

---

# Strike likely to halt half of Britain's mines

By Barrie Clement and Tim Jones

The miners' strike over pit closures and redundancies looked certain last night to spread from Yorkshire and Scotland to engulf more than half the British coalfield.

Support for the action is, however, far from unanimous and a move to organize ballots in moderate areas has started.

Leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Wales and Kent urged their members to join the stoppage and miners in Durham were instructed to stop work from midnight last night.

Mr Ray Chadburn, the area council president in traditionally moderate Nottinghamshire, said his 34,000 members would hold their own secret poll with a recommendation to strike.

Flying pickets expected to visit Nottinghamshire from more militant areas to the north were told by Mr Chadburn to stay away until the ballot next week. There are similar moves for ballots in other areas, including North Wales, Lancashire and Derbyshire, and the union's power group and white-collar sections, according to union sources.

By last night only Leicestershire had decided against the stoppage.

The strike, which takes effect from the first shift on Monday, will now almost certainly involve more than 100,000 of the union's 180,000 members.

There were some signs of a protest against the action in Scotland, where one pit voted against the stoppage, and at a South Wales delegates' meeting yesterday. However, in both these usually militant areas there is little likelihood of a full-scale rebellion against the strike call.

Other area councils are to meet this weekend to decide whether to join the stoppage. Less militant areas may be swayed by the National Coal Board's announcement of increased redundancy payments guaranteeing £1,000 for every year's service for miners aged between 21 and 50.

Activists, however, will argue that the four-million-tonne cut in production announced by Mr Ian MacGregor, the board's chairman, will mean the closure of 20 pits and the loss of 20,000 jobs.

The strike decision by the South Wales meeting was not unanimous. Some thought the

Yorkshire miners should be "made to sweat a bit", because of their failure to back the Welshmen in their unsuccessful fight last year to save a Rhondda Valley pit.

But Mr Emlyn Williams, the union's South Wales president, said his members realized that unless they took action the industry would be devastated and the economy and culture of the valleys destroyed.

Mr Williams, who proposed the successful motion at the union's executive meeting on Thursday to back local stoppages, said: "If this strike becomes national, I hope the working class will realize that it is also their fight, for they are

---

The National Coal Board is unlikely to take legal action against "flying pickets" under the Employment Act, 1980, for fear of worsening the dispute, according to industry observers.

Some Yorkshire and Scottish miners intend to demonstrate outside collieries in Nottinghamshire, where the union's leadership has refused to endorse the strike but is organizing a ballot.

Although miners from outside Nottinghamshire work for the same employer, the National Coal Board, they would not be picketing at their place of work under the terms of the 1980 Act.

Under the Employment Act, 1982, the board could also seek damages.

---

sick and tired of the dictatorship of men like MacGregor."

He pointed out there would be no strike pay but was confident that pithead meetings would endorse the action.

As the deadline drew near for all-out industrial action in the Yorkshire coalfield, a further 2,500 miners went on strike. More than 20,000 men stopped work on various issues.

The board said yesterday that there were coal stocks of 23 million tonnes at pitheads, the highest, apart from last year. Power stations also have stocks of 26 million tonnes, a spokesman said.

He added that action by rail unions to exacerbate the strike would be ineffective because of the high coal stocks at power stations.

---

**Strike likely to halt half of Britain's mines.**

By Barrie Clement and Tim Jones.

*The Times* (London, England), Saturday, Mar 10, 1984; pg. 1; Issue 61778. (656 words)

**Category:** News

© Times Newspapers Limited

**Gale Document Number:**CS18189930