

File

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

BRENDA STOUT : DAILY MIRROR ARTICLE BY PAUL FOOT

Line To Take

It is up to the press and media to decide which stories they report and the way in which they report them. Once the police were informed of the alleged attack on Mrs Stout by three masked men at her home on October 22, they started an investigation, which is continuing.

Background Note

The Greater Manchester Police have advised that as soon as they were informed of the alleged attack on Mrs Stout they started an investigation. This is continuing in the normal way and it will not be until it is concluded that the police will be able to say whether, as Mr Paul Foot suggests, the alleged incident was connected with the miners' dispute. Mr Les Huckfield MEP has complained to the Chief Constable that his officers are not pursuing the investigation vigorously enough, a suggestion which the Chief Constable utterly rejects.

As Mr Foot's article suggests, Mrs Stout is a regular attender at the picket lines, in her wheelchair. The police say that she plays an active part. She has made a number of complaints about the police actions towards her, one of which is being actively investigated as a formal complaint under Section 49 of the Police Act 1964.

PAUL FOOT

043



DAILY MIRROR, Thursday, November 29, 1984

PA

reporting

Three casualties of the coal war

Horror story you haven't heard..

● THIS is atrocity month in the miners' strike, so I wonder if you've heard the story of Brenda Stout.

Brenda is a miner's wife who lives at Leigh, Lancs. She suffers from severe osteo-arthritis and has been in a wheelchair for five years.

On October 22, her husband left the house at half past five in the morning, as usual.

Almost at once, Brenda says, she heard a knock on the door. As she opened it, three masked men burst in. They rampaged about the house smashing all Brenda's

precious china ornaments, and breaking the stereo.

Then they turned to Brenda herself. "They said I was a spastic bastard and my face showed room for improvement," says Brenda.

"One of them came at me with a knife. He cut me on the eyebrow, and as I lifted up my arms, he cut me long and deep down my forearms. I was covered in blood.

"They slapped me four times across the face, giving me two black eyes. Then one of them got behind me with

some kind of rope and put it round my neck.

"I blacked out. When I came to, they had gone."

When the police arrived, the whole of the Stouts' floor was covered in glass, and her arms were still bleeding. Brenda was taken to hospital and treated for cuts, bruises and shock.

As I say, have you heard this dreadful story before?

You haven't? That doesn't surprise me. There was a short report in local newspapers, and another on local

television. But from national newspapers and television—not a word.

The police, too, have kept a low profile.

A spokeswoman from Greater Manchester police told me: "We are still making inquiries about this incident."

When everyone is so keen on violence in miners' homes, I can't think why there was so little interest in Brenda Stout's allegations.

The following facts may be relevant:



MRS STOUT AND HUSBAND: She was attacked.

BURNING QUESTION OF THE ACID VICTIM

● THE same papers and television news bulletins which ignored Brenda Stout paid a lot of attention to Barry Newton.

Mr Newton, a baths attendant at Hawthorn pit, Co. Durham, is known as "Silver Oak" for his attempts to get miners back to work.

On November 16, he alleged that "three masked men" had jumped out of a car while he was waiting for a bus to go to work. They had flung "acid-type" liquid in his face, he said. His face was burned.

ITN and a lot of newspapers told this horror story. They quoted a defiant and bandaged Mr Newton as saying: "Nothing will stop me reporting for work".

The police rushed in. They were surprised to find that Mr Newton had burns on the palms of his hands.

They did not interview

1 Brenda's husband Joe is on strike, and is a regular picket at Bickershaw pit.

2 Brenda has actively supported the strike, and has made a formal complaint against the local police for treating her roughly on the picket line.

3 Brenda's assailants complained throughout the attack that she was "giving publicity to the striking miners."

GET YOUR

A POLICEMAN'S LOT

● SADLY, I report another bet his colleagues he could get information, a senior South