

# Convoys of coal beat the pickets

By Paul Routledge  
Labour Editor

There were fresh clashes on the picket lines outside Ravenscraig steelworks in Scotland yesterday as British Steel stepped up its coal lorry convoys through the striking miners.

Mr Michael McGahey, president of the Scottish miners, and the area secretary, Mr Eric Clarke, were on the picket line yesterday as lorries carrying coal from the Hunterston terminal thundered through with supplies regarded as vital by unions and management at the Motherwell complex.

There were five arrests as the first lorries went in during the morning. But there were fewer than 100 pickets and they were outnumbered two to one by the police.

Trouble also flared in Nottinghamshire and Lancashire, where picketing increased sharply and more pits were prevented from working normally.

Top-level union officials meet in Sheffield today to choose a date for the mass demonstration intended to bring the Nottinghamshire coalfield to a standstill. It is almost certain to be Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the Central Electricity Generating Board has temporarily switched off two large power stations to save coal stocks. The stations, Didcot, in Oxfordshire, and Aberthaw, south Wales, are the first to be shut during the strike.

In Lancashire yesterday, police made eight arrests outside Golborne Colliery, where more than 1,000 pickets had gathered. Coal was being produced at two of the eight pits after some of the heaviest picketing since the strike began. The number reporting for work fell from 1,775 to 1,509.

In Nottinghamshire, the board said that all but one of the 25 pits were producing, but the union said that up to 10,000 of the 30,000 pitmen were on strike.

About 700 local strikers marched from Linby pit to Hucknall Colliery.

In the south of the coalfield, more than 2,000 pickets, many from Yorkshire, evaded police road blocks and invaded the pit village of Cotgrave. Police reinforcements were rushed in.

About 25 Kent miners were arrested at the non-union port of Wivenhoe in Essex, where imported coal is being moved out in lorries.

Mr Ian MacGregor, Coal Board chairman, said yesterday that he was prepared to sit out the strike "indefinitely". He agreed that it was time for compromise, but insisted that it would not come from him.

"It is time they made some overtures to me", he said in Blackpool after addressing a conference of British Association of Colliery Management.

Responding to suggestions

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# Coal convoy stepped up

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that Mr Scargill, union president, would not back down, he added: "That makes two of us. My attitude has to be a reflection of Mr Scargill's attitude."

"If I see any sign of intelligent bargaining on his part, I will respond. I have not seen any so far. I have not heard anything to negotiate about."

However, Mr Ned Smith, the coal board's director-general of industrial relations, has been seeking to arrange talks with the union on a possible compromise involving phasing of the board's plans to shut 20 pits and a shift back to area talks on redundancies.

Meanwhile, 121 pits remain

strikebound last night as the strike ended its eighth week. Forty-nine were producing coal, although not all at normal levels.

The board has stopped issuing figures for the overall number of men on strike.

● The Prime Minister exploited yesterday Labour embarrassment over the miners' attempted blockade of Ravenscraig by dubbing Mr Kinnock, party leader, "the strikers' friend" (Our Political Correspondent writes).

She told the Commons that the steel industry was a very good customer for coal. "One would think that an industry which wants a good future would be careful to keep its customers."

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