *National News Letter* 2 (February 1948), pp. 1 and 4; *ibid*. 6 (August 1948), p. 2; *ibid*. 15 (May 1951), p. 4; Minutes of the BACM, National Joint Council (NJC), 30 November 1958; Q. Outram, 'Class Warriors: The Coal Owners', in J. McIlroy, A. Campbell and K. Gildart (eds), *Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout: The Struggle for Dignity* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff: 2004), p. 117; Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*, pp. 186–203, 402–3.

[34] Minutes of meeting between Major Walton-Brown and Major Anderson, BACM national executive committee (NEC), and Lord Hyndley, Sir Arthur Street, and R. G. C. Cowe, NCB, 23 April 1947; minutes of meeting between BACM and NUM, 5 August 1947, BACM-TEAM Offices, Doncaster.

Managerial identity was also shaped by the NCB's organizational culture. When nationalizing coal, the Labour government drew on different models. Foremost was Herbert Morrison's 1933 plans for socialized transport. He envisaged a public corporation, which 'must be no mere capitalist business', staffed by a board and officers, 'in the splendid tradition of public service, loyalty and incorruptibility in the British Civil Service', who 'must regard themselves as the high custodians of the public interest'.[35] Those managing these corporations should be selected 'primarily on suitable grounds of competence', 'must graduate from within that industry', and embrace public service.[36] 'Socialism', as a Labour Party pamphlet declared, meant 'carrying the managerial revolution to its logical conclusion'. This was to be overseen by a 'progressive and professional' modern management. As both Ross McKibbin and Mike Savage observe, this technocratic vision sold 'socialism' to the middle class, although the class location of mine management professionals remained complex and contestable.[37]

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[35] E. Shinwell, *Conflict without Malice* (Odhams: 1955), pp. 172–3; H. Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport: The Organisation of Socialised Industries with Particular Reference to the London Passenger Transport Bill* (Constable: 1933), pp. 133 and 156–7.

[36] Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport*, pp. 145, 157–60, and 168.

[37] 'Linicus' in the Labour Party's *Vote Labour? Why?* (1945), quoted in Tiratsoo and Tomlinson, *Industrial Efficiency*, p. 49; R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918–1951* (Oxford University Press: 2000), pp. 68–9; Savage, 'Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55', *CBH* 22 (2008), pp.457-476.

Clement Attlee's immediate post-war administrations were committed to the professionalization of management, considered inextricably linked to the modernization of the economy. In part, this was informed by the Anglo-American Productivity Council.[38] Labour ministers and the NCB sought to build an *esprit de corps*, through integrated technical and management education. NCB senior managers were initially enrolled at the Administrative Staff College at Henley, which educated senior civil servants, as well as managers from other nationalized industries and leading British companies, with standards set by the new British Institute of Management.

Colliery managers were educated through the NCB staff college, established in the late 1950s, charged with 'developing and unifying management in the industry'.[39] Education was delivered by NCB staff and university mining departments. This greater professionalization was also prompted from within management, notably by the former chief inspector of mines, NCB board member, and prominent mining engineer, Sir Andrew Bryan, who became BACM's first interim president.[40] Whether this inculcated, as Jonathan and Ruth Winterton detected, a 'managerial unitary philosophy' within the NCB is debatable, given experiences

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[38] Tiratsoo and Tomlinson, *Industrial Efficiency*; A. Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Marketing of Management Science* (Manchester University Press:1987).

[39] J. B. Platt and M. B. Brodie, 'Management in the British Coal Mining Industry and the Rôle of the University Mining Departments', *Management International* 4:2 (1964), p. 37.

[40] Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*, pp. 186–205.

leavened by location, occupation, personal outlook, and generational differences.[41]

The legacy of the role and status of managers in the private industry, as well as opportunities and tensions arising from nationalization, were reflected in the divisions within BACM over managerial functions and status, and affiliation to the Trades Union Congress (TUC). Changing energy policy and the colliery-closure programme saw a shift in BACM politics, including fostering alliances across mining unions. These issues highlighted the contested locations occupied by managers and the 'moral choices' made by them. This shift in culture illustrates the transition from 'staff association' to a managerial 'closed union',[42] reflected in the background, politics and style of BACM's officers.

Its changing politics were evidenced by the contrast between the first (permanent) national president, Major Stanley Walton-Brown (1947–56), and general secretary Major Robin W. Anderson (1947–59), and the later leadership of national president Jim Bullock (1956–69) and general secretary George Tyler (1959–73). Walton-Brown and Anderson were doubtless in Bullock's mind when he observed that colliery managers and mining engineers were 'largely Conservative in outlook' and 'resented

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[41] J. and R. Winterton, 'Production, Politics and Technological Development: British Coal Mining in the Twentieth Century', in J. Melling and A. McKinlay (eds), *Management, Labour and Industrial Politics in Modern Europe: The Quest for Productivity Growth in the Twentieth Century* (Edward Elgar, Cheltenham: 1996), p. 131.

[42] Snape and Bamber, 'Managerial and Professional Employees', *BJIR*, figure 1.

nationalization at its outset'.[43] They embodied this difficult transition from professional association to managerial trade union and the tensions among the mine management professions. As national president of NACM in 1939–40, Walton-Brown had declared that he hoped that the then ongoing statutory plans for amalgamations of colliery companies would not 'disturb the happy relations between individual owners, agents and managers.'[44] This reflected his position as an 'owner-manager' and the distinctions between those and 'employee-managers' under private control, as evidence to the Royal Commission on Safety in Coal Mines (1936–38) and outbursts to the industry periodicals had shown.[45]

In contrast, Bullock and Tyler's tenure marked a watershed in the union's development, coinciding with the growing crisis in the industry as governments looked to other energy sources, the escalating colliery-closure programme, and the national strikes in the early 1970s. Bullock and Tyler laid the foundations for their successors – Charles Alexander, Norman Schofield, Doug Bulmer, and Alan Wilson.

Walton-Brown and Anderson represented a certain type of shareholder-manager who had vested financial interests in the private coal companies and had occupied senior positions. Walton-Brown spent most of his working life in Northumberland where his father had been a senior mining engineer. At the time of nationalization, he was managing-director of the Seghill Colliery Company and had been vice-chairman of the Northumberland Coal Owners' Association. He was also a district and

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[43] BACM, *National News Letter* 55 (June 1961), p. 3.

[44] *Transactions of the National Association of Colliery Managers* 37 (1940), p. 36.

[45] Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*, pp. 30 and 110.

county councillor, magistrate, and president of his local Conservative Association.[46] Walton-Brown and Anderson were neither 'natural' trade-unionists nor enthusiasts for nationalization; they approached their relationship with the NCB with a mixture of private deference and public belligerence. Yet, for all the indignation, in the closed environment of their first meeting with the NCB, BACM had pledged to be a 'very necessary help to the Board', and 'no longer a nuisance'.[47] In essence Walton-Brown and Anderson represented attitudes that continued over from the private industry; their 'contradictory location' was in having to continue as managers within a nationalized industry.

Walton-Brown's views were made clear in public pronouncements. In 1953 he declared: 'In a monopolistic industry, the ideas of a National Coal Board and their managers as employees no longer coincide to the same extent as … under the former regime'.[48] Although some managers agreed, others tentatively embraced nationalization.[49] The dominance of former shareholder-managers, and the entrenched sense of hierarchy among others, had a profound effect on the executive bodies within

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[46] *Mining Engineer* 120 (1960), pp. 157–8; 'Stanley Walton-Brown', North of England Mining Institute: https://mininginstitute.org.uk/about-us/past-presidents-of-the-institute/stanley-walton-brown/ ; J. Bullock, *Them and Us* (Souvenir Press, London: 1972), p. 147.

