



"The whole campaign was, mate, we weren't talking about how much money we were going to get when we finished. We were talking about our jobs ... They've conned us out of the pit mate, and as far as I'm concerned we should have still been in there."

However, there still appeared to be some miscommunication between the officials and the underground strikers, as in this scene. Were you ever tempted to discuss this further in the film?

I never got to the bottom of it. The unions denied there had been any misunderstandings and the men didn't want to talk about it. Yet it's very clear in this scene that they are annoyed at being "conned out of the pit". They apparently genuinely believed that the Coal Tribunal would still hear their case for a moratorium on retrenchments.

You could have thrown up the questions on the screen and pointed the accusing finger.

I think in this instance that the ambiguity is a good thing. It will make the film a talking point, particularly for audiences of shop stewards. It should clearly illustrate the problems of communication between leadership and rank and file in situations where people are under great stress to make decisions.



"You work here, mate. Do you? Do you only except decisions when they go your way?"

I always thought you should have dropped this scene because it is the kind of scene that commercial television stations, or television news, would love to be able to run because it is possible to paint the workers as intimidating a more or less innocent member of the public. This guy is a representation of a member of the public, there he is in his suit and tie on his way to work and there are these guys with their arms seemingly folded in aggressive positions following him down a blind alley?

Viewed outside the context that this scene is located in I would agree with you. However, the average viewer, who is made to identify with the plight of the striking workers by the film, interprets this scene as the workers being demoralised in the face of an intractable company. That sense of demoralisation I particularly agonised over in the cutting room — yet to have left it out would have been dishonest.

What are Will and Ngaire doing now?

They are both involved in relationships with different people. During the early part of the separation, Will took the whole thing particularly badly — even put himself under hypnosis to get over the pain. Ngaire, however, seemed to develop as a much more independent, self assured person. Whatever ill feeling there was between

Will and Ngaire seemed to pass quickly though. At the film's opening in Wollongong in July the four of them sat together looking at the film.



"No matter what happens I'll manage somehow. I'll make sure that the kids are alright and I'm alright, but there's no way you're getting me out of here. This is home and this is where I'm going to stay."



Coal Dust

Where does that footage come from?
Eddie Allison's film *Coal dust*. It was made in 1947 about the anti dust campaign.

Coal dust is a work of real skill. It should be seen. Very few people have seen it in recent years. Only one copy survives in the archive.



"I'd love to be able to stand in front of you and say: 'don't worry, go home. By my action I'll save the 363 jobs' ... but I can't."

If you are looking at the framing of the two shots of Hawke and the other politician addressing the miners in the previous black and white frame, they are almost sitting in the same spot in relation to the frame. Why didn't you cut between them?
We didn't have Hawke in sync. It was a cutting problem.

You could have put his voice over the archival material.

I can't remember why we didn't do it. I think the reason was to do with the music where it finished and ended — it had to cover that whole sequence, otherwise it would have felt rhythmically unbalanced. One of the hardest problems we had was to try and work out how to tie up various elements tangential to the strike but that were important to the film; the future of Wollongong, the role of new technology in coalmining, the idea of history repeating itself, etc. Music was the only way to link these separate, yet interconnected ideas. The result is not unlike the montage at the start of the film.

Did you consider going into more detail about the international political economy that was constructing the situation?

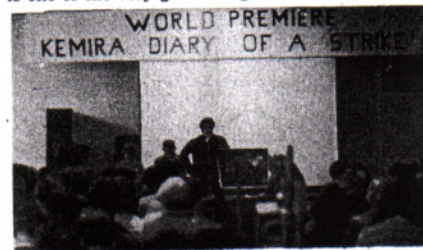
I certainly wanted to. But we were careful not to impose our own analysis. We wanted to bring out the point raised in discussion amongst the rank and file. To do otherwise would have looked very patronising, so we waited for an appropriate moment, and one finally came — the demonstration in front of State Parliament House against the Shell Oil Company. The scene clearly states that multinationals are also retrenching workers on grand scale, and that Labor governments are doing very little about it. This forms a natural transition into the historical flashback which suggests that miners have always been suspicious of any one political party having their true interests at stake.

It sounds as if cassette sales are going really well. Is a real model for independent distribution. Is it also helped by the fact that Kemira is oriented so directly to a specific community?

Probably thirty-five copies have been either sold or given away in the Wollongong community since July. It is very effective way of getting people to see it and discuss with others without having to force them to move out of the privacy of their own loungerooms. It is particularly useful for activists like Sally Bowen — she recently invited home the newly formed Coalcliff Mine Women's Auxiliary to show them the film. Coalcliff, the way, is where six hundred miners' jobs are threatened by the latest retrenchments.

It is a very sociological film in that the emphasis placed on systems and structure, which is true of your films, there is a strong sociological perspective I see it as more political than sociological, ok, structure but structures which have some sort of controlling influence.

The film quite obviously takes up a position, locates itself in relation to those structures, it works situation from which it is possible to extrapolate lots of other situations, to the whole situations, which is one of the very good things about the film.



Film's premiere at the Trade Union Centre Wollongong.

Have there been any criticisms made of the film so far that you found particularly insightful or useful? I could have delved deeper into the whole political economy of mining, but I don't consider it a subject this film. The film was first and foremost about a strike and the people involved in it and what happened there. To have gone onto a tangent would have disrupted not only the structure, but the whole feel of the film wanted to make people angry about the amorality companies like BHP and I wanted this anger to stay at people left the theatre. The end montage sequence poses various questions about the role of the Labor Party relation to the multinational ownership of coal resources. A film can only ask questions — it can't lecture. If you the latter, then you ghettoise political films by making them propagandist. I think political film has to be able to reach a wide public to be truly effective — I think the lies in communicating issues by fostering emotive identification rather than propagandising ideas suppose the other thing I could have done was to unmask the identity of the "secret operative" in Parliament House. I'm not sure how I could have handled that.

Whether it was true or not it would have been libellous, and if it was true it would have been illegal. Either way, you could go to jail for five years. What other distribution do you have planned for the film? As well as national screenings, I'm currently organising screenings in mining districts in the north and west of state, as well as in Queensland. I'm also organising on job screenings at Chullora and Clyde railway workshops as well as at Cockatoo and Garden Island Dockyard.

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