

The aim of this paper is to examine the rates of pay for female canteen workers employed by British Coal, and to compare their wages and other conditions of work with male employees. In particular, the paper will attempt to analyse the reasons for the existence and persistence of a large differential of around 10% between female canteen workers and male surface workers, with the former group earning on average 90% of the latter's average income.

In assessing the factors which account for the wage differential

CANTEEN WORKERS' WAGES AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ARRANGEMENTS IN BRITISH COAL

Kathy O'Donnell

School of Business and Economic Studies
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 3JY

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Accordingly, four sets of inter-related issues will be addressed:

- 1) the structure of collective bargaining within the coal industry and the formal and informal relationship between bargaining arrangements for female canteen workers and male miners;
- 2) the empirical evidence on relative pay levels and rates of change for female canteen workers and other employees of British Coal.

The aim of this paper is to examine the rates of pay for female canteen workers employed by British Coal and to compare their wages and other conditions of work with male employees. In particular, the paper will attempt to analyse the reasons for the existence and persistence of a wage differential of around 20% between female canteen workers and male surface workers, with the former group earning on average 80% of the latter's average income.

In assessing the factors which account for the wage differential between female canteen workers and male mineworkers specific attention will be given to the following issues: different arrangements for collective representation and the existence of formal separate bargaining arrangements; the role of external labour market conditions; and the significance of gender in determining relative wage structures and bargaining arrangements.

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- 1) the structure of collective pay bargaining within the coal industry and the formal and informal relationship between bargaining arrangements for female canteen workers and male mineworkers.

- 2) the empirical evidence on relative pay levels and rates of change for female canteen workers and other employees of British Coal.

3) the structure and influence of the external labour market for canteen workers and its relationship to the position of female canteen workers in the employ of British Coal

4) the role of gender in influencing the level of wage differential between female employees and male employees of British Coal.

1. Collective Bargaining Arrangements for Canteen Workers

1.1 The evolution of wage bargaining in the coal industry since nationalisation

On vesting day the National Coal Board (NCB)¹ inherited a vast and complex structure of wages consisting of over 6,000 jobs. In many instances employees performing essentially an identical job were paid different wages, often on the basis of a combination of piece rate and day wage, which were negotiated at both local and national levels.

There was a firm commitment from both the NCB and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), who represented the majority of employees in the industry, to rationalise and improve the wage structure as the minutes of the Joint NCB/NUM Committee on the Wages Structure document clearly. A guiding principle throughout the evolution of a new wage structure was put forward by the NCB in 1952 when it stated that:

'a principle on which both sides might be able to agree, as a principle, was that of 'equal pay for equal

work.' (emphasis added, p.890, Minutes of the Joint NCB/NUM Committee, 2 May 1952).

By the end of 1952, a complete schedule of some 350 occupations performed by daywagemen was drawn up and by 1955 these had been assimilated into 13 occupational grades consisting of 5 underground grades, 5 surface grades and 3 craft grades. A similar exercise for pieceworkers, mainly consisting of underground faceworkers, was completed by 1966 when the National Power Loading Agreement was introduced and implemented in full by 1971.

In addition to daywagemen and piece workers the wage structure of other NCB employees was also reviewed. Notably the weekly paid industrial staff, who prior to nationalisation negotiated locally on an individual basis with employees, were placed into a uniform national wage structure in 1956. Our main concern, the wages and occupational structure of canteen staff, were also subject to major revision.

In 1952 canteen staff were transferred from a joint welfare provision of NCB/NUM employment to the sole employment of the NCB under the Miners' Welfare Act 1952. New employment terms and conditions were imposed unilaterally by the NCB, with wages being linked to the Catering Workers' Act (Industrial Staff) with discretion to pay 25% above the statutory minimum. After the NCB agreed to recognise the NUM as the negotiating body for

canteen staff (Minutes of the 91st Meeting of the Joint National Negotiating Committee (JNNC), 18 November, 1953, p.1271), the NUM proposed that:

1) the lowest male rate be equal to the minimum surface grade rate with higher rates adjusted to the same ratio as previously negotiated by Durham Area NUM

2) the female grade rates be 80% of the male rates canteen staff and to be paid at least 50% above the statutory minimum. (Minutes of the JNNC, 30 April 1953).

The overall aim of these proposals was to introduce a uniform, national pay structure for all NCB canteen staff, inextricably linked to the mineworkers' pay structure and thus incorporated in the 1955 National Daywage Structure.