[47] BACM, NEC, minutes of meeting of Walton-Brown and Anderson (BACM) with Lord Hyndley, Sir Arthur Street and Mr. R. G. C. Cowe (NCB), 23 April 1947.

[48] BACM, *National News Letter* 24 (July 1953), p. 10; BACM, NEC, 20 September 1947.

[49] Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Colliery Managers', *Bus. Hist.*

BACM. Tensions increased between the 'mining groups' (colliery managers, mining engineers and senior production officials) and allied mining professionals (mining electrical and mechanical engineers, safety officers, and mines surveyors) over the dominance of the national executive and the national joint council (NJC). As late as 1975, three of BACM's nine vocational groups, representing half of its membership, were not represented on the twelve-person NJC. In contrast, the 'mining groups', representing 18% of members, held 39% of the seats on the executive and 42% on the NJC.[50] This was reflected at branch level; 'mining groups' dominated the Scottish, Durham, and Northern branches until the 1970s,[51] and inculcated BACM's initial conservatism at national level. The reorganization of managerial functions and the growing confidence among other groups within BACM was to challenge this hegemony.

Much BACM business initially was opposing the replacement of perquisites traditionally offered to managers with a more transparent salary structure and allowances. While the elimination of perquisites (a particular furore arose over Christmas turkeys) saw some loss of earnings in the early 1950s, managerial grades experienced dramatic improvements in pay, conditions, prospects and representation compared to under private ownership.[52] In 1947, the NCB introduced a national

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[50] Arthurs, 'Managerial Unionism', p. 8.

[51] BACM, *National News Letter* 35 (May 1956), p. 6; of BACM, Durham & Northern branch minutes, 1947–1969, AS.ACM (temporary accession code), Tyne & Wear Archives, Newcastle.

[52] Perchard, *Mine Management Professions.*

salary scale for colliery managers ranging between £650 and £1,650 (£24,170–£61,360 at 2017 real prices). After their 1951 settlement, the NCB agreed to a sliding range of £800–£1,250 (£23,880–£37,320 at 2017 real prices) for managers of small collieries and £1,000–£1,650 (£29,860–£49,260) for large. Between 1948 and 1951, under-managers' wages rose from £700–£1,100 to £900–£1,200. [53] This was a legacy of the variation in pay offered by different colliery companies. The Lanarkshire Coal Masters' Association, for example, had fixed colliery managers' wages at £545 in 1942 (£24,140 in 2017 real prices).[54] So Lanarkshire colliery managers would have seen significant pay increases in real terms. Similarly, salaries for south Wales managers increased substantially after nationalization. However, managers at Bickershaw colliery in Lancashire complained that their salaries would be halved by the new scales.[55]

BACM's relationship with the NCB was not aided initially by its attempts in Durham, Yorkshire and Scotland to recruit members of the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS) and the National Unon of Mineworkers (NUM). BACM received a rebuke from NCB chairman Lord Hyndley for 'poaching … of a flagrant kind'.[56] The bitterness of these disagreements was evident from Walton-

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[53] *Ibid*., pp. 402–3.

[54] *Ibid*., pp. 30–1. This includes comparisons of managers wages across the Scottish coalfields and weighed against wages for engineering managers. All historic values have been calculated using: https://www.measuringworth.com/index.php

[55] *Ibid*., p. 403; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Colliery Managers and Nationalisation', *Bus. Hist*., pp. 60–4.

[56] Minutes of BACM NEC, 1 November and 20 December 1947, and 7 June 1950; minutes of meeting between BACM NEC and NCB, 15 February 1949; minutes of

Brown's speech to the 1948 conference: 'there has never been a time when the management and staff were so disgruntled … so ready to talk of industrial action'.[57] His rancour, and capacity for fanciful exaggeration, was still evident in 1955:

It is a far cry back to … 1947 when this Association commenced its task of putting the relationships between the Board and the Union on a firm and proper basis … [W]e were faced with an atmosphere created by the first Board whose conception of the Management Staff dated not merely back to feudal times but even further, perhaps even to the days of Rome, Egypt and Babylon when slaves might be seen but certainly not heard.[58]

Prosecutions of managers under the Coal Mines Act 1911 continued to be contentious. Colliery managers' complaints that they were held legally responsible for accidents, arising from withholding of vital investment to pits, while company agents and directors evaded responsibility, had gained more traction in the 1930s in the aftermath of the 1934 Gresford explosion and inquiry and in evidence to the 1936 Royal Commission, and in the 1939 Valleyfield disaster. The same issues were highlighted over prosecutions of managers after the Castle

BACM, NJC, 15 March 1950; BACM, *National News Letter* 2 (February 1948), p. 2; *ibid*. 25 (November 1953), p. 7.

[57] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Colliery Managers and Nationalization', *Bus*. *Hist*., p. 67.

[58] BACM, *National News Letter* 31 (May 1955), p. 1.

Knockshinnoch disaster in 1950. While the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 introduced further clarification, acknowledging both the role of higher levels of management and the diffusion of management functions, colliery managers and under-managers bore the brunt of the responsibility. The shortcomings and inequities of this became more evident with the productivity drives from the late 1950s.[59]

In the vanguard of the mood for change were Bullock and Tyler, who could scarcely have been more different from their predecessors. Bullock was born into a household of miners. After leaving school aged thirteen, he worked as a miner, junior official, and under-manager, before becoming a colliery manager. He remained a Labour Party supporter, an advocate of nationalization and a committed trade-unionist.[60] Tyler also came from a mining family, left school at fourteen to become an apprentice fitter, and worked for six years underground. He went on to study mining, when he discovered an interest in trade-unionism and social sciences, which he pursued at Nottingham and Oxford universities. During the 1930s and 1940s, Tyler worked with the South Wales Miners' Federation, organizing holiday camps for unemployed miners. From 1947

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[59] Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*, pp. 95, 108, 265–333; S. Williamson, *Gresford: The Anatomy of a Disaster* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool: 1999).

[60] Bullock was a well-practised performer who sought to justify the contradictions in his own behaviour; claiming to be a socialist while becoming a major landowner. See 'Jim Bullock: Miner Extraordinary' (1969), https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-jim-bullock-miner-extraordinary-1969-online . Bullock, *Them and Us*, pp. 132–44, and 150; BACM, *National News Letter* 66 (March 1964), p. 3.

he held numerous posts around the country for BACM.[61] Their

backgrounds were important in recommending them to many managers.

As one former Scottish BACM official recalled: 'Bullock was the best leader

that BACM have ever had, and, yes, there was a change in the attitude of

the management union … He came up, as you'll know, from the pit …

Brother, father, uncle Tom Cobley and all were miners. He was from a

mining village and he was a hands-on man.'[62]

Bullock and Tyler forged a distinct and independent agenda for

BACM; one that they argued was in keeping with their role as trade-

unionists. They highlighted the double standards implicit in the

government's granting of increases in salaries for board members while

urging wage restraint from the mining unions.[63] Breaking with Walton-

Brown and Anderson they were vocal in criticizing the failure of

governments to alleviate the distress from the industry's contraction and

to develop a robust national fuel policy, and they worked with the NUM

and NACODS to lobby against closures in the 1960s.[64] This strategy

found favour, coinciding with a 39% growth in BACM membership from

around 12,000 in 1956 to a peak of 16,700 in 1964. By the 1970s,

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[61] BACM, *National News Letter* 66 (March 1964), p. 3; *ibid*. 46 (March 1959), p. 10;
Bullock, *Them and Us*, p. 148.

