



Bristol Radical History Group

<http://www.brh.org.uk/site/>

Pamphlet #29, Coal On The One Hand Men On The Other: The Forest of Dean Miners' Association and the First World War 1910 - 1920, by Ian Wright

This pamphlet examines the relationship between the Forest of Dean coal miners and the government during the First World War. It considers how the government sought to use the machinery of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) to pursue its war aims by encouraging the miners to commit to the war effort in the mines and by volunteering to fight at the front. It describes how this was resisted in the Forest of Dean and how dissent was managed within the miners' union.

The following resolutions were passed at a meeting of Forest of Dean Miners at Speech House in August 1917:

“That we, the Forest of Dean Miners, enter our most emphatic protest against the agent for committing us to the comb-out scheme before first of

all ascertaining the view of the miners of the Forest of Dean”.

“That we, the Forest of Dean miners, enter our most emphatic protest against the comb-out scheme which we entirely repudiate, having regard to the fact that we were never consulted.”

“That we, the Forest of Dean miners, call upon the various Trade Unions of this country to take the necessary steps with the view to ascertaining the views of the workers of all countries to negotiate an immediate an honourable peace.”

The miners held the meeting in protest at their agent's support for the conscription of miners (comb-out scheme). The pamphlet discusses conflicts within the Forest of Dean Miners' Association in the years leading up to this meeting and how it impacted on the development of the Association afterwards.