The NCB rejected this proposal saying that it was unacceptable on the grounds that:

1) 'the policy of the Board was to relate the earnings of ancillary workers to the industry appropriate to them',

2) 'the type of work in canteens differed from colliery work and had more in common with that in canteens in other industries',

3) 'the work was much the same wherever the canteen was located'

4) 'the large proportion of females and the number of part-time employees were features common to canteen

work but quite foreign to mining'. (emphasis added, Minutes of JNNC, 97th Meeting, 16th September, 1954)

From this stand-point the NCB drew up a national agreement for canteen staff which was accepted by the NUM in January 1955 (Minutes of the JNNC, 19 January, 1955, p1507). The resultant agreements, dated 30 April 1955 and 8 December 1955, linked canteen staff's wages to the statutory minimum as laid down by the Industrial and Staff Canteens Undertakings Wages Board (ISCUWB), with the proviso that they be at least 25% above the minimum. Both agreements stressed that they are:

'designed to dissociate the wages and conditions of service of male and female employees from Agreements relating to the coalmining industry'.

Section 2 examines statistically the relationship between canteen staff's wages, ISCUWB level and mineworkers' wages, but at this stage it should be noted that between 1955 and the abolition of the ISCUWB in 1976 the above agreements governed canteen staff wage regulation. In 1977 a national agreement was signed between the NCB and the NUM again dissociating canteen workers from the rest of the coal industry. This agreement was unilaterally terminated by the NCB in 1986.

1.2 The role of gender in the evolution of 'formal' separate bargaining structures for canteen workers

On the basis of these extracts from the minutes of the JNNC meetings (and others), the NCB's rationale for

establishing separate bargaining arrangements and wage agreements for canteen workers from other mineworkers, seems to have been complex. But undoubtedly, a major factor underpinning the NCB's objective was the issue of gender. This can be illustrated by comparing the treatment of canteen workers who were predominantly female and often part-time, and skilled, with craft workers (eg., electricians) who were predominantly male and full-time.

This latter group of NCB employees were included in the 1955 daywage structure and the 1966 NPLA whereas, as we have seen, canteen workers were treated markedly differently. However, the explanations put forward by the NCB for their treatment of canteen staff were equally applicable to craft workers. The latter's type of work differed from other colliery work and had more in common with that of skilled workers in other industries than other mineworkers, and the work was much the same wherever the craft worker was located.

The main differentiating factor between canteen workers and craft workers was (and is) gender. Accordingly, there are considerable grounds for accepting that the issue of gender heavily influenced the policy of the Board to relate the earnings of canteen workers to the external labour market for canteen staff whereas craft workers were incorporated within the structure of wages for mineworkers. There were no technical barriers

which prevented canteen workers from being included within the major revision made to the internal wage structure in the 1950s and 1960s.

1.3 Informal common bargaining structure for canteen workers and mineworkers

The thrust of the previous section is to recognise that formally canteen staff have been dissociated from mineworkers but that the main foundation for this distinction is grounds of gender. As a consequence, as discussed below, the use of separate bargaining structures has driven a wedge of around 20% between canteen workers and male surface workers (grade S6). Notwithstanding this issue, a close examination of the process of bargaining for the two groups of NCB employees reveals that in practice both groups did and do share an informal common bargaining structure. In particular, the following factors indicate the existence of a common bargaining structure:

- 1) level of pay of both groups was negotiated at national level by the NUM. Various minutes of the JNNC Committee show that the same officials for both the NCB and the NUM negotiated and agreed the terms and conditions for mineworkers and canteen staff within the forum of the same meeting.

- 2) On numerous occasions recorded in the above minutes the NCB recognised and even argued for common

treatment of canteen staff and mineworkers. Three examples should suffice.

First, on 18 May 1960 in the JNNC Meeting, the NUM asked for an explanation of the NCB's rejection of their claim for an increase in the pay of colliery canteen workers. The NCB responded by stating that:

'for reasons which they had already given the Board had found it necessary to reject the claim for a wage increase for mineworkers. In the circumstances it would have been inconsistent to have given an increase to canteen workers. (emphasis added, Minutes of the JNNC, 18 May 1960, p.2289).

In its response the NUM argued that :

'the Board appeared to be working on the principle that if increases were given to mineworkers then increases would be given to canteen workers'.

It is difficult not to concur with that conclusion.

Second, in 1959, the NCB offered canteen workers a wage increase with effect from 23rd February, with 6s. awarded to female canteen workers and 7s 6d. to male workers. In the JNNC meeting the NUM noted that the rise of 7s 6d was also awarded to daywagemen in the industry with effect from 1st January 1959 and it requested that the operative dates of the two increases should be the same. The NCB's representatives agreed to pay the awards to the first full week which included 5 January 1959, although they noted that the previous operative date,

viz. 23 February, was the same as agreed by the ISCUWB and was unconnected with the mineworkers' increase. Despite this formal recognition of separate agreements, the NCB acted in awarding the pay increases for both canteen workers and mineworkers from the same start point as if the two groups were in the same bargaining unit.