[62] Interview with A. Moore conducted by A. Perchard, Bo'ness, West Lothian, 12
March 2004.

[63] BACM, NEC, 15 January 1959; BACM, *National News Letter* 54 (March 1961), p.
4; *ibid*. 55 (June 1961), p. 1.

[64] BACM, NEC, 30 January 1962; BACM, *National News Letter* 70 (March 1965), p.
2; *ibid*. 71 (June 1965), p. 3; *ibid*. 75 (June 1966), p. 4.

BACM claimed a density of 95% among NCB managerial grades.[65] While

the declining fortunes of some coalfields and the specialization of

management functions (and growth in allied management professions)

in part explain the union's shifting politics, Bullock and Tyler were

praised in 1963 by the Durham branch chairman (a vocal critic): 'a great

tribute should be paid to Mr Bullock … despite the number of closures …

not one single Member had actually been sacked … because of

redundancy'.[66]

Enduring malaise between the NCB and BACM was due to the

perceived lack of consultation over production targets, colliery reviews

and closures. Increasingly, the sense of alienation became visible both

among individual managers and collectively through BACM. The growing

sense among operational managers that they were subject to direction by

national edict festered. Discontent grew over the subjugation of local

managers to unrealistic, nationally devised productivity targets,

victimization, forced early retirement, and redundancies. After NCB

chairman Lord Robens lectured BACM members on the need for

consultation at their 1963 annual conference, locally and nationally anger

mounted over the board's own failure to consult managers.[67] BACM was

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[65] McCormick, 'Managerial Unionism', *BJS*, Table 1; Arthurs, 'Managerial
Unionism', p. 3.

[66] Minutes of joint Durham and Northern branches, BACM, 30 November 1949, 22
April 1958 and 3 April 1963.

[67] Letter from Tyler to Lord Robens (including transcript of Robens's speech to
BACM seventeenth annual delegate conference), 5 June 1963; letter from Bullock to

becoming more stridently independent and particularly critical of government by the 1960s over energy policy and colliery closures. This criticism extended to the government's restriction of compensation for pneumoconiosis sufferers. BACM's campaigning on this issue by the early 1970s reflected a more moral economic viewpoint.[68]

Such a viewpoint, and one able to unite BACM and other mining unions, was criticism of the absence of a well-conceived, long-term energy policy and the colliery closure programme and impact on coalfield communities. Under Sir James Bowman and then Robens, the industry contracted sharply, with 515 collieries closed and 411,200 jobs lost between 1958 and 1971.[69] Despite their association with the colliery-closure programme, Bowman and Robens sought to alleviate the effects. Robens also clashed publicly with Harold Wilson (Labour prime minister) when the latter, convinced of the dawn of the nuclear age and with cheap

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Cyril Roberts, 5 January 1967; BACM, N & C, 1 August 1963, Tyne & Wear Archives.

[68] BACM, *National News Letter* 102 (March 1973), p. 24; A. J. McIvor and R. Johnston, *Miners' Lung: A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining* (Ashgate, Aldershot: 2009), p. 219.

[69] W. Ashworth, *The History of the British Coal Industry, Vol. 5, 1946–1982: The Nationalized Industry* (Oxford University Press: 1986), pp. 237–8, 241–81, and table A.2; G. Tweedale, 'Robens, Alfred, Baron Robens of Woldingham (1910–1999)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/72445 [accessed 31 January 2018]; D. Ezra, 'Bowman, Sir James, first baronet (1898–1978)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30840 [accessed 31 January 2018]

oil supplies, wanted to speed up the industry's contraction. Robens defied ministers by winning a coal contract with the Canadian multinational, Alcan, for its Lynemouth smelter in preference to electricity from the new generation Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors (AGR), subsidized by government. This move pitted coal (representing old Labour) against Wilson's vision of the technocratic 'White Heat' revolution. The Alcan contract won Robens few friends among his erstwhile Labour colleagues but, in marked contrast to his ebullient management style and the 1966 National Power Loading Agreement (NPLA) with the NUM, it won him admiration from managers and BACM.[70]

The effects of the closure programme required a concerted campaign by the mining unions. In response to the loss of its members' jobs, by the early 1960s BACM nationally was collaborating with the other mining unions.[71] The indignation felt in some coalfields was captured by Michael McGahey, future NUM Scottish Area president and national vice-president, in Ayrshire in 1966: 'What we are experiencing is not the normal process of life of closing down exhausted pits but the deliberate,

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[70] Lord Robens was Labour MP, for Wansbeck and then Blyth, 1945–60, parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Fuel and Power, and Minister of Labour and National Service, under Attlee. He was subsequently shadow Foreign Secretary under Hugh Gaitskell. BACM, *National News Letter* 95 (June 1971), p. 7.

[71] BACM, NEC, 15 January and 23 September 1959, 30 January 1962; BACM, *National News Letter* 54 (March 1961), p. 4; *ibid.* 55 (June 1961), pp. 1; *ibid.* 70 (March 1965), p. 2; *ibid.* 71 (June 1965), p. 3; *ibid.* 75 (June 1966), p. 4;

premeditated murder of an industry'. [72]Much the same language was used by Bullock in a 1969 documentary, visiting the Yorkshire mining village of Fryston where he lived and worked: 'Closing a pit … means destroying a whole community … What touches us in mining families is that this destroys something that I don't think will ever be built up again.'[73]

Managers were personally affected by the closures as individuals and as part of occupational communities. By 1958–59, of the seventy managerial staff expected to be affected by the closure of thirty collieries in Scotland, the NCB divisional board could only guarantee posts for twenty-seven. A similar picture emerged in Cumberland and Northumberland: over the same period, most of the mine management staff affected by seven closures were not placed, demoted or given short-term contracts mothballing the collieries. The case of the 39-year-old manager of Blackhill Colliery in Cumberland is indicative. After declaring that 'we do not foresee alternative employment for this man in the immediate future', the divisional board appointed him to salvage work. He finally found a demoted post as an under-manager at Woodhorn Colliery, only for this to be closed in 1961. He was offered another under-manager post after vigorous lobbying by his BACM branch. In another Cumberland case, a divisional board staff manager visited an assistant colliery agent in hospital to tell him that he was to be retired within three months. By September 1959, the Durham divisional board informed BACM that

[72] Quoted in J.. Moore, *Doon Valley Diary: The Critical Decade 1963–72* (J. Moore, Ayr: 1980), p. 36.

[73] 'Jim Bullock: Miner Extraordinary'.

sixteen members under retirement age, some only fifty-five years old, were to be made redundant.

The rancour towards the NCB grew when it was found not to be honouring the 1953 agreement to maintain salary levels of those demoted or transferred because of closures. The refusal by the Minister of Power in 1959 to change superannuation arrangements to make allowances for early retirement inflamed matters, with the Durham and Northumberland branches declaring: 'when men have worked a lifetime in an industry so arduous and demanding as mining, they have a right to expect some restful leisure in their eventide'.[74] Closures sometimes forged a united front between colliery management and the NUM, such as at Woodend in Lanarkshire (which fought a closure threat for three years before succumbing in 1965).[75]

BACM was sharply critical of government policy, including the Fuel Policy White Paper of 1967. In 1970 it called for a national board to co-ordinate energy resources and power supplies. Alexander told delegates at the union's annual conference that 'if there is to be some measure of stability in the power game in this country a strong over-riding body must

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[74] BACM, Scottish branch, 23 January 1959; BACM, Durham & Northumberland branch, 29 December 1958, 23 February, 5 and 12 March, 30 September 1959, 22 June 1961.

