

Moderates dampen left-wing hopes of all-out pit strike

● Left-wing hopes of an all-out national miners' strike have been blasted by heavy votes against action from moderate coalfields.

● A big majority against striking is expected in the Nottinghamshire area, which called a 24-hour stoppage for its ballot today.

● In a deal following a picket's death at Ollerton Colliery, Yorkshire miners are leaving picket duties to their Notts. colleagues until the ballot result is known.

● Mr Brittan, the Home Secretary, was accused by the Opposition of inflaming a difficult situation when he spoke in the Commons of pithead intimidation.

By Paul Routledge, Labour Editor

Miners in the moderate coalfields yesterday delivered a body blow to left-wing hopes of a national strike in the mining industry by returning heavy votes against industrial action.

More than 12,000 members of the Midlands area of the National Union of Mineworkers have voted four to one against striking in support of Yorkshire miners, whose picketing has continued in defiance of a High Court order.

A similar vote against striking was recorded in the single-pit Cumbria coalfield. The men at Haig colliery decided by 383 votes to 109 against joining the "snowball strike" despite being told only the previous day that most of them will lose their jobs in the next few months.

In Lancashire, usually regarded as a "barometer" coalfield, reliable industry sources reported last night that despite intensive picketing by Yorkshire miners the vote is running at more than three to one against an all-out stoppage.

Miners in Nottinghamshire, Britain's second largest coalfield, vote on their area leaders' strike recommendation today after reaching a "no-go-area" deal with militant Yorkshire pickets - they will strike for the day to hold a pithead ballot in place.

The vote among traditionally moderate Nottinghamshire miners usually corresponds with the poll verdict in the Midlands, and after picket line

violence there National Coal Board managers expect a big majority against a strike.

The board's figures released last night indicate that the disruption is still growing. In all 138 pits are on strike or are "picketed out" by flying pickets from Yorkshire or other militant coalfields. Only 21 pits are working normally, two more are turning some coal and at another nine men are at work but not producing.

The board's lawyers are considering the evidence indicating that the injunctions against unlawful secondary picketing granted two days ago have been breached in many cases, but the board is delaying a return to court during the 24-hour truce reached between the Yorkshire and Nottingham miners' leaders.

Under the deal miners from Yorkshire withdrew after 6 pm yesterday so that Nottinghamshire members could enforce a day-long stoppage by picketing their own collieries while the strike ballot takes place.

Mr Henry Richardson, the Nottinghamshire miners' secretary, said a Yorkshire picket's death early yesterday had convinced everyone of the need for unity among miners.

He said: "It's obvious that life and limb are in danger and therefore we are saying to our membership that this cannot go on."

Another pithead ballot will be held today in north Derbyshire,

once regarded as a left-wing stronghold but now more in tune with moderate opinion. If the vote there conforms with the pattern elsewhere there will be intense pressure on the union's left-wing leaders to order a national ballot next week.

There are fears, however, that if the Nottinghamshire men vote against striking then, in the words of one official "all hell will be let loose" by Yorkshire pickets.

Mr Arthur Scargill, the union's president, said in a statement: "Following the NCB decision to use Tory anti-trade union legislation in taking out an injunction against the Yorkshire NUM, there has been an escalation of action throughout the British coalfields."

This deliberate NCB provocation, alongside the tragedy that occurred last night on the picket line at Ollerton, demonstrates how serious the situation has become."

The union's Yorkshire area executive formally decided to continue sending flying pickets to spread the strike.

Mr Jack Taylor, area president, said: "There might be a way of interpreting the injunction to allow us to picket in other coalfields. If we believe that for us to carry out our responsibility to our members we need to picket in other areas, we shall do so."

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Miners united by picket's death

By Barrie Clement and Graig Seton

Both moderate and militant miners were shocked yesterday by the death of a flying picket from Yorkshire during clashes at Ollerton Colliery, Nottinghamshire.

Nottinghamshire's 34,000 miners were called out on strike until the result of a ballot is known at noon tomorrow. In return the militant pitmen from Yorkshire have withdrawn and handed over picket duty to their Nottinghamshire colleagues until the result of the voting is known.

By Stephen Jones, a Home Office pathologist, examined the body of the miner who died. Mr David Gareth Jones, aged 24, of South Kirby, West Yorkshire, and found nothing to support suggestions by other pickets that he had been hit by a brick, or a policeman's truncheon. There was no evidence on the body of assault, said Dr Jones.

Mr Jones, a father of two, almost certainly died after being crushed, it was discovered.

The pathologist's report indicated that Mr Jones had received a crushing injury to his chest which had injured blood vessels attached to the heart. He said the injury had probably occurred within one hour of the time of his collapse.

Mr Jones, was picketing at



Mr McLachlan: Another force to investigate

Ollerton, near Mansfield, on Wednesday night when, apparently, he was told his car was being vandalized. It was as he ran several hundred yards along the main road away from the colliery that he collapsed.

He had given first aid to a colleague from Nottinghamshire, just 20 minutes before he collapsed.

Mr Charles McLachlan, Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire, said that although there was no evidence of assault, an investigation into the death should be carried out by an officer from another force.

Mr Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers, visited the scene of Mr Jones's death early yesterday and talked to the pickets. Policemen on duty were reported to have joined in a two minute silence in respect for the dead man.

Contingents from the police forces in most parts of southern England, including men from the Metropolitan Force and men specially trained in riot control were involved in controlling pickets earlier yesterday. Mr Leon Brittan, the Home Secretary, told the Commons that 3,000 officers from 17 forces were at hand to quell any disturbances.

The violence at Bilsthorpe, Thoresby and Ollerton collieries which resulted in 23 arrests and some injuries, came before the leaders of the Yorkshire miners decided to pull their members out.

Elsewhere in the coalfield picketing continued. Miners in North Wales complained that flying pickets from South Wales, where all the pits are at a standstill, had disrupted their ballot on the strike over pit closures.

Mr Arthur Scargill, was booed yesterday as he tried to speak to 200 Midlands colliers on the doorstep of the union headquarters in Sheffield.

Brittan 'inflaming dispute'

By Julian Haviland
Political Editor

The violence in the Nottinghamshire coalfield had its counterpart in the Commons yesterday when Mr Leon Brittan, the Home Secretary, volunteered a statement on the pickets and the police and was then accused by Mr Gerald Kaufman, his Opposition shadow, of deliberately inflaming a situation which required conciliation.

Mr Don Concannon, the former miner who is Labour MP for Mansfield, seemed to think little of either man's contribution, and said he hoped the House would "kindly belt up". He said he would rather Mr Brittan had not made a statement.

A pained Mr Brittan replied that it would be a sad day if it became a matter of controversy to suggest people should be able to go to work if they wished.

The Home Secretary began by reminding MPs that it was a breach of the criminal law to obstruct or intimidate.

He finished by saying that he looked to the whole House to condemn any intimidation unreservedly.

The Opposition do not like to receive moral precepts from Mr Brittan and he must have expected a sharp reply. But Mr Kaufman's bitterness took him aback.

Mr Kaufman said the Labour Party condemned all violence in all circumstances. But he said Mr Brittan seemed to regard it as his function to stir up difficult situations instead of cooling them down.

Then Mr Kaufman went too far for the affronted Conservative benches, by saying that the Government, by its legislation and by appointing Mr MacGregor, must have known what would happen and might even have hoped for it. They had a vested interest in provoking industrial anarchy, he said.

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By Paul Routledge, Labour Editor.

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