Three, on 2 May 1972 following the NUM negotiations with the NCB in the light of the Wilberforce Enquiry which led to an extra five days holiday for mineworkers, canteen workers were awarded three days. Again a differential was maintained but a clear, causal relationship between the terms and conditions of mineworkers and canteen workers is apparent. Similar examples from the more recent past also exist. In 1989, for example, Mr Kevin Hunt, Director of Industrial Relations, stated in a letter to the NUM that canteen workers would be able to take their holidays on the same basis as mineworkers.

Hence there was (and is) a clear difference between the formal wording of the separate agreements for canteen workers and mineworkers and the actual practice of wage negotiation and settlement. Conditions of employment for canteen workers did not adhere rigidly to ISCUWB provisions and were at times changed in line with the changing terms and conditions of mineworkers.

3) As in the rest of the industry disputes arising from canteen workers wage regulation could be referred to

a National Joint Council (NJC) made up of members of the JNNC and, if necessary, to independent arbitration.

1.4 The origins of surface worker grade 6: red circle or red herring?

Throughout this paper the wages and conditions of canteen workers have been compared with mineworkers in general and sometimes specifically surface workers, grade 6 (hereafter referred to as S6). As discussed below canteen workers' wage increases have followed closely those of S6 employees, albeit with a differential of around 20%. Hence some discussion is warranted of the origins and composition of the grade S6.

S6 is the lowest manual surface grade and contains within it fifteen job categories ranging from operating machinery to cleaning and general worker duties. The grade S6 was formally agreed between the NCB and the NUM on 3 March 1975 arising from a Joint Working Party Report following the NUM's 1975 pay claim. The NUM argued that a new pay structure was required to recruit any additional manpower and retain the skilled and experience manpower necessary for sustained and higher output. The Joint Working Party agreed that an extra sixth non-craft grade was needed on the surface in order

'to alleviate pressures on the surface and underground minimum rates caused by the policy of 'rolling up' the bottom grades so as to give relatively greater

benefit to the lower paid'. (Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Working Party, 14 January 1975).

Following the establishment of S6 there has been some controversy regarding its composition. For example, in its Grounds of Resistance Paper, the NCB provided an analysis of S6 mineworkers which suggested that employees within the grade are on the whole ex-underground workers who are now performing light work on the surface. The data on S6 workers are presented in Table 1A.

On 31st October 1987 there were 2,715 workers on the S6 grade. Of these some 1726, 63.3% can be categorised as 'career surface' workers, ie., they had never worked underground. The vast majority of this group, 98.7% were not engaged in light work. The remainder, 989 S6 workers (36.4%), had previously worked underground and 74% of these were engaged in light work.

On the basis of Table 1A it is clearly fallacious to argue that the S6 grade as a whole has been 'red circled'. Although there are undoubtedly some instances where ex-underground workers have been assigned the S6 grade and given light work it would be erroneous to categorise the grade as a whole as a 'protection' grade. Indeed it is fairer to say that such an argument is in large part a red herring which detracts from the basic origins of the S6 grade and its majority composition of male career surface workers.

2. Empirical Evidence on Relative Pay Levels and Rates of Change for Canteen Workers and Mineworkers

On the basis of various data sources (referred to in detail on each Table or diagram), a clear statistical picture showing the close relationship between mineworkers' pay and canteen staff's pay can be established.

Table 1 compares annual basic wage rate growth for a range of canteen worker grades and surface rates. For example, between the annual increase for canteen assistants and S6 workers for the period 1977/78 and 1987/88 there is a correlation coefficient of 0.99, indicating a near perfect correlation for the two wage series.

For a longer time period, from 1955 to 1987/88, Table 2 shows the maintenance of a steady ratio between canteen attendant's basic rate and S6's basic rate. The differential, in favour of S6 workers, ranges between 0.67 and 0.82 with a heavy clustering of values around 0.80-0.82. Taken together with Table 1, the data indicate that although the NCB made formally separate wage offers and payments to mineworkers and canteen staff, in practice the vast majority of increases were the same. A similar picture emerges from Graphs 1, 2 and 3, which illustrate in different ways the close relationship between canteen staff rates of pay increase and levels compared to S6 workers.