[75] Perchard, *Mine Management Professions*, p. 363. For North Wales, see T. Ellis, 'Death of a Colliery', *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society* 21 (1972), pp. 94–108.

control its destiny'.[76] Tyler spoke of the bleak future for coal without planning. He wanted, 'as management, to be able to say honestly that we can guarantee a future to young men coming into the industry'.[77] In the brief respite afforded by a renewed interest in coal, Alexander declared in 1971: 'this means there should be no more closures, with the normal exceptions of the few … shut because of exhaustion of reserves, or unexpected problems like insurmountable geological difficulties'.[78]

Deploying arguments over security of supply (against the backdrop of delays in the UK's much-feted new AGR nuclear-power stations and before the oil shock of 1973), the president restated in June 1972 that BACM was 'opposed to closure' on any other grounds than exhaustion of reserves or insurmountable financial difficulties, arguing that coal's 'value to the Nation must not be assessed in the context of short term and markets, but on the wider aspect of a future realisable asset'.[79] Alexander admonished those in the press who took cheap shots, reminding them of what had been achieved; for example:

It would be fair to say that the recovery of the nation depended upon the strength of the Mining Industry … Notwithstanding some failures, it had achieved this 'in adversity'… against the forces of nature, against the equally perverse forces of government … and

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[76] The Fuel White Paper of 1967 reorientated energy supply from coal to natural gas and nuclear. It signalled an end to support for coal and increased colliery closures. *Coal News*, June 1970

[77] *Coal News*, July 1970

[78] BACM, *National News Letter* 95 (June 1971), p. 2.

[79] *Ibid*. 99 (June 1972), p. 3.

against a public which is notoriously fickle … and is always prepared to drop an established and loyal service in favour of a modern gimmick.[80]

The national strikes of 1972 and 1974, and NUM policy, symbolized rank-and-file discontent, but the change in the NCB's relationship with government also played a part. Derek Ezra, NCB chairman 1971–82 but without Robens's political influence, came under pressure from a confrontational government.[81] Notwithstanding bitterness over picket line conduct in 1972, BACM joined with the NUM and NACODS, in writing to the NCB to demand greater involvement, scrutiny and transparency in the review procedures for colliery closures.[82] Alexander told the 1973 BACM conference:

it ought to be part of the policy of any British Government to conserve any supplies of indigenous fuel over which it had absolute control. I also stated that it should sustain any industry which was actively engaged in the extraction and production of these sources of basic power in view of the situation which was developing in the world energy markets … I emphasised that our energies should be directed towards influencing the political body,

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[80] *Ibid*. 98 (March 1972), p. 1.

[81] J. Phillips, 'The 1972 Miners' Strike: Popular Agency and Industrial Politics in Britain', *CBH* 20 (2006), pp. 187–207; Ashworth, *History*, p. 306.

[82] BACM, *National News Letter* 102 (March 1973), p. 14.

in conjunction with the Board and any of the other Unions in the Industry.[83]

During the 1973–74 NUM overtime ban, and in agreement with the NUM, BACM members undertook extra duties to guard against flooding and fires in pits. While BACM remained critical of the dispute, this was directed equally forcefully at the government. Former general secretary Tyler warned the government to pay attention to miners' concerns: 'we are close enough to the pit head to know that the miners are not kidding'.[84] A year later, the new president, Schofield, urged the government to maintain, 'the right atmosphere in the pits'.[85] The assault on the industry and mining communities – as well as the threat to managerial employees' jobs – coalesced opinion among the mine management professions, able to rally against the 'outsider' threatening their industry. The depth of feeling among managers expressed during the 1984–85 strike belied two decades of tensions. This was an attack not just on the industry (and significantly NCB organizational culture) and coalfield communities, but also on their identity as individuals who had built their careers in coal.

If BACM's preoccupation had initially been 'the protection of members' occupational interests' its tactics shifted markedly under Bullock and Tyler, highlighting generational, as well as locational, differences between them and the early leadership of the union and the contested

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[83] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[84] *The Times*, 15 January 1974.

[85] *Coal News*, June 1975

nature of managers' positions.[86] This was primarily shaped by pragmatism and the experience of operating within the wider post-war arena of industrial relations, as well as the NCB conciliation and arbitration mechanisms. Bullock and Tyler utilized and recognized the limitations of 'discursive confrontation'. They distinguished between the success of (and benefits accrued by) managerial unions that extended their sphere of influence through forums like the TUC and those which foundered in professional isolation.[87] This change reflected the determination of key figures at national and branch levels to transform BACM's outlook. It also reflected a more moral economic viewpoint, which became particularly visible in campaigns to stem the industry's contraction. Changes in UK energy policy and the industrial politics of coal brought Bullock and Tyler's successors into ever more vocal condemnation of government policy and, by the 1980s, into open conflict with MacGregor and the Conservative governments of Thatcher and John Major. BACM's claims to trade-unionism were to be markedly tested by debates over such issues as strike cover and TUC affiliation.

Trade Unionism and Industrial Action

No single issue illustrated the complexities and 'contradictory locations within exploitation relations' of BACM's members as its position over industrial action. BACM remained opposed to striking – though, from the first annual meeting in 1947, it agreed that, in the event of industrial

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[86] Snape and Bamber, 'Managerial and Professional Employees', *BJIR*.

[87] Hartmann, 'Managerial Employees', *BJIR*, p. 270.

action, 'members ought not to do the work of other bodies on strike, except in matters involving the safety of the pit'.[88] This was unsuccessfully challenged in 1952 when the South Western branch wanted the rules amended to 'do everything in their power in the interests of safety [and] keep everything going.'[89] BACM policy was tested during the 1972 strike. The union remained steadfast: 'Members ought not to do the work of strikers except in matters involving the *safety of the pit in its strict and proper sense*' (added emphasis).[90]

BACM sympathized with the NUM and laid the fault at Robens's door for what it perceived to be the wages consequences of the NPLA's introduction in 1966.[91] BACM and the NUM had agreed on safety cover in the event of official industrial action two years previously.[92] Its enforcement at local level led to claims of illegal working and counter-claims of intimidation by pickets, contrary to agreements, concluding with an exchange between NUM general secretary Lawrence Daly and Tyler. Daly wrote to BACM after reports that its members had been flouting the rules over strike cover and producing coal. Tyler rebutted these and questioned the behaviour of pickets to BACM and NACODS members. Tyler couched BACM's position around the long-term survival of pits, although he admitted that finance staff had been breaking the agreement:

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[88] BACM, *National News Letter* 1 (21 January 1948), p. 1.

[89] *Ibid*. 22 (September 1952), p. 2.

[90] *Ibid*. 98 (March 1972), p. 6.

[91] *Ibid*., p. 2.

[92] *Ibid*. 92 (December 1970), p. 10.

