

No accord between NUM and steelmen

By David Felton, Labour Correspondent

Steelworkers' and miners' union leaders were yesterday as far apart as ever after an abortive meeting called to agree on the level of coke and coal supplies to the five big integrated steel plants.

As a result of there not being agreement between the two unions, the TUC will become tentatively involved in the four-month miners' strike for the first time on Monday when a special meeting of the 14 unions on the TUC steel committee will be held.

The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation will seek the support of the other unions at that meeting in their rejection of the demands from the National Union of Mine-workers that steel production should cease.

Neither the ISTC nor the NUM modified its position at yesterday's 90-minute meeting of the two union executives, with the steelmen insisting that to agree to NUM demands would be "tantamount to calling a national steel strike".

The miners want to limit the steel plants to sufficient coal to safeguard the blast furnaces but not allow any production. Mr Arthur Scargill, the miners' president, said after the meeting that a further meeting of the transport unions organizing the blockade of the steel plants would be held on Monday evening and hinted that the action could be intensified if there was no agreement with the steelmen.

Monday's meeting of the steel committee is seen as a significant step because several large unions which have previously voiced their support of the miners are represented on the committee and will be "put on the spot", according to one union source.

Those unions include the Transport and General Workers Union, which is taking part in the steel blockade, and the General, Municipal, Boilmakers and Allied Trades Union whose leader Mr David Basnett has on several occasions declared his support for the miners' fight against pit closures.

The NUM and ISTC will meet again after the steel committee but it is unlikely that the miners' pledge to call on the transport unions to halt imports of all foreign steel will be sufficient to persuade the steelmen to halt production.

The rail unions' blockade of iron ore supplies to Ravenscraig steel plant in Lanarkshire became effective yesterday after which the British Steel Corporation decided to start running supplies into the works from Monday, using convoys of lorries.

Lorry convoys are already being used at Llanwern, Gwent, South Wales, and it is feared that the Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire could again become a focus of mass picketing. The plant is said to

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have nearly exhausted its supplies of coal and BSC will have to decide whether to restart lorry convoys there.

Working miners in Nottinghamshire have had big successes in branch elections which ended yesterday and the new area council of the NUM will consist almost entirely of delegates who are defying the strike.

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