3. External Labour Market for Canteen Workers

The basic argument of the previous sections is that although formally dissociated from mineworkers, the pay and conditions of canteen workers has in practice been very closely determined and associated. In effect, they have, with exception of a 20% differential, both groups of workers can be said to be part and parcel of the same bargaining arrangement. Another way to view the determination of the pay and conditions of canteen workers is to compare their position vis a vis other canteen workers outside the coal industry. In other words, have their wages, etc., being influenced by external labour market pressures? Recalling the NCB's original argument in 1955 for the establishment of separate bargaining arrangements, a core issue is whether canteen workers employed by British Coal have more in common with other canteen workers than mineworkers.

Tables 3 and 4 provide some background data on pay variations for canteen workers across industries, regions and different time periods. There does not seem to be any statistical basis for the existence of a 'market' rate for canteen workers, either at the national or regional level. This is primarily due to the fragmented structure of the industry which consists of a mixture of in-house canteens, outside contractors and public and private firms. In addition, there is a marked variation in the

degree of unionisation across the sector, accounting in part for the large variation in working and pay conditions.

A comparison of rates of pay for NCB canteen workers and canteen workers elsewhere suggests that there is no clear relationship between either rates of change or levels. For example, Table 5 compares canteen assistant (NCB) with the rate set by ISCUWB, and the same for the canteen manageress grade between 1963/64 and 1975/76. In both cases there does not seem to be a steady relationship. The differential fluctuated between 15% and 99%. Indeed a marked widening of the differential in favour of canteen workers employed by the NCB emerged during the 1970s.

As section 2 indicated this was due in large part to the close relationship between canteen workers' wage increases and those attained by mineworkers. The latter's pay rose considerably during this period following the industrial disputes of 1972 and 1974 and the subsequent substantial national pay awards.

In summary, the statistical evidence would suggest that:

- 1) there is no obvious market rate for canteen workers
- 2) external factors such as the ISCUWB have had little impact on either the wages or conditions of employment of NCB canteen staff since 1955.

4. The role of gender in influencing the wage differential and other differences in conditions between canteen workers and mineworkers

The point of departure for this paper was to consider which factors, if any, account for the wage differential between canteen workers and mineworkers. After considering the role of separate bargaining structures, empirical evidence on wages and other conditions and the influence of external labour market conditions, the following issues have emerged:

1) The origins of the separate bargaining structure for canteen workers lie according to the NCB in its policy of relating the earnings of ancillary workers to the industry appropriate to them'. However, the supplementary arguments, namely that 'the type of work in canteens differed from colliery work and had more in common with that in canteens in other industries', and that 'the work was much the same wherever the canteen was located', were and are applicable to other employees such as craft workers who were defined within the mineworkers bargaining group. The sole distinguishing factor appears to have been gender. In the NCB's words 'the large proportion of females and the number of part-time employees were ... quite foreign to mining'. As a

consequence canteen workers were paid a consistently lower rate than similar male workers, eg S6 workers.

2) The influence of external labour market conditions has been negligible compared to the influence of internal labour market factors. Following the creation of the wage differential canteen staff's pay has followed closely mineworkers.

On the basis of the foregoing analysis gender difference seems to be the main explanatory factor which accounts for the remaining differences in pay and conditions which exist between female canteen workers and mineworkers. It would thus seem appropriate if the NCB returned to its original guiding principle of 'equal pay for equal work' and corrected the anomalous position of its canteen staff.

NOTES

1. The NCB was renamed British Coal in 1986 but NCB will be used henceforth in this paper.

Table 4 Analysis of S6 Mineworkers 31st October 1987

Area	No. in S6	C/S	C/S (L/W)	ExUG	ExUG (L/W)
Scotland	26	19	0	7	7
North-East	391	245	16	146	91
South Yorks	300	162	0	138	121
Central	359	185	1	174	105
Notts	437	258	0	179	140
Western	204	92	0	112	112
South Wales	480	407	5	73	62
Kent	21	11	1	10	
North Yorks	497	347	0	150	86
Great Britain	2715	1726	23	989	735
% in each category		63.6	0.8	36.4	27.1

Source: British Coal Memorandum: Grounds of Resistance

Key

- C/S Career Surface Workers Normal Duties
- C/S(L/W) Career Surface Workers Light Work
- ExUG Previously Underground Workers Normal Duties
- ExUG(L/W) Previously Underground Workers Light Work

