

Thatcher refuses to yield over Orgreave mob

By Anthony Bevins and Craig Seton

The Prime Minister and senior Cabinet colleagues yesterday drummed home the concerted message that neither the Orgreave mob nor Mr Arthur Scargill's striking faction could or would be allowed to win.

The political determination came as Mr Peter Wright, Chief Constable of South Yorkshire, appealed to miners' leaders to help reduce the level of violence at the "battleground" of Orgreave and an unrepentant Mr Scargill, the miner's president, accused the police of "blind hatred" towards pickets.

Mrs Margaret Thatcher told Mr Kinnock in the Commons that she was astonished by his suggestion that because one faction of the mineworkers' union should adopt the disgraceful tactics of mob violence and intimidation at Orgreave, they should be given what they wanted.

Mr Leon Brittan, the Home Secretary, was more graphic. He

told MPs later: "If a highwayman holds you up, it is always possible to avoid violence by handing over to him what he wants."

Mr Norman Tebbit, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, was more personal and more political. He suggested in a BBC radio interview: "Even the leadership of the Labour Party is now trying to escape from the embrace of Mr Scargill, because they know that when Mr Scargill goes down, if they have not escaped from his embrace, they will go down too."

Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, confined himself to a statement. He said: "Last week, there were times when there were no pickets at Orgreave. But Mr Scargill wished to illustrate that the mob was still available."

The three ministers, those most closely involved in masterminding the government response to the dispute, had

earlier met the Prime Minister at No 10 to discuss Orgreave.

Mrs Thatcher said in the Commons that there could be no concession to the mob's demands.

"If we were to do that, we would lose in two ways," she said. "We would be asking the National Coal Board to adopt a policy which would destroy the prospects of an efficient industry and, second, we would be accepting that violence and intimidation were an acceptable part of industrial relations."

She then challenged Mr Kinnock to denounce picket line violence, which he did. He then appealed to her to appreciate the strong basis for a negotiated settlement.

Mrs Thatcher replied that 50,000 miners were working. "I note he is against those miners who are working," she said, adding later: "These violent tactics have been used to try to

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impose the will of one faction of the NUM on the rest."

Later, in response to an emergency question from Dr David Owen, leader of the Social Democratic Party, Mr Brittan insisted that ministers would not stand in the way if British Steel decided to seek injunctions against secondary picketing.

As the political battle raged, police and the miners' leaders exchanged charge and counter charge over Monday's clashes at Orgreave in which 79 people were injured and 93 men arrested, 24 of whom were charged with rioting.

Mr Wright, pledging that his men would remain in force at the coking plant near Sheffield as long as they were needed, denied that police used excessive force to disperse 10,000 miners and their supporters in what had been a riot. He accused Mr Scargill and the NUM of being "obsessed" with stopping coke leaving Orgreave for the Scunthorpe steel works.

Mr Wright's comments came after Mr Scargill's release from a Rotherham hospital where he had been treated for a head injury he insisted had been

inflicted by a policeman wielding a riot shield, an allegation disputed by police officers who maintained that he had fallen down and banged his head.

Responding to Mr Scargill's allegation of blind hatred, Mr Wright said: "We are in a mining community. We are policing a mining community and our concern for them is sincere."

Referring to a report by Mr Tony Clement, assistant chief constable, that the police would carry out their own inquiry into an incident on television in which a policeman stuck a miner several times over the head with a truncheon, he said that officers could draw their truncheons and use them only in self-defence and then they were to aim for the arm or leg. That was a clear direction. He did not think that what had apparently happened in that incident was right.

● Molten metal broke through the walls of one of the blast furnaces at the British Steel Corporation's Scunthorpe works yesterday. The furnace has been damped down for about 10 weeks because of fuel shortages, and could be out of action for about three weeks

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