

COOK, ARTHUR JAMES (1883 - 1931), miner and trade union leader

Name: Arthur James Cook
Date of birth: 1883
Date of death: 1931
Parent: Thomas Cook
Gender: Male
Occupation: miner and trade union leader
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: Huw Morris-Jones

Born at Wookey, Somerset, 22 November 1883, son of Thomas Cook, a serving soldier. After leaving the elementary school he worked as a farm labourer. At 17 he was preaching with the Baptists; at 19 he went to work to the Lewis Merthyr Colliery, Trehafod, and developed extreme socialist views which led to his severing his relations with his religious denomination. He attended courses at the Labour College, London, and afterwards conducted classes in economics in the Rhondda. While working as a collier, he was elected chairman of the Lewis Merthyr colliery lodge of the South Wales Miners' Federation and a member of the executive committee of the union; he was also elected a member of the Rhondda Urban District Council. In 1919 he was elected a miners' agent and in 1921 became a member of the executive committee of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, becoming in 1924 its national secretary, a post which he held until his death.

His extreme views led to his conviction and imprisonment for three months in April 1918 under the Defence of the Realm Act; he was also sentenced to two months' imprisonment in 1921 for inciting to unlawful assembly. He played a leading part in the general strike of 1926 and the prolonged miners' strike which followed. His slogan 'Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day' became the cry of the miners throughout the country.

In 1926 he visited Moscow and was warmly received. But his views changed considerably in the next few years and in 1929 he was deprived of the honorary membership of the Moscow Soviet and the honorary studentship of the Mining Academy granted to him during his visit.

He wrote a number of pamphlets such as *The Nine Days*, *The Miners' Next Step*, *Miners' Unofficial Reform*. He was a member of the Coal Advisory Board to the Secretary for Mines.

He endured great physical pain during his last years from an injury received whilst a miner and aggravated by an attack on him during the 1926 strike. His leg had to be amputated, complications set in, and he died at the Manor House Hospital, London, 2 November 1931.

Author

Professor Huw Morris-Jones, (1912)

Sources

Labour Who's Who

South Wales News, 10 April 1924

Western Mail, 3 November 1931

H. Blackwell, NLW MSS 9251-9277A: *A Dictionary of Welsh Biography*

private information

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [A. J. Cook](#)

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