Do you really expect our members to allow a pit to be ruined and made

unfit for work when the strike is over? I know that some of your

members have publicly declared that they would prefer that to happen,

rather than to compromise on pay claims … Whatever our members are

doing at pits, they are not producing coal. Any activity they are

undertaking is equally in the interests of your members as ours

because it would be a very hollow victory indeed if, as a result of the

strike, some pits (and it could be many) are never able to open

again.[93]

Alexander, Bullock's successor as national president, also exhibited a

moral economic approach; he justified safety cover while expressing

indignation over pickets' tactics.[94] He concluded with management's

responsibility in a nationalized industry by drawing on the collective

memory of the Second World War: 'Because we are management we are

conscious that a large part of the national asset is being severely

damaged and we accept our responsibility by our attempts to minimise

that damage.'[95]

His reaction captured the conflict in being a manager and a trade-

unionist. Alexander, who had served in the war, used language similar to

many managers of his generation who took issue with what they saw as

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[93] *Ibid*. 98 (March 1972), p. 6.

[94] *Ibid*., pp. 2 and 3.

[95] *Ibid*.

the unruliness of young miners on the picket lines.[96] He was articulating in a proprietorial sense what Morrison's notion of managers as 'custodians of the public interest'; and he also reflected the dislocation that was evident between different generations of miners.[97] What proved even more contentious for BACM was ambiguity over unofficial action, with rules left purposefully vague. This allowed BACM members to be called upon to undertake duties – in the event of unofficial action – beyond those necessary for safety as long as consultation took place between the NCB and BACM, and competency and job demarcation were met. During a pit deputies' strike in the east midlands in 1956, BACM members were instructed to 'help the board as far as possible', but that 'no manager or undermanager should act as a deputy'.

Divisions over BACM's position on industrial action were also evident during a consultation over policy in 1964. While most branches accepted the status quo, the Scottish, Northumberland and Durham, and North Western branches urged a stronger statement. In particular, they expressed concern that 'members should not be strike-breakers'. Alexander, the then Scottish branch secretary, insisted that 'members

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[96] Interview with Alistair Moore; Perchard and Phillips, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy', *CBH*.

[97] For changing attitudes between generations on the picket lines, see M. Pitt, *The World on Our Backs: The Kent Miners and the 1972 Miners' Strike* (Lawrence and Wishart: 1979); V. L. Allen, *The Militancy of British Miners* (Moor Press, Shipley: 1981); Phillips, 'Economic Direction and Generational Change', *EHR*.

should refuse to undertake work other than their normal duties'.[98] In 1966, BACM rules were flouted when engineers were directed to carry out emergency tasks, which they were not qualified to undertake, and without prior consultation. It was the opacity of BACM's position on this that led to a motion at the 1975 conference to clarify the rules to ensure that members could not be directed to maintain production in the event of a strike; this was rejected by a sizeable majority.[99]

The executive had issued a policy in 1964 that any task undertaken should not contravene safety regulations and not be carried out by unqualified officials. Nevertheless, it 'recommended' that administrative staff at area and divisional levels should 'help the Board, taking into account the conditions', while directing members to 'refuse to undertake work other than their normal duties unless consultation has taken place.'[100] During unofficial action at Lynemouth in Northumberland in 1968, the NCB asked BACM for cover. The branch had agreed, on the understanding that it was voluntary, that members not be asked to cover NUM or Colliery Officials and Staff Association (COSA) jobs, and that it be limited to one weekend. All except one of the colliery engineers agreed. At a subsequent meeting 'where the Union's policy had come under fire', some deputy engineers, sympathetic to the NUM claim, entered into a

[98] Minutes of the BACM, N & C branches, 4 October 1956 and 10 March 1964.

[99] BACM, *National News Letter* 76 (September 1966), p. 11; A. Arthurs, 'Management and Managerial Unionism', in K. Thurley and S. Wood (eds), *Industrial Relations and Management Strategy* (Cambridge University Press: 1983), p. 16

[100] BACM, 'Unofficial strikes – BACM Policy', 7 July 1964.

fierce debate with the branch secretary. He responded: 'management officials who accepted management privileges had to accept management responsibilities'.[101] These incidents captured the compromised position BACM found itself in during unofficial action. The failed 1975 attempt to change the policy suggests that the proposers felt morally compelled to challenge a ruling which could be used to direct them to continue production. As the clash over safety cover between BACM Scottish officials and area director Albert Wheeler during the 1984–85 strike illustrated, BACM policy on industrial action continued to be divisive.[102]

BACM's position on this illustrated characteristic tensions for managerial and white-collar unions and the managers' 'contradictory locations'. Policy on strike cover also exposed the union's 'high wire' balancing act to maintain some semblance of unity, with differing stances adopted in different coalfields. (The NUM similarly contended with the varied politics and traditions of the various coalfields.)[103] The moral arguments deployed by the BACM leadership in the early 1970s mirrored those they advanced against premature closures and UK energy policy. Divisions within management over future visions for the industry would be acute after 1979, particularly after MacGregor's appointment in 1983 as NCB chairman.

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[101] BACM, N & C branches, 16 October 1968.

[102] Interview with A. Moore; Arthurs, 'Management and Managerial Unionism', p. 16

[103] For variations, see D. Howell, *The Politics of the NUM: A Lancashire View* (Manchester University Press: 1989); K. Gildart, *The North Wales Miners: A Fragile Unity, 1945–1996* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff: 2001); B. Curtis, *The South Wales Miners: 1964–1985* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff: 2013).

The legacy of Bullock and Tyler was evident also in BACM joining the TUC. Bullock was unequivocal: 'My mind has always been clear that any union that wanted to be a union in spirit as well as in name should join the TUC'.[104] BACM's research officer, G. E. C. Paton, sought to allay fears by stressing the TUC's politically independent nature, as well as the benefits from membership. This was designed to counteract the substantial opposition but also reflected the leadership's concerns not to affect its bargaining position with Conservative governments.[105] BACM did eventually join the TUC, a key characteristic of 'unionateness'. But, as with many other managerial, and white-collar, unions, clearly many members were suspicious of joining a body seen as dominated by unions with clear political affiliations.

Despite support for TUC affiliation from the Scottish, east midlands and London branches, Bullock and Tyler faced robust opposition. In 1964, the Durham and Northumberland branch urged its members to vote against because 'The BACM is an Association which caters for Management Grades and there are other Unions which are not affiliated to the TUC, which, whilst not perhaps being as wholly management in outlook as we are, nevertheless, also cater for senior officials.'[106]

This reflected the conservatism of that branch, with close ties to Walton-Brown, and the contested position of BACM's managers. Paton had tried to address this, adapting the statement of the general

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[104] BACM, *National News Letter* 66 (March 1964), p. 3.

[105] *Ibid.* 55 (June 1961), p. 3; memo from G.E.C. Paton, BACM Research Officer, to Tyler and BACM NEC, 'TUC Affiliation', 5 March 1964.

[106] Letter from BACM D & N committee to members, 28 May 1964.

secretary of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants to its members: 'In the event of the Society's affiliation to the TUC, this would not in the slightest way affect the position of a member of the Executive Class occupying a managerial position, who would continue to adopt a wholly impartial attitude to public issues'. [107] The Durham and Northumberland branch's circular, and the sharp rebuke from Tyler, highlighted regional differences. The vote in September 1964 elicited a low response (37%), with only 37% in favour. The following year, Bullock and Tyler addressed concerns, re-emphasizing the union's outlook and the changing politics of the TUC:

The TUC itself is concentrating increasingly upon economic and social questions and the growing influence of affiliated black-coated unions will help to ensure that in time purely political questions are left to political parties. In the event of affiliation the Society will react to questions as it does now according to how these affect our relationship with the Government and employer.[108]

Bullock and Tyler highlighted benefits of membership –access to corporatist bodies such as the National Economic Development Council – giving BACM a greater voice in the industry's future. One critic accused them of being 'out of touch' with the membership, arguing that affiliation

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[107] Memo to BACM NEC, March 1964.

