



Mrs Ann Scargill at Mansfield yesterday before appearing in court.

Scargill's wife on picket charge

From Craig Seton
Mansfield

Ann Scargill, wife of the mineworkers' president, Mr Arthur Scargill, is banned for the time being from picketing or demonstrating in Nottinghamshire after her appearance in court at Mansfield yesterday.

She was accused of obstructing a police officer and obstructing the highway after being arrested in the Nottinghamshire coal field early yesterday.

After a brief hearing, in which she appeared with three other women, Mrs Scargill, who was arrested at 5.30am at Silverhill Colliery, near Sutton in Ashfield, was remanded on bail until July 11.

At the request of the police the magistrates imposed a condition of bail on Mrs Scargill and the three other women that they do not visit any place in the Nottinghamshire coal field for the purpose of picketing or demonstrating during the present dispute between the miners and the coal board.

Mrs Scargill, aged 41, of Worsborough Dale, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, was charged with obstructing Police Constable Clive Powell in the execution of his duty, and wilfully obstructing the free passage of Silverhill Lane near Silverhill Colliery.

After her arrest she and the other three were taken to Hucknall police station.

All the women faced similar charges with the exception of Audrey Moore, of Nottingham, who was additionally charged with assaulting Police Constable James Shearer.

Lynn Hathaway, of Barnsley, was accused of wilfully obstructing the highway and obstructing Police Constable Michael Craig while Elizabeth Hollis, of Nottingham, faced two charges of highway obstruction and obstructing Police Constable David James.

The women were among 40 women who arrived at the colliery yesterday to support Nottinghamshire women.

Detective Sergeant John Burton requested that bail be granted conditionally.

Mr Christopher Chapman, for the four women, unsuccessfully opposed the application for conditional bail saying that the condition was tantamount to a criminal court granting an injunction effectively to the police in a matter which was for the civil courts.

Mr Scargill said at Westminster last night that he was proud of his wife and all other women on the picket line. She was fighting to save the coal mining industry.

Mrs Scargill, who was arriving for talks with Labour's chief spokesman on energy, Mr Stanley Orme, said: "My wife has been involved in this action to save the pits ever since day one. She a miner's wife and her father was a miner."

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MPs to get £6,163 tax-free expenses

By Anthony Bevins
Political Correspondent

A Commons committee yesterday passed a clause in the Finance Bill exempting from tax a £6,163 expenses allowance for MPs, without one word of debate.

The additional costs allowance is designed to reimburse an MP "who necessarily incurs extra expenditure in staying away from his only or main residence for the purposes of performing his parliamentary duties."

Since it was introduced in 1971 the allowance has been taxable as an emolument, although MPs, like everyone else could claim for expenses incurred "wholly, exclusively or necessarily" in performing their duties.

Clause 28 of the Finance Bill frees the allowance from tax liability, but about 30 MPs who have been claiming tax against expenses substantially in excess of £6,163 will lose that entitlement.

When the clause was reached after 1am yesterday, no one rose to speak.

It is understood, however, that there had been some nervousness on the Government's side of the House. Mr John Wakeham, the Chief Whip, was seen waiting outside the committee room and Mr Edward du Cann, chairman of the Conservative backbench 1922 Committee went into the room at the time the clause was called.

Unlawful killing verdict on Moscow banker

By John Witherow

Dennis Skinner, the Midland Bank representative in Moscow who died in a fall from his flat last June, was unlawfully killed, a coroner's jury in Croydon decided yesterday.

The surprise verdict, reached after nearly four hours, opens up new areas of speculation because Mr Skinner had feared arrest and possible murder by the KGB.

The Labour Party spokesman on foreign affairs, Mr Donald Anderson, called for a Foreign Office investigation, but the ministry refused to comment last night.

The verdict was not heard by Mr Skinner's widow, Lyudmila, who stayed away after it was stated on Tuesday that she believed she had betrayed the KGB and feared abduction.

The coroner, Dr Mary McHugh, told the jury of six men and two women not to underrate her fears in view of "that unfortunate Markov incident in 1978". Mr Markov, a Bulgarian defector and BBC broadcaster, was killed in London by a jab from a poisoned umbrella.

Mrs Skinner, aged 39, will be eligible for £200,000 insurance which would have been withheld if the verdict was suicide.

Dr McHugh instructed the jury not to return a suicide verdict despite the Soviet police finding no signs of a struggle and saying his flat was locked from inside.

Dr McHugh said everything about Mr Skinner pointed against suicide and that someone could have escaped on to a balcony from his twelfth floor apartment.

"You must have definite proof of intention and if such a (suicide) verdict were returned, Mrs Lyudmila Skinner would have every right to go to the High Court and ask for it to be quashed."

She dismissed accidental death because of the difficulty of falling out of the window and because Mr Skinner had a tracksuit top over his head.

Dr McHugh gave special attention to a note Mr Skinner gave to a neighbour two days before he died in which he stated his life was in danger and that he knew of a spy in the British security services.

"It is a strange coincidence that death should have occurred such a short time after the writing of the note".

Dr McHugh said that Mr Skinner had been in contact with the KGB for many years, but that this was a "cover because he was a very patriotic man."

But she believed it would be difficult to make a verdict of accidental death or unlawful killing "stick" and said that the jury could always return an open verdict. The jury thought otherwise.

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From Craig Seton.

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