Table One

Yearly Basic Wage Rate Growth
Of Canteen And Surface Grades 1977 - 1988

Grade	% Basic Rates Increase												
	77/78	78/79	79/80	80/81	81/82	82/83	83/84	84/85	85/86	86/87	87/88		
Canteen Manageress (A)	12.71	21.01	33.90	9.80	8.56	7.21	5.19	5.19	4.16	4.50	4.27		
Cook	12.71	23.66	35.63	9.80	8.57	7.21	5.20	5.18	4.17	4.51	4.28		
Canteen Attendant	12.70	25.35	36.18	9.77	8.60	7.20	5.22	5.20	4.15	5.20	4.26		
Surface S5	12.74	19.32	32.74	9.80	8.62	7.21	5.21	5.20	5.10	3.53	4.26		
Surface S6	12.80	19.68	33.06	9.78	8.60	7.18	5.21	5.20	5.20	3.59	4.29		

Source: NCB Memorandum of Agreements
NCB Report G Accounts 87/88

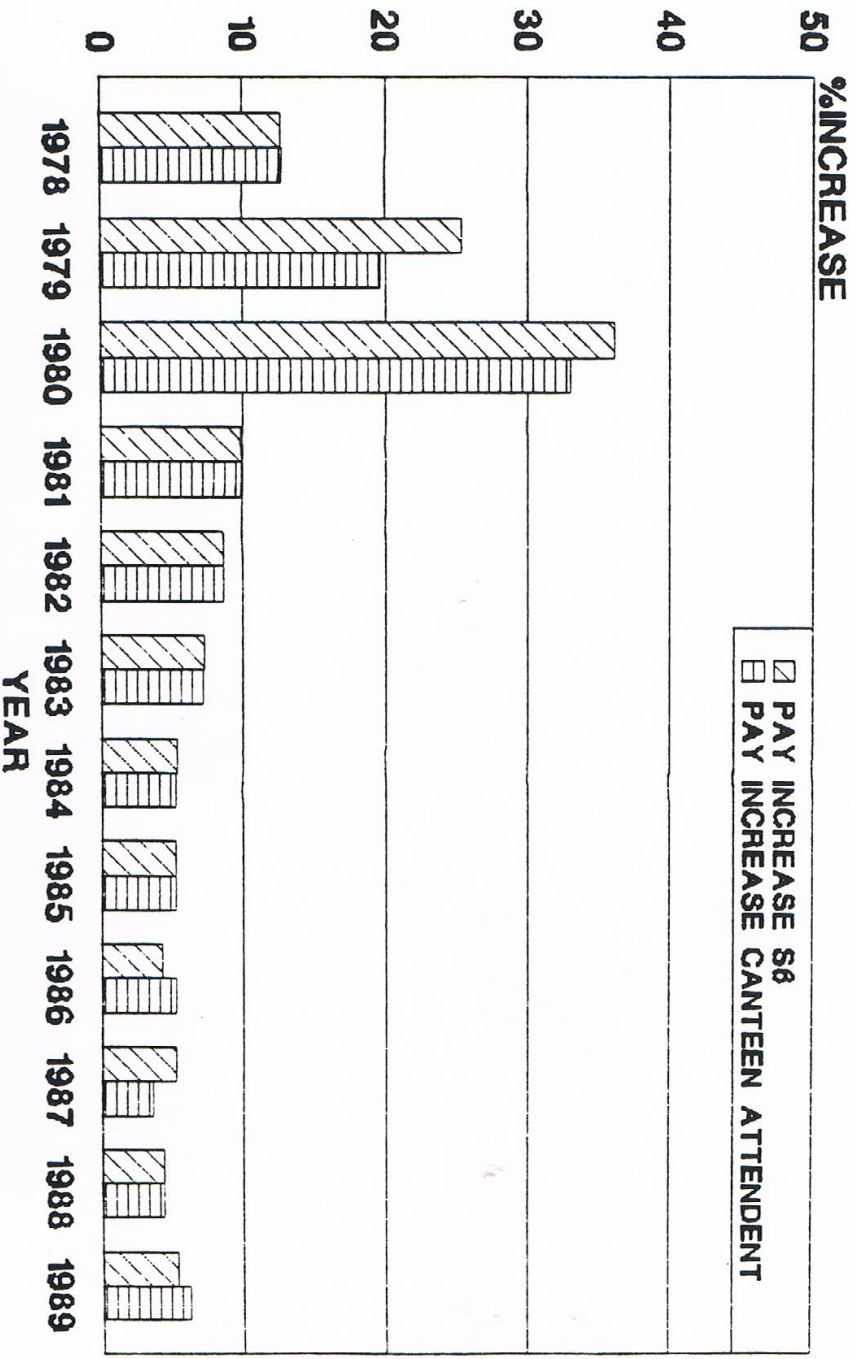
Table Two

Canteen Attendant Basic Rate
As A Proportion of S6 Basic Rate

Year	CA / S6W	Year	CA / S6W
1955	0.70	1979/80	0.80
1960	0.73	1980/81	0.82
1965	0.71	1981/82	0.82
1966/67	0.67	1982/83	0.82
1967/68	0.70	1983/84	0.82
1968/69	0.75	1984/85	0.82
1969/70	0.76	1985/86	0.82
1970/71	0.80	1986/87	0.80
1975/76	0.77	1987/88	0.81

