
Steelmen to defy Scargill threat

By Paul Routledge
Labour Editor

Leaders of the main steel union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, intend to defy an ultimatum from Mr Arthur Scargill that they should cut down coal supplies to the steel works.

The National Union of Mineworkers has given the steelmen until midnight tonight to seek a national agreement with the miners' national coordinating committee or face a complete blockade of coal and coke.

The ISTC executive meets in Scarborough today for the opening of the steel workers' annual conference, and may be called into special session to discuss the growing threat to the five integrated steel works.

But such a meeting will not take place before Mr Scargill's ultimatum runs out and ISTC leaders were last night bitterly complaining about being placed in such a situation by another union belonging to the "triple alliance" of coal, steel and rail unions.

"We wouldn't accept a deadline like that from the employers so why should we take it from the NUM", one leading official said.

The mineworkers' national executive agreed on Thursday that unless there was a national agreement on how much coal and coke could go into the steel plants then all supplies could be cut off.

The miners say that just enough coal should be allowed to stop the blast furnaces and coke ovens from collapsing but not enough to make steel.

The steel workers' union has told members to make local agreements with the NUM on the supply of coal and where these break down to work normally, using such consignments as the British Steel Corporation can obtain.

● All miners will receive a letter from Mr Ian MacGregor at the end of this week or the beginning of next which will try to encourage the slow drift back to work by pointing out the industry's bright future (Barrie Clement writes).

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