[108] BACM, *National News Letter* 68 (September 1964), p. 17; *ibid*. 73 (December 1965), p. 13.

would embroil them in debates about Rhodesia and Britain's potential involvement in the Vietnam war.[109]

By the time Bullock and Tyler had stepped down, BACM was still deeply divided over TUC affiliation; a vote in 1970 returned 58% against. By 1975, the majority of the executive supported affiliation. There are a number of explanations for this change of heart: the UK's entry into European Economic Community (in 1973) and the platform that the TUC provided for representing the industry's long-term interest; concerns over energy policy and the future of the industry; and the Conservative government was urging BACM and the First Division Association (representing the senior civil service) to join to 'strengthen the representatives of the TUC' (to counteract the block votes of the manual unions and the left). In 1976 a majority voted in favour (joining in 1977).[110]

BACM's affiliation severely weakened attempts, supported by some Conservative MPs, to create a separate forum for managerial unions. This aimed to forge a Managerial and Professional Group (MPG) bringing together the Association of Managerial and Professional Staffs (AMPS) and the UK Association of Professional Engineers (UKAPE), along with fourteen other unions and associations (including the British Medical Association). The MPG was further weakened when the Steel Industry Managers' Association (SIMA), UKAPE and AMPS all merged into the TUC-affiliated

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[109] *Ibid.* 74 (March 1966), pp. 1–3 and 6.

[110] *Ibid.* 15 (May 1950), pp. 1–2; Arthurs, 'Managerial Unionism', pp. 16–17; *idem*, 'Management and Managerial Unionism', p. 14. Bamber, *Militant Managers?*, pp. 72–3.

Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union. Within the TUC, managers' unions campaigned for a specific section. In the 1980s, BACM, together with the Engineers' and Managers' Association and the British Air Line Pilots' Association, set up a council within the TUC for those unions unaffiliated to the Labour Party. The intention was not simply to promote interests of professional and managerial staff within TUC, but also to share information, lobby government, and encourage other unions to merge with them. In part, as Greg Bamber notes of BACM (and other managerial unions), this was a response to rising costs and falling membership, increasing unemployment, and the anti-union politics of the Conservative government.[111] It also built on discussions already taking place within BACM, and its collaboration with the NUM and NACODS over colliery closures.[112]

The TUC became an important forum for BACM to lobby on government energy policy. This was visible in its attempts to lobby against financial targets within the Coal Industry Act of 1985 (requiring the NCB to break even) – which BACM argued was 'likely to cause further capacity closures and redundancies' – and the Central Electricity Generating Board's policy on ever lower coal prices, as well as review procedures for colliery closures.[113] As the industry contracted so membership fell to 5,640 by 1993 (many of them retirees). In response, BACM created the Technical, Energy and Administrative Management

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[111] Bamber, *Militant Managers?*, pp. 126–7.

[112] For example, BACM, *National News Letter* 92 (December 1970), pp. 28–9.

[113] BACM, *National News Letter* (September 1985), pp. 11 and 15 (by then edition numbers had ceased).

(TEAM) section to create BACM-TEAM (representing managers and engineers in the energy sector).[114]

To foster alliances to lobby for coal and protect the remaining jobs in the industry, BACM-TEAM found itself by the twenty-first century attempting to foster reconciliation between the NUM and the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers. But concerns over factionalism prompted BACM to block Scottish branch attempts to affiliate to the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), both key avenues for lobbying within policy-making circles in Scotland. Though other white-collar unions (including the First Division Association) affiliated to the STUC, BACM never did. This was fraught with wider tensions over the rise of nationalist parties and campaigns for greater decentralization of power in Scotland and Wales, and public debates and dissatisfaction over the so-called 'democratic deficit' (embracing both the labour movement and business interests) by the 1960s and 1970s.[115]

As with contests over cover for strike policy, debates over TUC affiliation reflected battles within the union – chiefly between the 'mining group' and allied professions – as much as the issue at hand. By the 1970s, the pre-eminence enjoyed by colliery managers and mining engineers (though still controlling the NEC and NJC) was being challenged.

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[114] J. B. Smethurst and P. Carter, *Historical Directory of Trade Unions, Vol. 6* (Ashgate: 2009), p. 528.

[115] Perchard, *Mine Management*; J. Phillips, *The Industrial Politics of Devolution: Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s* (Manchester University Press: 2008).

The diffusion of managerial functions also created further tensions. Capturing the changes within the union, Alistair Moore recounted the 'coup' that saw the 'mining group' ousted from its dominant position in the Scottish branch, after which the colliery managers and mining engineers walked out *en masse* in protest: 'Managers always thought … that they should be in charge and that other disciplines were subservient. If you like, they were lesser beings ... "This is our union, you have only pinned yourselves on. Therefore we should be in charge".'[116]

Bullock and Tyler's campaign, carried on by their successors, for TUC affiliation had taken over a decade to succeed. It exposed the deep-seated tensions within BACM between branches and the national leadership, posing the fundamental quandary for managerial unions over whether they were a trade union or a professional association.

Culture clash: BACM, MacGregor, and the road to privatization

MacGregor's appointment as NCB chairman marked a watershed. He had earned a brutal reputation at the British Steel Corporation (BSC) and had developed a ruthless attitude to trade unions and labour from his earliest days as a manager.[117] Even before his appointment, BACM had voiced concerns about the Thatcher administration's management of the

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[116] Interview with A. Moore.

[117] M. W. Kirby, 'MacGregor, Sir Ian Kinloch (1912–1998)', *ODNB*: https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/69687

industry.[118] In May 1983, BACM's president, Schofield, stressed that MacGregor was there (as in BSC) to 'run the industry down'.[119] 'Should it become obvious that his objective is to butcher the coal industry, then the membership of this association will not be with him.'[120] In October, BACM signed an agreement with the NUM and NACODS to offer 'all possible mutual support and assistance to prevent further rundown'.[121]

Animosity between BACM and MacGregor peaked during the 1984–85 strike. This is little commented upon, or understood, in the dispute's literature. By August 1984, NCB industrial relations director Ned Smith later recalled, MacGregor's tactics and utterances were 'bringing to a head a growing sense of fear and discontent, not to say disbelief'.[122] In a meeting, with Jimmy Cowan, NCB deputy chairman, BACM declared that it 'had lost confidence in the Board, in particular … the Office of the Chief

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[118] After studying metallurgy at Glasgow University, followed by a diploma at Royal Technical College (now University of Strathclyde), MacGregor joined his father at the British Aluminium Company's smelter in Kinlochleven in 1935. His confrontational management style was shown when a junior manager at William Beardmore's Parkhead Forge. He then worked for the Ministry of Supply before being sent to North America in 1940. After the war he had a thirty-year career in the US, latterly as chief executive and chairman of AMAX. He was appointed a non-executive director (deputy to chairman Michael Edwardes) of British Leyland in 1977, and chairman of BSC in 1980, halving its workforce. See BACM, *National News Letter* 132 (September 1980), pp. 1–4; *The Times*, 27 December 1980 and 2 May 1981.

[119] *The Times*, 10 May 1983.

[120] *Ibid.*

[121] *Ibid.*, 21 October 1983.

[122] J. and R. Winterton, *Coal, Crisis and Conflict*, p. 216; N. Smith, *The 1984 Miners' Strike: The Actual Account* (Whitstable: 1997).