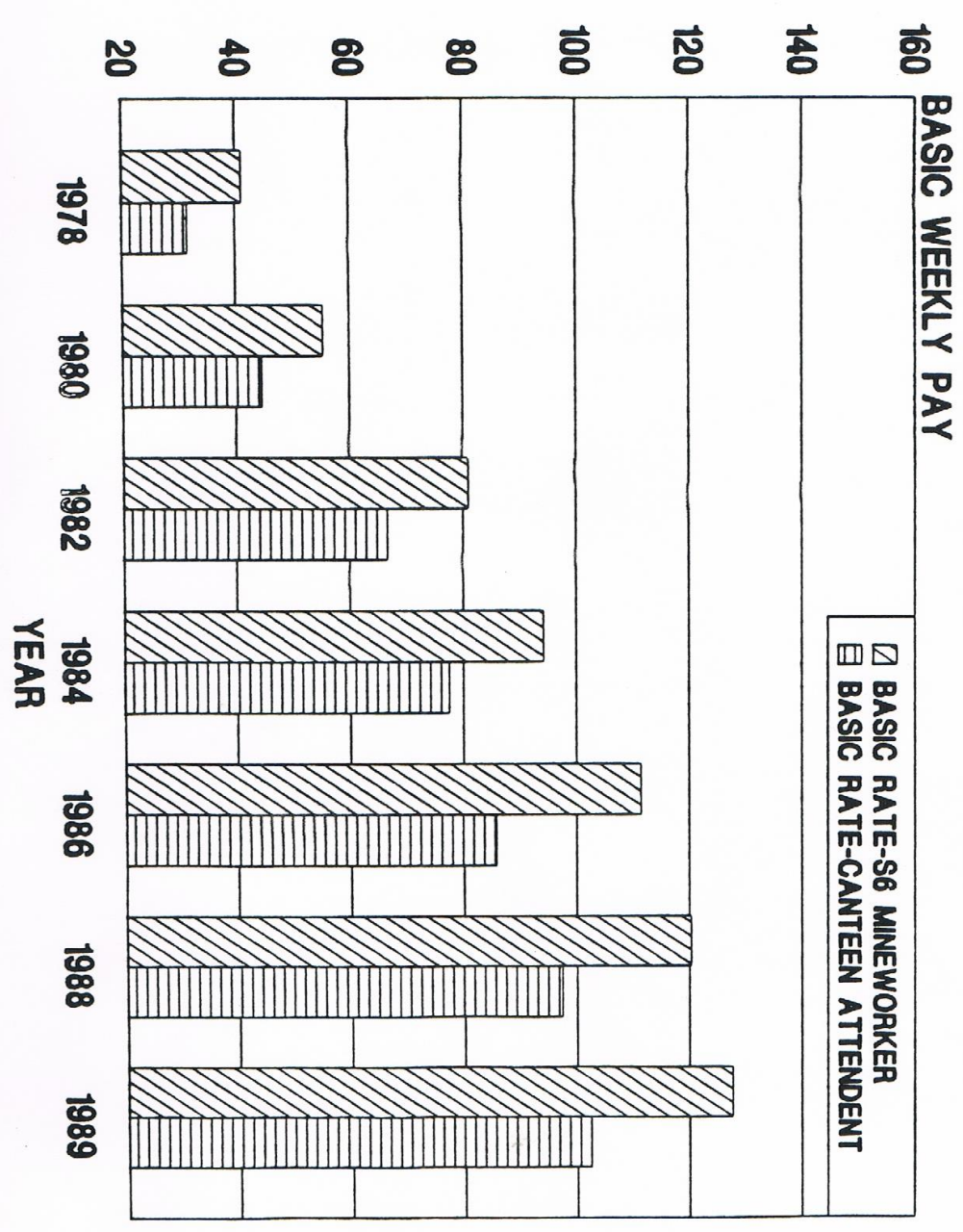
Source: NCB Memorandum of Agreements

BASIC PAY RISES, YEAR BY YEAR, 1978-89



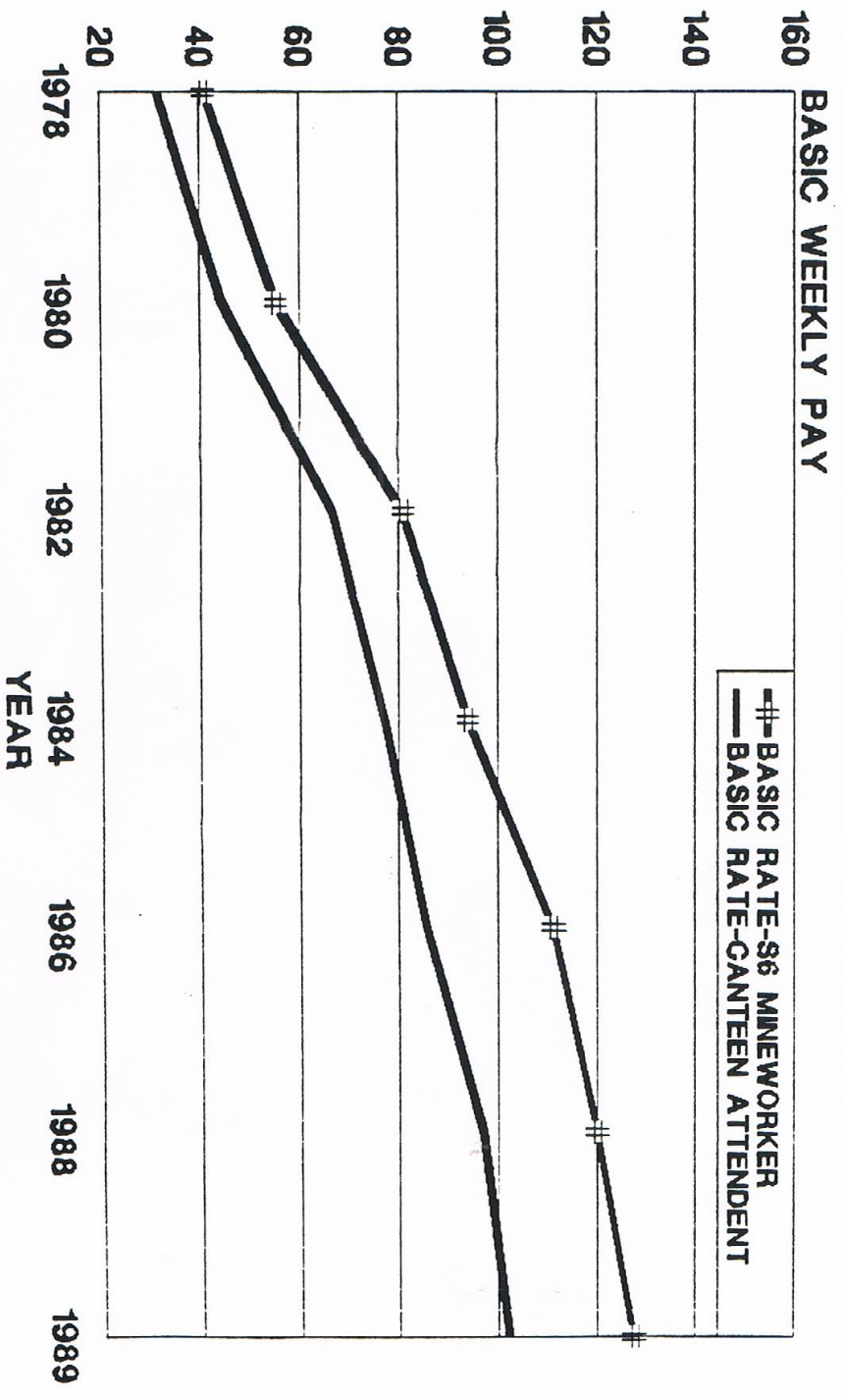
(SOURCE: BC MEMORANDUM OF ARTICLES)

CANTEEN AND S6 PAY, 1978-1989



AGENCIJA ZA VEŠTAČENJE I PROJEKTOVANJE IZ OBLASTI GRAĐEVINARSTVA I PROMETA NEKRETNIM PRAVIMA

CANTEEN AND S6 PAY, 1978-1989



(SOURCE: BC MEMORANDUM AND ARTICLES)

