
Rivals clash as 6,000 rebel pitmen jeer union chiefs

By Paul Routledge and Craig Seton

The split in the mineworkers' union over the "rolling strike" came into violent public focus yesterday when moderate pitmen staged a "right to work" demonstration outside the offices of the Nottinghamshire area.

Mounted police were called in to keep the warring factions apart as strikers staged a counter-demonstration on the sports field behind the Mansfield headquarters of the National Union of Mineworkers.

About 1,500 strikers gathered to show their backing for the stoppage, now in its eighth week, but four times their number were there to protest against being called out by their

area leader. The moderates carried placards saying: "Adolf Scargill" and "Nottinghamshire miners have a lot of bottle".

Mr Henry Richardson, left-wing area general secretary of the union, told the anti-strike contingent: "You are the only friends Ian MacGregor has got. It is about time you acted like bloody men and showed your solidarity with other miners."

Mr Ray Chadburn, area president, urged the miners to take their protest to the coal board's headquarters in London, but the non-strikers shouted "Resign", "Traitor" and "We're off to work tomorrow."

An estimated 5,000 to 7,000 non-striking Nottinghamshire

miners marched on the Mansfield headquarters. The inevitable confrontation exposed the deep and increasingly bitter rift in the traditionally moderate coal field. Most of its 34,000 miners have continued to work normally and are demanding a national ballot while many others - estimated by the NCB at between 1,000 and 3,000 - have joined the strike.

Police estimated that the total number of miners involved in yesterday's demonstration at Mansfield reached 10,000. Another 1,000 on their way from Derbyshire and Yorkshire to support striking colleagues in Nottinghamshire were turned back. Nine arrests were made

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Miner accuses miner as militant moderates besiege strikers



Man in the middle: Mr Ray Chadburn, the Nottinghamshire miners' leader, speaking from the balcony at the Mansfield NUM headquarters, where he was joined by strikers (left), while workers (right) staged a "right-to-work" demonstration.

Thousands of pitmen clash in rival demonstrations

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when police stopped miners' cars on the A38 on the Derbyshire border and stones were thrown.

About 1,000 police were involved in controlling the two demonstrations and they lined up three deep to keep the two sides apart as union officials claimed that the strikers were being starved back to work.

The non-striking miners thronged behind a wire fence of a park only 50 yards from the Union building and some stones were hurled from each side. A bicycle chain thrown from the balcony narrowly missed a policeman and later a miner behind the fence was seen being led away with blood streaming from a head wound. Banners were waved, insults, tees and abuse were offered by both sides in a crescendo of sound, but police said there were no arrests.

The non-striking rally was organized after repeated attempts by the frustrated area executive to get all the men to join the strike, and visits by Mr Arthur Scargill, the union president, to implore them to stop work.

In an area ballot however, the Nottinghamshire men voted by about three to one against striking and area delegates voted by almost the same margin to work normally until a national ballot was held.

The Nottinghamshire coalfield is now seen as crucial to the union's dispute strategy as its 25 pits represent most of those working normally in the country. None of the striking miners believes that mass picketing will again be tried to get them to stop work.

Mr Chadburn and Mr Richardson arrived on the balcony of the union building crowded with their chanting supporters to chants of "Resign" and jeers and boos from the park below.

Leaders of the anti-strike demonstrators were given a police escort to address their supporters from the headquarters balcony. Mr Colin Bottomore, branch secretary at Bentinck colliery told the cheering crowd: "Nottinghamshire men want a ballot and Nottinghamshire will not strike without a ballot."

After the rally, striking miners claimed that the coal board had encouraged men still

working to take a rest day so that they could join the anti-strike rally, and claimed also that coal board buses had been used to ferry the men to the rally.

The coal board said it was up to the miners when they took a rest day, and denied that it had anything to do with the rally, or getting to it.

The port of Wivenhoe in north-east Essex was brought to a halt yesterday when more than 100 miners and Essex University students blocked the entrance to the wharf where coal from Europe is being unloaded. There were 69 arrests.

Mr Neil Kinnock the Labour leader said last night that if he were a Nottinghamshire miner he would both be on strike and agitating for a national ballot. He supported his deputy Mr Roy Hattersley's pledge last week that he would be taking part in the industrial dispute if he was a Nottinghamshire miner.

Hampshire Police have chartered a Boeing 737 to fly 120 officers to picket lines in the Nottinghamshire coalfields.



Faces of conflict: Non-striking miners surge at a fence and a working pitman's head bleeds (Photographs: Brian Harris)

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The Times (London, England), Wednesday, May 02, 1984; pg. 1; Issue 61820. (901 words)

Category: News

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Gale Document Number:CS17927842