

Union coordinated picket violence, says police chief

By Peter Davenport

Senior police officers last night laid the blame for the latest outburst of picket line violence directly at the door of leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers.

The accusation, the most pointed so far in the 22-week dispute, came after the second violent confrontation in 24 hours between police and striking miners at the Hasworth Colliery on the border of Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire.

Police battled with 800 pickets who stoned the cars of working miners, police vehicles, coal lorries, and even a routine service bus passing the pit gates.

There were 95 arrests and houses near by were damaged as pickets rampaged through gardens collecting rocks, stones and other missiles. The confrontation was only broken up after senior officers ordered in mounted police.

Last night 59 men, all but two charged with unlawful assembly and threatening behaviour, were bailed at special courts in Mansfield.

The man in charge of the operation Chief Supt Derek Shentall, was unequivocal in apportioning blame: "There is no doubt that this was coordi-

nated by NUM representatives outside Nottinghamshire and would-be demonstrators are briefed as to their conduct."

Nottinghamshire's deputy Chief Constable Tony Tyler

Ministers briefed on coal dispute

The Prime Minister last night called an hour's meeting of ministers closely involved in the coal dispute, before her expected departure today to Switzerland on holiday.

They were given a report on the state of the dispute by Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, who will be responsible for calling any ministerial meetings required during Mrs Margaret Thatcher's absence.

said the attacks were organized and coordinated.

"I have in my possession maps of this county with the collieries marked on, with directions how to reach certain collieries and an instruction as to which colliery people will go to, the time they will arrive there and what time the shift changes take place", he said.

Mr Shentall said that those organizing the pickets, unless they condoned the use of violence, should make it clear that future demonstrations should be peaceful and that stone-throwing was dangerous. The latest confrontation happened at the lunchtime shift change at Harworth yesterday and followed a commando-style raid by 1,000 pickets on Tuesday evening.

The same evening they also attacked the Silverhill colliery 30 miles away at Sutton in Ashfield and later 50 of them smashed windows at the headquarters of the neighbouring coal board area in Doncaster.

After the new style hit-and-run attacks senior police officers launched a big investigation aimed at identifying and arresting those organizing the columns of pickets.

At about 3pm up to 1,000 pickets descended on the Silverhill colliery arriving in a convoy of cars and a cattle truck. Working miners at the pit were already underground and there was only a token police presence.

The strikers swarmed into the pit yard smashing windows in colliery buildings and damaging 22 cars belonging to working miners and pit officials. When police reinforcements were called the strikers began disperse but four officers were injured in violent scuffles.

Almost one hour later 1,000 strikers turned up 30 miles away at Harworth.

Windows in the pit canteen were smashed and women staff inside were, according to police, "frightened for their lives."

Police reinforcements were again summoned and two arrests were made. Altogether, in the incidents, nine police officers were hurt, three seriously.

The convoy of strikers then disappeared in the direction of Doncaster where 50 turned up later in cars and a cattle truck and stoned the area NCB headquarters, Coal House, smashing 15 windows causing damage estimated at £2,000.

The incidents followed an attack last week on an NCB haulage depot in Nottinghamshire in which lorries were

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Most pitmen working in West, says NCB

By Paul Routledge, Labour Editor

Fewer than one miner in three is now in strike in the National Coal Board's Western Area, and local management is urging the men to study the latest peace proposals in the hope that pit delegates will vote for their acceptance tomorrow.

Mr Jack Evans, deputy director of the area, said: "There are substantially more men at work than on strike. More than three out of five are reporting for work daily."

The NCB has put much of its effort to accelerate the drift back to work into this region, which covers Staffordshire, Lancashire, North Wales and Cumbria, and it appears to be paying off. At the height of the strike 8,300 men were out, but this

figure has fallen to 5,200, or 29.3 per cent of the workforce.

The return to work is most marked in the Cannock area of South Staffordshire, where the proportion of strikers has fallen from more than 47 per cent to less than 14 per cent.

A spokesman attributed the return to work in the Western Area to fading enthusiasm for industrial action.

"The battle lines have been drawn and a slit has occurred between those who are not in favour of the strike and those who want to continue to obey the official line. We hope that people grasp the significance of these figures."

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Police blame union for picket line violence

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damaged and the attack claimed by the self-styled "South Nottinghamshire Hit Squad" who pledge further raids.

Almost 400 police were sent to the Bevercotes Colliery, south of Retford, Nottinghamshire, when 1,000 flying pickets, mainly from Yorkshire, arrived as the afternoon shift ended. The police reported no violence and said they were in control of the situation but late last night the pickets were still outside the colliery.

Mr Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party, said that violence in the miners' dispute has no part in the British trade union movement. He was speaking in an interview on Granada television.

He described the scenes of violence as horrific and said

that people on the picket lines saw it as "playing Maggie's game".

"The only people who are gaining anything out of the violence - and I think frankly, without enjoying it, certainly willing to take whatever political benefit that comes from it - is the Government itself."

Meanwhile yesterday, Mr Ian MacGregor, chairman of the coal board, sent a personal letter to three working miners at the Renishaw Park colliery near Chesterfield assuring them their jobs were safe. They are among only 12 out of a workforce of 560 to defy the strike.

● Police are investigating a £7,000 trail of damage at a privately owned open-cast coal mine at Westerhope, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

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