

Daily Coal Report - Tuesday 4 September 1984

File 5

Pit categories

	<u>Number</u>	<u>plus on holiday</u>
Working normally	42	3
Turning some coal	7	2
Some men present	14	-
Not working	105	1

There are only minor variations on yesterday's picture:

A record 200 miners reported for work this morning in Scotland, 14 up on yesterday. At Bilston Glen attendance is up by 1 to a record 146.

Also in Scotland, the NUM have restored safety cover to the Castlehill pit after the management had declared an emergency.

In the North East, Paul Wilkinson, who yesterday won a Court Injunction against the Durham area NUM, reported for duty at the Easington pit accompanied by his father.

Attendances have improved in North Derbyshire. Shirebrook has a record 158 men in (12 up on yesterday) and Warsop a record 154 (up 4); although at Bolsover numbers are down to 215 from yesterday's record 222.

33 men have reported for duty in Yorkshire - the same number as yesterday.

Numbers in Kent are also the same as yesterday: 23 at Tilmanstone (not 26 as stated in yesterday's report) and 4 at Betteshanger.

Coal Movements

122,000 tonnes were moved yesterday. 28 coal trains ran.

Coal trains were reported to be running again this morning. It remains to be seen what effect yesterday's TUC vote to blockade the movement of coal and coke will have.

Law and Order

There has been some skirmishing, but at the time of writing picketing is generally light. Main exceptions are Allerton Bywater in North Yorkshire (1,500 pickets, 5 men in) and Kent where there are assessed to be some 300 pickets moving between Tilmanstone and Betteshanger pits. 15 men were arrested in Chesterfield last night on suspicion of causing criminal damage.

Talks between the NCB and NUM

NUM General Secretary Peter Heathfield claimed this morning that the Board had cancelled the fresh talks planned for later this week. Scargill claimed that the 'cancellation' was due "to the direct intervention of Mrs Thatcher, or a deliberate piece of deception on the part of Mr MacGregor".

The allegations are totally untrue. The Board's deputy Chairman has issued the following statement:

"The NCB state unequivocally that they have not cancelled talks with the NUM.

They remain ready at any time to have meaningful talks to resolve this damaging dispute.

On Monday in further discussions between Mr Heathfield of the NUM and Mr Smith of the NCB it was mutually agreed that, as the NUM were not prepared to discuss closures on other than exhaustion or safety grounds, in those circumstances a further meeting would be neither meaningful nor purposeful.

Mr Heathfield said then that after further discussions with his colleagues, he would contact Mr Smith again if the NUM had any helpful suggestions to offer.

No contact has been made with Mr Smith or any other Board representative by Mr Heathfield or any of his colleagues.

The NCB repeat their willingness to have talks at any time to secure the future of this industry."

TUC Congress

It is too early to judge the effect of yesterday's endorsement of the General Councils NUM motion, but the early signs are encouraging. John Lyons of the Engineers and Managers Association has said there is not the slightest prospect of TUC policy being put into effect. Eric Hammond of the Electricians Union described the General Council's statement as dishonest and deficient and said his union would not stop the power stations.

D/Employment have commented that among many TUC moderates there appeared yesterday to be evidence of wishful thinking that words from the Congress would be sufficient to trigger talks which would bring about a solution to the dispute; and also a belief that Scargill's position may have softened. Today's development on the talks front will have torpedoed these ideas.

Line to Take

Today's claim by the NUM that the Coal Board cancelled the proposed new talks is completely untrue. The Board have stated unequivocally that they remain totally willing to have meaningful negotiations to end this damaging dispute.

Ordinary decent miners should not be fooled by the NUM's dishonesty - neither should the country at large. The Coal Board's offer for talks is on the table, and Mr Scargill should take it up without further delay if he really has the interests

of his members at heart.

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STOP PRESS

TUC - BRIGHTON

Mr Kinnock this afternoon re-affirmed Labour's support for the NUM. He said the strike was no longer just a case of protecting jobs - it was a defence of the national interest. In the light of this speech Mr Walker has issued a press statement - a copy is attached.

Speaking in London this afternoon the Rt Hon Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy said:

"It is extraordinary that in his speech this afternoon to the TUC, the leader of the Labour Party should have failed to demand that the miners had a ballot in the normal ~~conditions~~^{traditions} of the National Union of Mineworkers.

The country should be reminded that Mr Kinnock failed to criticise Mr Scargill for not having the ballot when the dispute commenced. But when Mr Scargill changed the rules of balloting so as to reduce the numbers that would be required to vote for a strike, immediately on April 17 Mr Kinnock expressed his view that a ballot should take place.

Why does he no longer argue that miners should have the right to decide by ballot?

Is it because the one third of miners, 70,000 of them, that decided to have a ballot, voted by such decisive majorities not to strike?

It is also staggering that Mr Kinnock should express the view that he supports the National Union of Mineworkers on the question of uneconomic pits. Is he really saying that any pit, no matter how uneconomic, should continue at vast cost to the taxpayer? Imposing much higher costs of coal upon the consumer, and in fact ruining the coal industry by seeing that it was unable to obtain new markets?

How does he defend the fact that every post-war Labour Government has closed uneconomic pits? How does he defend the fact that the Labour Government, in its agreement on "Plan for Coal" stated categorically that there was a need to close uneconomic pits? How does he defend the fact that the Labour Government introduced legislation that incorporated within it the need to close uneconomic pits?

On the question of the ballot and on the question of uneconomic pits it would appear that Mr Kinnock has become a lackey of Mr Scargill."