Executive'.[123] By autumn, BACM was in open conflict with MacGregor. It confirmed that in the event of a breakdown of talks between NACODS and the NCB, and a resulting strike, BACM would not allow its members to cover miners working in defiance of the NUM.[124] In the same month Weekes, NCB South Wales Area director, recorded: 'The man has to go, and go soon.'[125] An NCB insider who had returned to south Wales after stints as deputy director of the NCB staff college and in the east midlands, Weekes was considered fair and a good mining engineer by many, including on the left of the NUM South Wales Area.[126] His opposition to MacGregor owed much to his identification with his 'location' socially and geographically (his native valleys), which needs to be understood in terms of the impact of the closure programme that were felt earlier in south Wales, Scotland, Durham and Northumberland.[127] In November 1984, BACM declared MacGregor's management of the industry a 'disaster': 'that is not the way to run this industry, which is complex and has certain traditions that have to be known and

[123] Smith, *The 1984 Miners' Strike*, pp. 165, 173–4.

[124] *The Times*, 18 October 1984, front page; Smith, *The 1984 Miners' Strike*, p. 174. For the legacy of bitterness among managers, see B. Haslam, *An Industrial Cocktail* (Robert Hale: 2002), pp. 114–15.

[125] Phillip Weekes, 'NCB Diary', 18 October 1984, National Library of Wales.

[126] Weekes's obituary appeared in several newspapers: for example, *Western Mail*, 28 June 2003. For NUM South Wales Area perspectives, see Curtis, *South Wales Miners*, pp. 125, 184. For personal recollections: H. Francis, *History on Our Side: Wales and the 1984–85 Miners' Strike* (Parthian, Swansea: 2009), pp. 41, 44, 46 and 75; Ian Isaacs, *When We Were Miners* (Ken Smith Press: 2010), p. 151

[127] J. Phillips, 'The Meanings of Coal Community in Britain since 1947', *CBH* 32 (2018), pp. 39–59; Perchard, 'Broken Men'.

understood'.[128] In the same month, the NCB public relations director Geoffrey Kirk took early retirement, observing of MacGregor: 'he is unaccustomed to having people questioning his decisions and pointing out consequences'.[129] BACM held a 'torrid meeting with Cowan & MacGregor', with Weekes noting after in his diary, 'I am convinced that this pair of idiots is so inept that it wouldn't be impossible to imagine a *Third* Front being opened', referring to the possibility of BACM joining the strike, alongside the threat of NACODS action.[130] The following month Smith publicly criticized MacGregor's 'balance sheet mentality' to pit closures. In the wake of his departure, *The Times* reported: 'Colleagues of Mr Smith argue privately that his resignation is just the tip of an iceberg of discontent at Hobart House, the board's head office'.[131] He was followed in February 1985 by Paul Glover, director of staff, and Ralph Rawlinson, technical director, leaving the national board with no experienced senior officials.[132]

The gulf between the chairman, and those in the industry's management, was further widened by MacGregor's decisions reached secretly with the government's political advisers, without consulting his colleagues. Whereas in the steel industry, MacGregor had grown accustomed to the qualified support of managers and their union (SIMA),

[128] *The Times*, 5 November 1984.

[129] *Ibid.*, 8 December 1984.

[130] Weekes, 'NCB Diary', 23 October 1984.

[131] *Ibid.*

[132] *The Times*, 9 February 1985.

he and BACM had developed a mutual and visceral dislike.[133] Unlike his

predecessors Ezra and (briefly) Norman Siddall, MacGregor was an

'outsider'. In contrast to MacGregor's close proximity to the Thatcher

government, Ezra had deeply resented the interference of the Heath

government in NCB negotiations with the NUM in the early 1970s.[134]

In Scotland, where one of a number of bullish area directors, Albert

Wheeler, had been installed, managers were divided over the strike.[135] In

the years immediately preceding, Wheeler sought to dismantle existing

colliery-level negotiations and disrupt relationships between operational

management and the NUM. This included replacing 'local' managers with

outsiders, with a brief to sever agreements and enforce the new

managerial prerogatives. At an Edinburgh meeting of mining engineers in

1982, he excoriated them for taking the path of least resistance. Even

before the strike, with an NUM overtime ban – in response to wage claims

and closures – starting in November 1983, Wheeler (unlike his English and

Welsh counterparts) refused to permit BACM members to support surface

cover to allow NACODS members to undertake weekend safety and

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[133] Bamber, *Militant Managers?*, pp. 108, 122.

[134] For Sir Norman Siddall's obituary see *Independent*, 4 March 2002; interview with Derek Ezra quoted in R. Darlington and D. Lyddon, *Glorious Summer: Class Struggle in Britain 1972* (Bookmarks: 2001), p. 36; Smith, *The 1984 Miners' Strike*, *passim*. For similar divisions within British railways, see T. Strangleman, *Work Identity at the End of the Line: Privatisation and Culture Change in the UK Rail Industry* (Palgrave: 2004).

[135] The others were Ken Moses, in Wheeler's old area of North Derbyshire; John Northard in North Western; and Albert Tuke covering south Yorkshire. After the strike, Moses and Northard were promoted, and Wheeler moved to Nottinghamshire.

maintenance work. Events reached a climax when BACM Scottish officials requested that their members be allowed to fulfill basic maintenance tasks (to prevent flooding and falls). In an act many viewed as tantamount to criminal negligence of 'community resources' – leading directly to the flooding of the Bogside complex and one of Scotland's largest pits, Polkemmet – Wheeler refused and threatened to demote any BACM member undertaking such tasks. In Scotland, this narrative about 'insider' managers pitted against the 'outsider' Wheeler has been a common theme among both NUM activists and some managers. One retired Scottish BACM official appropriated MacGregor's and Thatcher's characterization of the NUM leadership, to refer to Wheeler as the enemy 'within our ranks'.[136] While suggesting different solutions to save the colliery, this was reflected in BACM's defence of Polmaise 3 and 4 and Wilson's public repudiation of Wheeler's attempts to close the pit at a pit review meeting in March 1984.[137]

Though pursuing a cautious line after the strike – recognizing its lack of power and the poor relations with MacGregor and the government – BACM made its views on closures and government policy clear, with general secretary Wilson declaring:

There will also need to be an acceptance that social factors must be taken into consideration ... My fears stem principally from the external forces which I am sure from past experience can have such an impact

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[136] Phillips and Perchard, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy', *CBH*, p. 398.

[137] Note of public appeal meeting on Polmaise colliery, 14 March 1984. NUM offices, Barnsley.

upon the industry. I refer to political philosophy and voices are already being raised in certain quarters suggesting more decentralisation and the privatisation of parts, if not all, of the coal industry.[138]

Wilson lamented the exclusive focus exclusively on the strike's 'staggering financial cost [which] takes no account of the human cost – the legacy of bitterness, estranged families, broken homes, the lingering acrimony and the deep divisions within the NUM'.[139] With a membership reluctant to strike, BACM had been peripheralized in negotiations with the NCB under MacGregor. During the dispute, managers occupied differing positions, some (such as MacGregor, Wheeler, Ken Moses and John Northard) ruthlessly pursuing a market logic, with others (most prominently Weekes) attempting to defend the 'collective resources' of the industry for mining communities and the nation couched in 'moral economic' arguments and a 'local Keynesianism'.

