

Harlan Accord a Major Victory for

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By Austin Scott

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The United Mine Workers won a major victory yesterday in the effort to rebuild their union and give coal miners a bigger share in profits resulting from the energy crisis.

After 18 hours of nearly nonstop negotiations the government's chief mediator, W. J. Usery, announced a 3:30 a.m. agreement, ending the increasingly violent 18-month-old strike at the small Brookside mine in Harlan County, Ky.

"We got everything we wanted," exulted an aide to UMW President Arnold Miller.

Although fewer than 200 miners worked at Brookside

the victory was enormously important to the UMW, which has spent an estimated \$1 million to support that strike alone and was prepared to spend more.

It was the first big test of Miller's reform leadership, which ousted that of former President W. A. (Tony) Boyle, later convicted of murder in the 1939 assassination of another reform candidate, Joseph A. (Jocky) Yablonsky.

Miller had promised to make the union strong again in the Eastern Kentucky coal fields, scene of some of its most violent and most successful organizing battles of the 1930s. Both miners and coal company owners were watch-

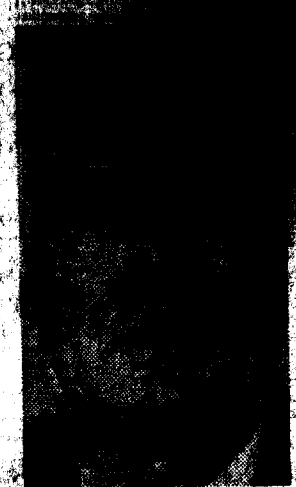
ing closely to see if Miller could deliver.

The win should strengthen the union's position in the bargaining over an industry-wide national coal agreement, scheduled to begin Tuesday.

Miller told a news conference the Brookside agreement means "... the beginning of the end for non-union coal in this country... I serve notice that the UMW intends to bring every ton of coal mined in this country and every American coal miner under UMW contract."

By union figures, there are 130 million tons of non-union coal mined annually compared

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ARNOLD MILLER

... "contract is a message"

with 440 million tons of union coal.

"This contract is a message to every non-union coal operator in the land that coal mining families have had their fill of leath-trap mines, starvation wages, and meager benefits in return for their labor," Miller said.

"This contract brings a message that huge outside corporations can no longer come into the hollows of Appalachia in search of coal and ignore the human needs of the people who live there."

The coal fields of Eastern Kentucky are also symbolic to the 200,000-member union.

Miller, a miner himself for 24 years, went there to open his campaign for the union presidency.

The fields gave rise to titles like "Bloody Harlan" and songs like "Which Side Are You On, Boys?" during the 1930s.

And they clearly showed the weakening of the union during the 1960s, when most of the hard-won gains of the 1930s were lost, and the UMW was pushed out of most Harlan County mines.

The new agreement was reached in Usery's office between Miller, Norman Yarbrough, president of Eastover Mining Co., which owns Brookside, and Carl Horne Jr., president of North Carolina's Duke Power Co., which owns

production of 560,000 tons of

coal went to feed the electric generators of Duke Power, the nation's sixth largest public utility.

Under the agreement, Eastover agreed to recongize the UMW as bargaining agent for miners at Brookside, to be bound by the 1971 National Bituminous-Coal Wage Agreement, and to automatically be bound by whatever national agreement is reached in 1974 Brookside miners ratify it.

The company also agreed to hire 59 miners it discharged after the strike began, and to hold a union representation election at its Highsplint mine, also in Harlan County.

In return, the UMW agreed not to authorize or call another strike at the Brookside mine before a 1974 national coal contract is ratified.

Although there had been some contact between the parties, there had really been no negotiations in the Brookside strike since late 1973.

This week's push toward agreement was spurred by the killing of 23-year-old miner Lawrence Jones on Saturday, and a growing, angry mood building among the strikers.

According to the union, Jones was walking a picket line at the Highsplint mine when a Brookside foreman, Billy Carroll Bruner, 39, walked up to the picket line, cursed at the miners for being on strike, slammed his shotgun butt against the head of the striker, and then blew off the left side of Jones' head with a deer slug.

Jones, a miner's son with a

23-year-old wife and a three-month-old child, survived for three days with the aid of a heart, lung and kidney machine, but without any discernible brain waves, the union said.

Bruner was arrested, charged with felonious assault to commit murder, and was put in the Pikeville jail, one county away, to guarantee his safety.

There were numerous instances of violence before the killing, including miners' wives using willow switches on workers who crossed the picket lines early in the strike.

The UMW carried on an intensive campaign outside Harlan County as well, including full-page ads in North and South Carolina newspapers fighting a 17 per cent rate request asked by Duke Power, and charging the rate rise was the price consumers were being asked to pay to finance Eastover's refusal to sign a contract.

The power company was buying coal from outside at \$22 a ton, the ads said, when mining it at Brookside under the 1971 UMW wage agreement would cost it an estimated \$8 a ton.

Another full-page ad purchased by the UMW showed a mining family on the porch of one of the shanties Eastover rents to miners for \$20 a month, surrounded by their tattered possessions.

"Your friendly neighbor-

hood power company plans to throw this family out of its home," the add said.

Miller said the agreement did not specify whether families evicted from the shantytown for non-payment of rent during the strike would be allowed to return, but he expected they would be.

The national coal negotiations open next week against a background of more labor unrest than the nation has had in some time.

More workers were idle because of strikes in the first seven months of 1974 than in all of 1973 or 1972, the Labor Department said Wednesday.

From January through July, 29.45 million man-days were lost because of strikes, the department said, compared with 27.07 million in all of 1972, and 27.95 million in all of 1973.

In Los Angeles, Mayor Tom Bradley called for round-the-clock negotiations to end a 17-day bus drivers' strike that has hurt four Southern California counties, including Los Angeles.

Workers accepted new contracts at Milwaukee's A. O. Smith Corp. and General Motors' Lordstown, Ohio, assembly plant, as well as at the Briggs & Stratton Corp. in Milwaukee.

But efforts to end a strike at GM's St. Louis, Mo., assembly plant fell through. And in New York, some 4,000 drivers and package sorters struck the United Parcel Service, halting delivery of an estimated 200,000 packages in the metropolitan area.

The major issues in the Brookside strike were union recognition, safety and working conditions, not wages.

A Citizens Inquiry Committee assembled by the NMW and chaired by former Labor Secretary W. Willard Wirtz visited the Brookside mine in March, recalling the work of the 1931 inquiry committee headed by Theodore Drieser and John Dos Passos.

The committee concluded that the miners were still the victims of absentee owners.