

## The miners' dispute

# Scots pit faces lost, coal board claims

From Ronald Faux, Edinburgh

Two production faces at the Castlehill pit in Fife are to be abandoned with the loss of several hundred jobs and equipment worth £1.6m, the National Coal Board in Scotland announced yesterday. The board directly blamed the damage caused by neglect during the miners' strike for the decision and what it said was the consistent refusal of the National Union of Mineworkers to allow sufficient men into the pit to carry out repair work.

The immediate reaction from the NUM headquarters in Edinburgh yesterday was that the board's announcement ranked as another ploy to intimidate men back to work.

Inspectors from the union are to visit Castlehill at the earliest opportunity, however, to examine the alleged damage.

A statement from the coal board said that two faces were to be closed. They had been responsible for half the daily output of 2,000 tonnes from the mine, which is in the Longannet complex. Tunnels leading to face lines and faces themselves had deteriorated badly. Only part of the coal-cutting equipment could be recovered.

Meanwhile, the dispute over the number of miners returning to work continued, with the coal board insisting that the drift back to the pits was continuing and the union saying the

board's campaign had failed. The coal board's version of the number of miners working was that 82 men had reported for work at Bilston Glen, near Edinburgh, yesterday and that with others at the remaining nine Scottish pits, the figure was approaching the hundred mark.

That arithmetic was scornfully dismissed by Mr George Bolton, vice-president of the NUM in Scotland, who said that the coal board was including "pit cats and fleas" when it counted the number of miners working. He said that fewer men were going in to Bilston Glen than at the start of the week.

Mr Bolton said he could

certify that 36 men only were working in the Scottish area. There was a solitary man working in Fife and the union was offering a reward to anyone who could produce the "invisible scab" who the coal board claimed was working at Scafield colliery.

The miners working at Bilston Glen are investigating the possibility of legal action against the union in the Scottish courts to force a ballot.

The miners, led by Mr Harry Fettes, a face worker, have approached the legal firm of W & J Durness, of Edinburgh, for advice on the possibility of court action after the initiative of two Yorkshire miners.

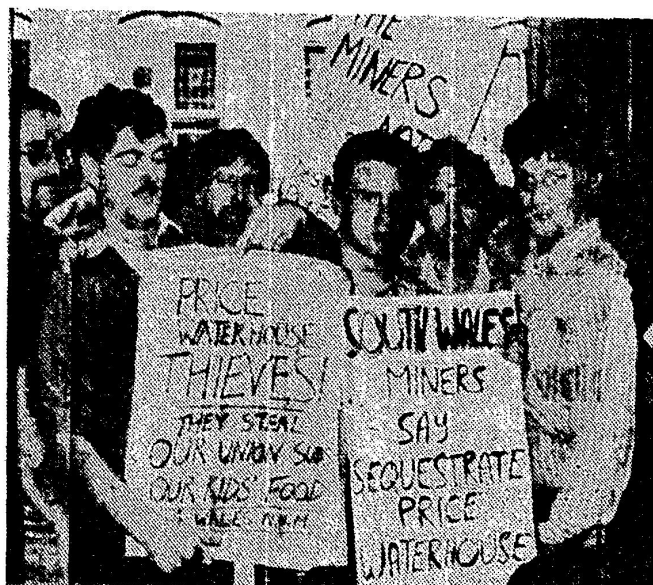
## Hauliers told to ignore letter

Haulage firms defying pickets were urged by the Confederation of British Industry yesterday to ignore a letter from the leader of South Yorkshire County Council telling them to stop moving coal. The letter was described as "preposterous and deplorable."

Sent by Mr Roy Thwaites, who expressed concern about the level of violence at the Orgreave plant, it told haulage firms that they were substantial and valued suppliers of goods and services to the council and requested them to stop moving coal.

Mr Thwaites said yesterday: "The letter is what it appears to be, a genuine attempt by SYCC to discover if it can help in stopping disturbances which have been occurring during the miners' strike".

● The Yorkshire area of the National Union of Mineworkers has threatened to picket



Sign language: Striking miners spell out their feelings during their occupation of the Price Waterhouse offices yesterday.

unregistered wharves on the Trent after the disclosure that the British Steel Corporation has begun to use Flixborough wharf to import iron ore for its Scunthorpe works.

● Mr Peter Walker, Sec-

retary of State for Energy, begins a two-week holiday in Greece today with the Government clearly expecting no significant developments in the miners' strike until the Trades Union Congress in September.

## Nalgo will debate donations

By Our Labour Correspondent

A special conference is to be held in October as part of a campaign to prevent Britain's fourth largest union from making any further donations to the miners' strike without an individual secret ballot of the membership.

The conference, of the National and Local Government Officers Association (Nalgo) will be held in London after 50 branches requested it. Union officials are convinced that the campaign is being organised by Conservative Trade Unionists, which has a strong membership within Nalgo.

So far the union has given more than £46,000 to the miners' appeal funds, of which £10,000 was a gift agreed by the Nalgo executive, £13,000 cash donations from branches and the remainder collected as a result of a conference decision

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From Ronald Faux.

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