Industrial Unrest 1973/4

Overview

Labour unions disrupted fuel supplies to the extent that electricity across the country was cut off for long periods of time.

Manufacturing companies were reduced to a three-day working week.

Transport and food supplies were hit and schools and hotels had to close because they had no heat.

The UK Ordinary Share Index (London stock exchange) fell by more than half.

Industrial Relations Act 1971

The industrial unrest was largely a result of the Industrial Relations Act.

The Industrial Relations Act was an extension of ‘In Place of Strife’.

It restricted the right of workers to strike by introducing a new concept of ‘unfair industrial practice’.

A National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC), with authority to judge the validity of strike action, was created.

Unions were required to put themselves on a government register if they wanted to continue to have their legal rights.

Did anyone gain anything from the industrial unrest of 1973/4?

NUM (National Union of Mineworkers)

When the miner’s dispute was eventually settled, the NUM gained a 21% wage increase, which is nearly three times the amount that the employers had originally offered.

They had received confidence and courage in their success so they went on strike again at the beginning of 1974 in pursuit for a further wage increase.

They were successful since they had received what they set out to achieve.

They seemed to prove that they were more powerful than the government.

Ordinary people didn’t gain anything from the industrial unrest since it caused them major inconveniences. For example they could cook, they didn’t have heating and they had to sit by candlelight.