

National docks strike threatened as union tries to stop coal ship

By Ronald Faux.

A national dock strike was threatened yesterday after talks broke down between the Transport and General Workers' Union and the British Steel Corporation over a coal shipment due at Hunterston terminal on the Clyde for the Ravenscraig works, near Motherwell.

The union represents 24 dockers seeking to cut coal supplies to the plant in support of the miners' strike.

They have threatened to walk out if the 87,000 tons of coal is brought in without assistance from tug boatmen, who belong to the union. Mr John Hardie, union area secretary, said that a dock strike in Scotland would be followed relatively quickly by a national strike.

A joint statement last night from the British Steel Corporation

and the Clyde port authority, said that an offer made by the dockers' representatives during the talks fell far short of the corporation's operational requirements in Scotland and had also been conditional on the agreement of trade union third parties.

The corporation had drawn up a plan of action which would not infringe the dock labour scheme. It was expected to be considered by the dock labour board on Monday for that view to be confirmed, and to satisfy the urgent need for coal at Ravenscraig.

The board is confident that the Ostia, carrying the shipment from Rotterdam, can berth at Hunterston without help from tugs, and then unload using mechanical grabs operated by Iron and Steel Trades Confederation members at Hunterston under an union agreement reached in 1979.

Mr Ronnie Mercer, BSC manager at Ravenscraig, said the corporation reserved the right to bring the ship in. "The cargo is vital."

The corporation did not intend to breach the scheme, and was asking registered dockers to work normally.

The Clyde port authority, gave assurances yesterday that nothing would be done to contravene the scheme, but said that any dockers who refused to handle the Ostia would be suspended without pay. Contravention of the scheme by BSC prompted the national dock strike last month because unregistered labour was used to unload iron ore at Immingham.

Secret committee attacks NUM

From a Staff Reporter

A newly formed, secret committee of working miners in Lancashire launched a vitriolic attack yesterday on full-time National Union of Mineworkers officials and union "bully boys who are like a cancer in our midst". And in an open letter to men still on strike they urged: "Get off your knees and get back to work."

The Lancashire working miners committee has been formed of 36 men from the collieries at Agecroft, Bickershaw, Golborne, Parsonage and Parkside where production is continuing and from the National Coal Board workshops at Walken and Kirkless.

They announced their creation in a letter to newspapers, radio and television stations and asked for their anonymity to be excused. "We would become the targets of bully boys destroying our great union. They are like a cancer in our midst."

The letter went on to attack full time union officials at area and national levels and called for a return to work throughout

the coalfields. One of the organizers, who did not wish to be named, later claimed they had been in touch with similarly-minded groups in Yorkshire, South Wales, Scotland, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire.

In the letter the working miners committee denied they were out to form a breakaway union but said they were trying to defend democracy within the NUM.

It claimed that a ballot was held in Lancashire in March and that 59 per cent of men voted to work. But then "due to intimidation, bully boy tactics and violence, men were forced to strike. This is dictatorship. The rank and file are the bread and butter of this union and they provide the expensive cars and high standard of living that area and national officials enjoy. So surely they should have a right in the running, organisation and decision making of the NUM?"

"This right is being taken away from you and dictatorship is taking over," the letter said.

Miners defy union to save pit

Safety cover at Bilston Glen colliery, near Edinburgh, was restored yesterday by 47 volunteer miners who walked past picket lines in defiance of a union instruction (Ronald Faux writes).

The National Union of Mineworkers had ordered the removal of safety cover at the pit, for the seventh time since the miner's strike began, because men had reported for work.

Power had been turned off below ground for 24 hours. According to the National Coal Board water was flooding into the mine at a rate of 1,000 gallons a minute and was threatening the two deepest faces, which are 2,500ft below ground. The board said that the pit was only hours away from being totally lost. The turnout included a variety of workers from winding enginemen to face workers.

The NUM in Scotland has largely rejected statements by the coal board that pits were being irreparably damaged by the withdrawal of safety cover, dubbing such claims as scare-mongering.



Mr John Jones (right), chairman of the Garw Lodge, makes a point to Mr Monty Morgan, rebel miner, in his garden yesterday.

Drivers stop rebel from working

From Tim Jones, Cardiff

The only miner to defy the strike in south Wales failed to report for work yesterday, because two coach drivers sent to his home by the coal board, refused to cross picket lines.

Mr Monty Morgan, aged 54, said that he would try again on Monday in spite of warnings from the mineworkers' union that if he succeeded all safety cover would be withdrawn at the Garw pit, Blaengarw, mid Glamorgan.

There were violent scenes outside the pit on Thursday, as hundreds of pickets laid siege to the colliery and fought running battles with police.

As Mr Morgan waited for the bus yesterday, about 50 pickets gathered outside his council home in Bettws, warning that

he would require a permanent police guard even after the strike was over.

Police, who had mounted an all-night guard outside his home, stood by at dawn when Mr Morgan took his three dogs for a walk.

Mr Morgan said: "I am determined not to give in to intimidation, and will definitely try to go to work on Monday. When the bus did not stop, my heart sank. I thought of calling a taxi, but I would have had to get one from outside the area."

Mr John Jones, the lodge chairman at Garw had a heated conversation with Mr Morgan in the back garden of the house, and said his action was putting the whole colliery at risk as no one would work with him.

Pit strike 'enforced by mobs'

Continued from page 1

Talking of the delegate conference, Mr Walker said that the public had seen the treatment given to delegates who expressed their democratic views. "These decent men have been spat at and have had their cars kicked in - all the methods of abhorrent violence which the country has witnessed in recent weeks have been used by the mob."

He called on Mr Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party, to renew his call for a national ballot on the strike.

Referring to Mr Scargill's reported allegation that some 70 pits would be closed, Mr Walker said: "this is the sort of tripe and total untruth we constantly have from him. He is lying."

National docks strike threatened as union tries to stop coal ship.

By Ronald Faux and From Tim Jones.

The Times (London, England), Saturday, Aug 11, 1984; pg. 2; Issue 61907. (1111 words)

Category: News

© Times Newspapers Limited

Gale Document Number:CS33787659