

By Ben Waldron  
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## Arthur Scargill says 'personal friend' Jeremy Corbyn's stance on customs union is a 'betrayal'

Mr Scargill claims the pair campaigned against the United Kingdom's involvement in the European Union during the 1970s

Controversial former miners' union leader Arthur Scargill has attacked his 'personal friend' and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn for his stance on the European customs union, which he believes is a 'betrayal'.

Mr Scargill was speaking at a rally in Swadlincote when he said he protested against the United Kingdom's inclusion in the European Union and its customs union alongside Mr Corbyn in the 1970s.

The 80-year-old was speaking at a meeting of the Socialist Labour Party, which he founded in 1996, held at Swadlincote Town Hall on Thursday, October 19, when he revealed his stance on Brexit negotiations.

He aimed criticism at Mr Corbyn for backing the view that the UK should enter into a new customs union with the EU after Brexit.



Mr Scargill, speaking exclusively to the Burton Mail, said: "Jeremy Corbyn has been a personal friend of mine for 40 years.

"I am deeply saddened and feel that it's a tragedy that he has adopted the position that he has and I have to feel that I condemn him for what he is doing at the moment.

"He is now doing the very thing that he previously fought against together with Tony Benn and me.

"We campaigned to come out of the European Union and out of the customs union.

"He's now talking about having a customs union. That's a betrayal - that's all I can say."

The customs union sees all participating nations impose the same tariffs on goods imported from outside the EU and effectively makes trade between member states tariff-free.

The European Union Single Market, meanwhile, allows free movement of goods, services, capital and labour between member states.

In February 2018, during a talk at Coventry University, Mr Corbyn called for the UK to become part of a permanent post-Brexit customs union with the EU.

Labour's current manifesto seeks to scrap the Conservatives' Brexit white paper which is the Tory Party's vision for the United Kingdom's future relationship with the European Union.

The manifesto reads: "We will scrap the Conservatives' Brexit white paper and replace it with fresh negotiating priorities that have a strong emphasis on retaining the benefits of the single market and the customs union - which are essential for maintaining industries, jobs and businesses in Britain.

"Labour will always put jobs and the economy first."

Mr Corbyn's office has been contacted by the Burton Mail for comment on Mr Scargill's comments.

Mr Scargill was speaking in South Derbyshire as part of a tour of events by the Socialist Labour Party across the East Midlands.

Topics discussed included Brexit, the future of the Irish border and the party's stance on taxation, pensions and the environment.

Mr Scargill was the general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers and led the unofficial miners' strike in the 1980s.

His father was a miner, while his mother was a professional cook. He left school at just 15 to work as a coal miner at Woolley Colliery, near Barnsley, where he would stay for 19 years.

His first experience in politics came in 1955 when he joined the Young Communist League and became the Yorkshire district chairman of the league just a year later.

He went on to represent Yorkshire miners at a world festival of youth and students, held in Moscow in 1957 after being elected as the area's youth delegate for the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

Mr Scargill played a leading role in the the UK miners' strike of 1969, which involved 140 of the the 307 collieries owned by the National Coal Board.

Lasting around two weeks, it is believed the unofficial strike cost the coal board around £15 million.

The unionist became the president of the NUM in 1973. He would go on to lead the union in the national miners' strike, which lasted a year from 1984 to 1985 when the Government announced controversial plans to shut 20 coal mines. Many miners supported the strikes, but many also opposed them, while Mr Scargill came in for criticism as he did not ballot members on whether they wanted to strike.

The strike ended in March 1985, following a vote within the union, which was seen as a major victory for the Conservative Party and then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.