

ORGREAVE RESOLUTION:
DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2016

Most members will be aware of events that unfolded during picketing at the Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire on 18 June 1984 during the year-long Miners' Strike – a single event that had a dreadful impact on the lives of many miners and their families across Britain, including here in County Durham.

95 miners were arrested on trumped-up charges and, although all subsequent trials collapsed amid allegations of police collusion, many suffered months of psychological trauma at the prospect of facing lengthy jail terms – in many cases of life imprisonment if found guilty. This was in addition to the physical beatings meted out to picketing miners dressed in summer clothes by police, many with riot gear, batons and shields and on horseback.

However, perhaps the most disturbing outcome of that day's events was the effect it had on the manner of policing at subsequent events.

Without effective controls police clearly came to believe that they could act with impunity. This became instilled in the public conscience and came to a head with tragic consequences at Hillsborough football stadium in April 1989 when 96 football supporters died in entirely avoidable circumstances. The culpability of South Yorkshire police, alongside proven incidents of police collusion in blaming fans for the tragedy, was confirmed in the findings of an inquiry announced in April this year into policing tactics at Hillsborough.

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign was set up to lead calls for a public inquiry into events that took place at Orgreave, including methods used by South Yorkshire police during and after the event which included wrongful arrest, false imprisonment and false prosecution.

Last week, on 13 September 2016, representatives from the OTJC met with the Home secretary Amber Rudd to press for a full public inquiry. Following the meeting the media widely reported that the Home secretary was indeed minded to call an inquiry. However, reports in the press earlier this week appear to backtrack on claims that a full public inquiry was about to be announced. This prevarication by the Government is extremely disappointing, especially when hopes had been raised so high.

With that in mind surely the time is now right to show solidarity with the OTJC and join calls for a public inquiry into policing tactics used at Orgreave, perhaps similar in

structure to the Independent Panel established to investigate the tragic events at Hillsborough.

Natural justice demands that the police are held accountable for their actions on that day, and that every effort is made to ensure that heavy-handed policing remains an unfortunate anomaly of the past, a shameful stain on the record of the South Yorkshire police force. Crucially, political accountability must also be at the top of the agenda.

From recent media reports the Government appears to believe that a full inquiry would take too long and would be too costly. I don't believe a timescale can be put on police accountability, or that a price tag can be put on securing justice for so many men unjustly demonised for simply playing their part in this particular episode of the year-long struggle for jobs and communities.

**Cllr Rob Crute
Blackhall Division
Durham County Council**

Wednesday 21 September 2016