

# Rail unions to ask TUC for blockade to support miners

By Paul Routledge, Philip Webster and Barrie Clement

A concerted initiative to halt the movement of coal, coke and iron ore is to be made by unions sympathetic to the miners' strike.

Train drivers and railwaymen are submitting an amendment to a policy motion from the National Union of Mineworkers to next month's Trades Union Congress, calling for a blockade of energy supplies and the raw material needed for steel-making.

That is in addition to a proposal that all 100 TUC-affiliated unions should not cross NUM picket lines wherever they are set up, including outside power stations.

Those are the industrial measures which the National Union of Railwaymen and Aslef are putting forward as part of a strategic package to back the pit strike, which today goes into its twenty-second week.

But suggestions of a coordi-

nated campaign of industrial action by the large trade unions in support of the miners during the early autumn are not regarded seriously by either the political or industrial leaders of the labour movement.

Indeed, they were treated with rueful scorn by union leaders who attended last Wednesday's "London summit" of nine unions.

Although some union leaders individually have advocated an all-out confrontation with the Government - the so-called "big bang" approach - it was made clear yesterday that Mr Neil Kinnock, the Labour Leader, does not believe that such a concerted move will happen and that there is no organized plan of action by the union leaders.

"There is no grand plan of mayhem at all", one left-wing union leader who was at the summit said. "If only there was

- but the trade union movement doesn't work like that."

A bigger role for the TUC is envisaged by unions supporting the strike, but it will not extend to negotiating on behalf of the miners, who are traditionally mistrustful of handing over any of their power to the TUC since the so-called "great betrayal" of 1926.

However, the TUC is regarded as an appropriate mechanism to channel funds to the NUM, which has indicated that it needs £200,000 a week to run its operations.

The idea of a levy on members of affiliated unions, first proposed months ago, is likely to be revived at the Brighton congress, which starts on September 3.

The Labour leadership is unhappy at the prospect of the miners' dispute dominating politics through the summer and autumn, up to the TUC conference and the Labour Party conference in Blackpool.

Mr Stan Orme, Labour's energy spokesman, who last week saw National Coal Board and mineworkers' leaders yet again in an attempt to bring the sides closer together, is continuing to offer himself in the role of conciliator.

Despite the obvious lack of a joint union campaign of action, members of the Shadow Cabinet regard it as inevitable that the dispute will intensify during the summer.

Interviewed on BBC radio yesterday, Mr Rod Todd, general secretary-elect of the Transport and General Workers' Union, said it would be "totally unrealistic" to say the labour movement was planning a kind of general strike in support of the miners.

He said that there might be some logic in the "big bang" theory if it meant one huge onslaught of disruption by trade unions, but he strongly doubted if all trade unionists were going to "go on the march".

But Mr Todd pledged his complete support for tougher motions of support for miners going before Congress in September. "People have come to realize that it is time that the TUC indicated positive supportive action."

The Government had attempted to "bludgeon" the miners into submission and was hell-bent on the destruction of the trade union movement.

Private permits row, page 2

## Settlement hinges on delegates' talks

By Our Labour Reporter

The possibility of a settlement of the miners' strike now hinges firmly on the national delegates' conference next Friday. Mr Ian MacGregor, chairman of the National Coal Board, made it clear yesterday that his "final offer" could be withdrawn if pitmen's leaders show no sign of acceptance.

If efforts to find a "mechanism for compromise" were rejected he may be forced to abandon it, he said on the Channel Four television programme, *Face the Press*.

Meanwhile, the coal board will be watching the number of pitmen turning up for work today after the summer break. Last week 129 pits were due to be closed for a two-week holiday period; today the figure will be down to 43. Privately the board held out little hope last night for a surge back to the pits.

Speaking to journalists on the Channel Four programme Mr MacGregor said he had evidence that "a very large" number of employees wanted to get back to work. What dismayed him was that their only reason for not doing so was their fear of intimidation and

physical violence to themselves and their families.

Of peace talks he said: "We negotiated in good faith. I am afraid that I have come to the conclusion that the people on the other side of the table were not doing the same." He hoped that on Friday many of the 220 delegates would show more willingness to compromise than their national executive which meets the day before.

The coal board is not expecting open splits to emerge from the private conference, at Sheffield, but is hoping to discern, as one board official said, "tiny cracks on the surface which will represent deeper fissure underneath".

The coal board chairman did not see the stoppage, now in its twenty-second week, as a battle of wills between himself and Mr Arthur Scargill, the miner's president. But he added: "I think Mr Scargill has certain objectives. Some of these are of interest to members of the NUM; others go far beyond that."

The industry would take about two years to recover from the strike, Mr MacGregor said, and would endanger his long term plans.

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