

Police teams to fight intimidation of working miners

By Sheila Beardall and Julian Haviland

Special teams of detectives are being formed to combat intimidation of working miners and their families, Mr Leon Brittan, the Home Secretary, told MPs yesterday.

Extra uniformed officers are being placed in villages identified as high intimidation areas, "patrolling on foot throughout the day and increasing levels of activity during the high risk periods," he said.

Miners are being encouraged to report all incidents "with the assurance by the police that they will be investigated and wherever possible charges brought."

Mr Brittan faced constant barracking during Question Time from Labour MPs, and repeated demands for an inquiry into police tactics, which led the Speaker, Mr Bernard Weatherill, to call for "calmness and seriousness".

Mr Brittan, clashed angrily with the Labour MP for Bolsover, Mr Dennis Skinner, who criticized the drafting of 12,000 police to the Midlands coal field.

He told Mr Skinner: "If you wish to be taken remotely seriously on law and order, I would like to hear you condemn those involved in the mining dispute who have been responsible for threatening the families of people going to work."

"I want to hear you condemning those who damage property, those who daub paint and those who engage in violent activity on a massive scale."

The daubing of paint on doors and windows and throwing it over a litter of kittens,

killing one, was barbaric, Mr Brittan said.

The Labour MP for Mansfield, Mr Don Concannon, also faced heckling from his own side as he condemned intimidation. Mr Skinner was heard calling him "copper's nark".

Mr Gerald Kaufman, Labour home affairs spokesman, criticized the "palming and fingerprinting" of Mrs Ann Scargill. He and other Labour MPs

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called for an inquiry into the creation of "no-go areas", the prevention of freedom of movement and fears that a national police force was being set up.

Mr Brittan rejected the requests and said that he hoped those with material to lay complaints against the police followed the statutory complaints procedure. He said that there was no question of a national police force.

Mr Ian MacGregor, chairman of the National Coal Board, is to meet Mr Stanley Orme, chief Labour spokesman on energy, on Monday to hear Mr Orme's account of his meeting on Wednesday with Mr Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers.

But neither the coal board nor the Labour Party had more than the faintest hope yesterday that the meeting would help to promote a resolution of the miners' dispute.

Mr Orme invited Mr Scargill and other members of the union executive to the Commons on behalf of the Labour Party leadership, for talks to try to break the log-jam. But it became clear yesterday that the party learned little about the union's position that was not known before.

Mr Scargill and his colleagues did not move in private from their public position that they were happy to meet the coal board at any time, but would not discuss pit closures or redundancies.

One Labour Party source said yesterday that a "very stony path" lay ahead. Mr Orme's objective on Monday will be to bring Mr MacGregor and Mr Scargill together for talks, on any basis and in any forum that can be agreed. If he succeeds the party will count it a triumph.

The reason for Labour's reluctant intervention has been the growing despondency of Mr Neil Kinnock and colleagues at their impotence. They are content to know that Mr Orme's efforts can do no harm.

● The idea of an arbitrator is winning increasing support among miners' leaders seeking "middle ground" to end the ten-week pit strike (Our Labour Reporter writes).

Mr Gordon Butler, Secretary of the Derbyshire area, said yesterday that an independent body could be a way out of the impasse.

The idea emerged from the meeting between Mr Orme and Mr Scargill.

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The Times (London, England), Friday, May 18, 1984; pg. 1; Issue 61834. (668 words)

Category: News

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Gale Document Number:CS17141426