

## Railways avoid all-out clash

By David Felton  
Labour Correspondent

An unholy alliance has been forged between British Rail and the two main rail unions to prevent an all-out confrontation over the unions' decision to support the striking miners by refusing to transport coal.

About six railway workers were sent home yesterday without pay by local managers for refusing to take out coal trains. This was half the number suspended on Monday. Passengers services in the Wirral, Merseyside, were halted after a walkout by about 250 staff over the suspension of a driver, but that was an isolated incident.

Both sides are reluctant to escalate the action. Most coal trains were running in areas still producing coal.

Militant members of the National Union of Railwaymen were threatening at one stage to disrupt passenger services on the main London to Glasgow line in the Warrington area over the suspension of two guards, but the dispute was defused by NUR national officers.

The suspensions were at depots at Saltley, Bescot, Toton, and Nottingham in the Midlands and at Birkenhead. In other areas, mainly the Nottinghamshire coalfield, train drivers refused to cross official National Union of Mineworkers picket lines.

BR has been telling regional managers to send home only those staff who refuse to take out trains which might carry coal. If a driver and guard refuse to cross a picket line at a colliery they return the locomotive to the depot and are put on other duties.

The pickets were using the device, adopted in the big pit strikes of the 1970's, of hanging a blanket over a bridge near pitheads to denote the picket line.

The NUM was not maintaining round-the-clock picketing of railway lines and coal was apparently being moved at night. The amount being moved has been cut to between 40 and 50 per cent of normal. BR gets about half of its freight income from carrying coal and the long-term loss of money could be serious.

Suggestions that the cautious approach is the result of government pressure are discounted by BR executives.

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## Notts miners may yield to pickets

By Paul Routledge, Labour Editor

Miners' leaders in Nottinghamshire voted yesterday to escalate the coal strike by calling on 34,000 pitmen in their traditionally moderate coalfield not to cross picket lines set up by flying pickets from Yorkshire.

This unexpected hard-line approach was agreed after a heated three-hour meeting of the 15-man area executive of the National Union of Mineworkers, but it is still conditional on approval by a coalfield delegate conference tomorrow.

Nottinghamshire is the only coalfield to have worked normally during the "rolling strike", now in its fourth week. But Mr Henry Richardson, area NUM secretary, said last night: "We have now changed our policy. We have got to look at our consciences because other trade unionists are putting their jobs on the line to help us."

The National Coal Board is guardedly confident that the move not to cross picket lines will be rejected by the 250-strong area conference. A three to one ballot vote against sympathy strike action has kept the 25 Nottinghamshire pits producing coal.

However, the development alarmed National Coal Board managers who were counting on a steady resumption of normal working in the moderate coalfields to put pressure on the NUM national executive to call

## Scargill denial

Mr Arthur Scargill denied last night that he had told a Moscow newspaper that the miners' strike was the start of a class war against the British ruling class.

The Soviet trade union daily, *Trud*, quoted him as saying in an interview that a "barrel of social gunpowder" had been exploded by the strike. But a NUM spokesman said that the interview had never taken place and that Mr Scargill had not made the statements attributed to him.

a national ballot at its April 12 meeting.

The board reported last night that 43 pits were working normally - an increase of three on the previous day.

Arrests on the picket line continued yesterday. In South Wales, 11 pitmen were arrested after clashes with police outside the Port Talbot steel works.

The National Union of Seamen fell into line with other transport unions yesterday with an instruction to its 25,000 members to black all movement of coal.

● The National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, the pit foremen's union, decided last night to ballot its 18,000 members on whether to strike.

## Special powers aim to quell Punjab crisis

Delhi (Reuter) - The entire state of Punjab was declared a "dangerously disturbed area" last night after 10 rioters and two policemen were killed in violence sweeping the Sikh holy city of Amritsar.

An Indian Home Ministry spokesman said the declaration under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act gave security forces unlimited powers in an attempt to defuse spiralling communal violence between Hindus and Sikhs.

The situation had been brought under control by dusk and rioters and looters dispersed when police opened fire.

The wave of violence was set off by the killing yesterday morning of Mr V. N. Tiwari, a leading academic and Upper House member of the ruling Congress (I) Party

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