Table 3: BASIC WEEKLY RATES FOR CANTEEN WORKERS IN 34 INDUSTRIES

agreement	basic rate £	weekly hours	settlement date
1 Shell Oil (Shellhaven) process	187.08	40	1.10.88
2 Pilkington Glass (Cowley Hill)	163.38	39	1.10.88
3 Devro	161.08	37½	6. 6.88
4 Smiths Industries (Cheltenham)	150.12	39	1.11.88
5 Gallaher (man)	150.04	n.a.	1. 1.89
6 Distillers	147.74	39	3. 4.89
7 Wellcome Foundation	146.40	37½	1. 5.89
8 Selfidges (retail)	140.00	36 ² / ₃	1. 2.88
9 Glaxo (Ware & Barnard Castle)	136.85	37½	1. 7.88
10 Glaxochem - man	136.55	37½	1. 7.88
11 Castrol (manual)	136.54	40	1. 5.88
12 Herberts	130.39	37½	1. 1.89
13 Shulton (GB) Ltd.	118.35	35½	1.12.88
14 Brit American Products (B'head)	117.00	38	8. 1.89
15 Sanyo Industries	114.40	39	1.12.88
16 Littlewoods Head Off - JM Cnt	113.13	35	1. 2.89
17 Berger Industrial Coatings	110.70	37½	1. 1.86
18 Fine Fare (distribution depots)	109.80	39	3. 4.89
19 Tucker Fasteners	105.00	39	1. 1.88
20 Ceramic industry	104.97	39	27. 3.89
21 Vernon Pools	102.75	34½	18. 7.88
22 British Telecom (telephonists etc)	102.65	41	1. 7.88
23 British Coal	102.48	40	1.10.88
24 Local authorities (manuals - E&W)	101.25	39	1. 9.88
25 Local authorities (manuals - Scotland)	101.25	39	1. 9.88
26 BBC	100.99	37	1. 7.88
27 Littlewoods (retail)	99.82	37½	1. 4.89
28 Inco Europe	99.80	39	1.12.88
29 Woolworth	99.12	39	1. 2.89
30 Littlewoods mail order	98.48	35½	1. 1.89
31 House of Fraser (excl.Harrods)	95.31	38	3. 4.89
32 Lewis's	93.73	35	1. 8.88
33 Metal Box Engineering Division	91.00	37½	1. 1.88
34 AL-KO B&B Trailers	87.75	39	1. 6.88

Average basic in 34 industries £119.29

Source: Labour Research Department.

Table 4: REGIONAL PAY VARIATIONS - CANTEEN WORKERS 1988-89Yorkshire Region

	Weekly Pay [£]
SCM Chemicals (Grimsby)	92.10
Rockware Glass (Doncaster)	91.60
Linpac Corrugated Cases (Featherstone)	89.60
Royal Ordnance (Leeds)	84.00

North West

Albright and Wilson (Whitehaven)	121.60
GEC Traction (Preston)	107.20
British Aerospace (Preston)	106.00
Almetex (St. Helens)	100.00
Dresser Rand (Manchester)	80.00
Williams Fairey (Stockport)	80.00
Greengate Polymer Coatings (Salford)	79.60
Volex (Wigan)	61.60

Midlands

Link 51 (Brierley Hill)	86.00
Land Rover (Solihull)	80.00
Austin Rover (Birmingham)	80.00
Christin Salveson (Droitwich)	74.00
Albridge & Wilson (Warley)	70.00
Beans Foundry (Tipton)	70.00

Scotland

James Keiller (Dundee)	73.80
Strathlevel Bonded Warehouse	47.60

Source: GMB Database

Table 5

A comparison between Canteen Workers' Wage Rates and the Statutory Minimum as laid down by the Industrial and Staff Canteens Undertakings Wages Board under the 1959 Wages Council Acts.

Year	CA [NCB] £	CA [ISCUWB] £	% diff.	CM [NCB] £	CM [ISCUWB] £	% diff.
1963/64	6.38	5.43	17.5%	10.30	8.72	18.1%
1965/66	6.88	5.93	16.0%	10.87	9.30	16.9%
1967/68	7.50	6.50	15.4%	11.50	9.83	17.0%
1969/70	8.50	6.50	30.8%	12.55	9.83	27.7%
1970/71	12.00	7.85	52.9%	14.80	11.18	32.4%
1972/73	16.40	10.20	60.8%	19.60	13.53	44.9%
1974/75	24.40	12.25	99.2%	28.00	15.89	76.2%
1975/76	31.50	18.73	68.2%	38.00	24.28	56.5%

CA[NCB] Canteen attendant employed by NCB
 CA[ISCUWB] Statutory minimum rate
 CM[NCB] Highest grade Canteen Manageress employed by NCB
 CM[ISCUWB] Statutory minimum rate

Source: NCB Memoranda 63/64 - 75-76
 Wages Regulation (Industrial and Staff Canteen)
 Orders 1963-1976