



Domino theory: Miners at Yorkshire Main, striking over the way local shift payments are measured, pass the time before joining Monday's all-out strike in the coalfield.

## Closures affect old pit areas

By David Felton, Labour Correspondent

The brunt of pit closures over the next 12 months will be felt in old mining areas, Scotland, South Wales and North-east, where many pits are nearing the end of their productive lives.

Mr Ian MacGregor, National Coal Board chairman, has considerably rejected charges by Mr Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, that the management has a "hit list" of uneconomic pits planned for closure. But after Tuesday's announcement of production cut backs union leaders are more than ever convinced that it exists.

Mr MacGregor has said that no more than 20,000 of the 184,000 mining jobs will disappear and that about the same number of closures as this year will probably take place next year.

In the past year there have been 15 closures, one partial closure and seven mergers planned closures or mergers at five pits are being opposed by the NUM.

Mr MacGregor aims to cut

production by four million tonnes early in the next financial year, to balance supply and demand quickly. The target for next year is 97.4m tonnes, which the board believes it can sell and therefore start reducing more than 50m tonnes of stockpiles.

The area facing the biggest cutback, of 1.4 million tonnes, is the North-east, where 17 pits employ 23,500 people. The pits down the coast, where workings go under the North Sea, are mainly profitable and employ about two-thirds of the workforce.

But the inland collieries, like Bates at Blyth, Hordern, co Durham and Sacristone, near Durham city, have consistently lost money and could be targets for closure or cut backs.

The North-east came joint second with Scotland in the table of loss-makers, with losses last year of £67m which are expected to be higher this year.

The big loss-maker however, is South Wales, which last year reported a £113m deficit.

Mr Phillip Weekes, NCB area director, said yesterday that there would be an improvement of about £20m this year because of improved productivity and elimination of uneconomic capacity. He predicted that the production cut being demanded of South Wales, down from 6.9 million tonnes this year to 6.75 million tonnes, would lead to "little variation" in output.

The coalfield has in the past 12 months lost five pits, but there is optimism that the field's losses could within 12 months be pulled back to less than £50m, when profits from opencast operations are included. That could halt pit closures.

Scotland, along with the older coalfields of south Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire, could also face closures. Scotland has had three shutdowns and there are disputes over two other pits, Polmaise and Bogside, which face imminent closure.

## Coal output rising as productivity falls

By David Young, Energy Correspondent

Research into the National Coal Board's use of technology shows that output at the coal face has risen by 27.5 per cent since 1976, but elsewhere underground productivity has dropped 2.5 per cent.

The Technical Change Centre says that this disparity is due partly to the board's allocation of its development efforts.

A shift of resources to improving technology elsewhere underground would be the most effective way to improve overall performance, it says.

The report also concludes that there is no inherent conflict between greater productivity and improved health and safety. In practice, the two have progressed in parallel.

The Technical Change Centre is sponsored by the Leverhulme Trust, the Science and Engi-

nering Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council.

### Poland denies rise in exports

The Polish state coal marketing company, Weglokoks, has denied a suggestion from Mr Arthur Scargill that Polish coal imports to Britain are to be increased.

It said that since 1975 coking coal has been sold by Weglokoks to the British Steel Corporation, but only of types not available in Britain.

In 1980-83, when British coal exports increased by 14 million tonnes, Polish coal exports to traditional Scandinavian markets decreased significantly.

Closures and mergers since March 1983

Scotland	
Highhouse	April 28
Som	April 28
Cardowan	Aug 26
Bogside	Feb
Polmaise	Pending
N East	
E Hutton	June 26
Mutton/S Helton	March 27
Lynemouth/Ellington	Oct 30
Herrington	July/Aug proposed
N Yorks	
Newmarket/Silstone	Sept 30
Robwell	Dec 9
S Yorks	
Elsecar	Oct 28
Shireoaks/Steelley	Mar 27
Doncaster	
Goddiforpe/Highgate	This year
S Wales	
Ty Mawr/Lewis Marthyr	June 17
Wynham/Western	Jan 7
Blaengwrach	July 5
Britannia	Dec 8
Brynllw	Sep 5
Penrhybyr/Deep	
Navigation	This year
S Mid	
Desford	Jan 6
Sibson/S Leics*	Mar 27
Whitwick/S Leics	Jan 1
N Derby	
Shirebrook/Pleasley	Jan 1
Westhorpe	Feb 10
Western	
Cranton	Mar 2 '84
Bickershaw/Parsonage	Mar 27

\*S Leics merged with Whitwick after merger with Silstone

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