With the formation of the British Coal Corporation in 1987, BACM, in alliance with other mining unions, focused on resisting, and then mitigating the effects of, the breakup of the nationalized industry and further closures. It was afforded some support by the House of Commons Select Committee's report on energy (1991). This highlighted the gross disparities in funding awarded to the nuclear industry over coal in crucial areas such as research and development (Department of Energy support for nuclear was 65% of R&D budgets compared to 2% to

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[138] BACM, *National News Letter* (September 1985), p. 5.

[139] *Ibid.*

the latter) and concluded that the market could not be relied upon for energy security.[140]

Responding to news announcing the further contraction of the industry in September 1991, BACM 'made it clear that whoever is thinking of such a strategy should not expect the management staff of the industry to co-operate in their own suicide'.[141] It placed a motion before the TUC in 1991, including a pledge that the Congress support 'maintenance of a substantial British deep-mining coal industry', and pledge to 'have no confidence in any government that turns its back on coal'.[142] Ultimately the union's officers recognized the unrelenting political direction – given the earlier privatizations of British Gas, Britoil, BP, the regional electricity companies, and, in March 1991, the power generators PowerGen and National Power. BACM commented on an Adam Smith Institute conference on privatization attended by accountants, economists, corporate finance and lawyers: 'My, how the vultures are circling'.[143]

In response to the government's selection of Rothschild to report on the future of the industry, and the leaking of the document's dismal outlook to selected news outlets in September, BACM president Bulmer

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[140] House of Commons Select Committee on Energy, Third Report (1991).

[141] BACM, *National News Letter* (September 1991), pp. 4, 10–11.

[142] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[143] A neoliberal think-tank, the Adam Smith Institute, was influential in Conservative policy on privatization. *Ibid.*, p. 5; D. Parker, *The Official History of Privatisation, Vol. 1: The Formative Years, 1970–1987* (Routledge: 2016); *The Official History of Privatisation, Vol. 2: Popular Capitalism, 1987–1997* (Routledge: 2016).

was unequivocal: 'These reports were commissioned by the Government as it wishes to privatise the industry'.[144] Further, 'The issue of privatisation has been overshadowed by the emergence of doubts over our continued existence.'[145] He took a sideswipe at the intellectual apostle of privatization, the Institute of Economic Affairs economist, Stephen Littlechild, over the timing of electricity contracts and for privatization.[146] In December 1992, Bulmer concluded:

> the Government's underlying policy objective for coal has for a long time been to break the power of the NUM and to demonstrate the failure of public ownership. With its newly established reverse Midas touch [the recession of 1991–92] this objective has failed on both accounts … From a national interest point of view, the policies pursued … have been negative regarding the coal industry. The scale of inequality of treatment is such that the Government should be required to demonstrate clearly why it took the decisions that it did. Long term strategic considerations seem to have been of no account.[147]

What Bulmer, BACM and the other mining unions were witnessing (in a, by then, well-practised way) was the systematic discrediting of the

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[144] BACM, *National News Letter* (September 1991), p. 2.

[145] *Ibid.*

[146] Formerly an economics professor and member of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, Stephen Littlechild was the chief architect of the deregulation of UK energy markets. He was UK energy regulator, 1989–98. BACM, *National News Letter* (March 1992), p. 2.

[147] BACM, *National News Letter* (December 1992), p. 2.

industry and the dismantling of public-owned power generation and supply. Meanwhile, the mood in the coalfields, among managers (as with miners and deputies) was grim; the BACM branch secretary covering Scotland, the north-east of England and Yorkshire, reported of British Coal's decision to suspend the colliery-review procedures in September 1992: 'At any other time, or in different circumstances, it would be pleasing to report … but I suspect that this is just the calm before the storm – or even before a hurricane.'[148] Bill Marshall, a deputy manager, and between 1988 and 1991 a BACM Scottish branch committee member, remembers that going into work was like going into a 'penitentiary'.[149]

BACM and the other mining unions organized lobbies, demonstrations and gained widespread support in their criticisms of the 1992 colliery-closure programme. While acknowledging the 'gratifying' but belated 'wave of public, media and political support' and its effect in giving the industry a brief stay, BACM noted the inexorable moves to contract and privatize the industry: 'all this is simply going through the motions in order to satisfy legislative and political requirements'.[150] BACM had become a strident defender of nationalization and indeed a vocal critic of Conservative plans for the industry after 1979 – hardly surprising given the background of many managers, hailing from mining families

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[148] *Ibid.* (September 1992), p. 21; D. Miller and W. Dinan, 'The Rise of the PR Industry in Britain, 1979–98', *European Journal of Communication* 15:1 (2000), pp. 5–35.

[149] Bill Marshall, interview with Andrew Perchard, Kirkcaldy, Fife, 21 April 2004; BACM, *National News Letter* (September 1991), p. 25.

[150] BACM, *National News Letter* (December 1992), p. 5.

and communities and starting working lives as miners.[151] Nationalization afforded managers tremendous individual opportunities and a collective voice. BACM continued to represent them through the final phase of colliery closures but in 2014 members voted overwhelmingly to join the Prospect trade union.

Conclusion: reluctant trade-unionists

BACM's actions, and those of individual managers, demonstrate a more complicated position and range of opinions than portrayed in much of the literature. The union's position from the 1970s was characteristic of that uncertainty. While the state acted as midwife to managerial unionism, frustration over centralized control and the industry's contraction from the late 1950s significantly increased recruitment to BACM. It was transformed from a conservative staff association and reluctant partner in nationalization, as epitomized by its first national leaders, to an independent managerial trade union, as represented by Bullock and Tyler. From the 1970s, and especially the 1980s and 1990s, BACM's leadership had to contend with the national strikes of 1972, 1974, and 1984–85, and the assault on the industry's future and nationalization. This was shown by the confrontations with MacGregor. There was also considerable

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[151] There are no comprehensive surveys of colliery managers' social background, but nearly all of Perchard's and Zweiniger-Bargielowska's respondents fitted this background (and confirmed this for many fellow managers), as did the main protagonists during the 1984–85 strike. See also Bullock's and Tom Ellis' memoirs.

tension between mining engineers and other BACM sections. In most respects, BACM fitted Blackburn's model of 'unionateness' but managers (and BACM) occupied multiple 'contradictory' locations of exploitation.

Part of the challenge for Bullock, Tyler and their successors – as demonstrated over strike cover and TUC affiliation – was in managing sectional interests and branches, experiencing contraction and growth, against the UK's shifting political economy of energy. Ultimately, BACM, the NUM and NACODS found common interest over the industry's survival in a hostile environment. Some managers demonstrated a moral economic position in their commitment to the industry, and recognition of coalfield communities' reliance on it for survival – collieries as collective resources upon which an occupational civilization relied. In part these differences reflected generational factors, social background and geographical location.

BACM's actions in the 1980s and 1990s reflected the contested position that managers occupied in the nationalized British coal industry, when the fabric of mining communities was under threat. Notwithstanding the disappearance of the 'village pit', managers were still likely to be drawn from coalfield communities and have worked as miners. MacGregor, the aggressive outsider with no feel for the industry, was assaulting an industry and culture that they were drawn from and to which they had devoted their careers. Such responses call into question Brian McCormick's early suggestion that managers unquestionably remained wedded to their employers and Bain's view that managerial employees were unaffected by social location or occupational identity. The divisions among managers themselves reflected the ruptures in the moral

economy of the coalfields.[152] BACM's position was a barometer of those contested and 'contradictory' locations; in this respect, the 'outsider' MacGregor recognized that.

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[152] Perchard and Phillips, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy', *CBH*; Phillips, *Collieries, Communities*.