

# MacGregor in 'no victory' warning to NUM

By David Felton, Labour Correspondent

Mr Ian MacGregor, chairman of the National Coal Board, yesterday issued a warning to miners that under no circumstances would he allow the National Union of Mineworkers to win a victory in the coal strike and that he was prepared to sit out the dispute until the end of the year or longer.

His broadside, contained in an uncompromising letter delivered to the homes of 178,000 miners, came as the NUM and the steelworkers' union agreed to hold talks to resolve the inter-union dispute over coal supplies to the five big steel plants.

Mr Arthur Scargill, the miners' president, rejected an appeal from the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation that the coal blockade of the plants be lifted while the talks were held. He indicated that his union may move to halt deliveries of iron ore to steel works if there is no agreement next week. Such a move would almost certainly lead to the closure of the plants.

Mr MacGregor's letter linked a warning of the consequences of a long dispute, involving the possible loss of between 20 and 30 pits, with an appeal for a return to work and allegations that miners were being deliberately misled by Mr Scargill.

The miners' president replied last night that it was Mr MacGregor who could not be trusted and the letter only served to stiffen his members' determination to win the dispute.

The letter said that no matter how long the strike went on, the board was determined to end up with roughly the same size of industry as was outlined last March. That entailed the loss of about 20,000 jobs and the closure of 20 pits in the present financial year.

It declared: "The leaders of the NUM have talked of it (the strike) continuing into winter. Now that our talks with them have broken down this is a real possibility. It could go on to December or even longer, in which case the consequences for everybody will be grave.

"Your president talks continually of keeping the strike going indefinitely until he achieves victory. I would like to tell you, not provocatively or as a threat, why that will not happen however long the strike lasts."

Speaking on Independent Television News, Mr MacGregor said that he expected a dramatic response to his return to work plea. "We have heard from a number of people about their desire to go back to work. I would not have written the letter unless I had clearly understood that the movement was afoot", he said.

Mr MacGregor's optimism that there is a large body of miners eager to return to work means that the board will not seek to take legal action against the union's programme of secondary picketing while there

is a chance of encouraging significant numbers to break the strike.

He claimed that the 120,000 pitmen on strike included "a very large number out of work because of intimidation", and indicated that he believed his letter, which is being reprinted in full-page advertisements today in some national newspapers, would be instrumental in breaking the strike.

A meeting last night of railway and transport unions with NUM leaders decided to ignore the plea from the steel

**A planned visit by the Queen to perform the official opening of the Selby coalfield in North Yorkshire next Thursday has been called off. Buckingham Palace announced yesterday. An official said that the decision had been taken on the advice of ministers and the National Coal Board, but it was hoped that the visit might take place at a future date.**

workers for the blockade to be lifted for the time being.

Mr Scargill rejected a statement made by Mr William Sims, general secretary of the steel union, at its conference in Scarborough that sufficient coal should be allowed into the plants to allow a reduced level of production.

He said that his union was appealing to the steel workers for the same level of support given by the miners to the steel men during their 13-week strike in 1980.

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## Portfolio card available

Cards for *Times Portfolio*, the new Stock Exchange game, are being distributed and should be available free in newsagents today or tomorrow depending on area.

The game, which starts on Monday, allows contestants the opportunity to win £2,000 each day and £20,000 weekly prize on the movement of shares in the *Times Portfolio* list of 40 shares.

Instructions on how to play and how to claim are printed on the back of the personal share card which gives each player eight unique Portfolio numbers. (Full rules for the game are published in the information Service on the back page today).

The game is free to enter and purchase of *The Times* is not a condition for taking part. This weekend's *Sunday Times Magazine* will also contain cards. Anyone having difficulty obtaining one should send a stamped addressed envelope to

The Times Portfolio  
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