

Docks employers predict vote for national strike

● Port employers predicted that dock union leaders would decide today to call for a national strike in support of Scottish dockers in dispute over the unloading of a coal carrier.

● Mr Roy Hattersley issued the strongest Labour condemnation so far of violence and intimidation, on picket lines in the miners' strike, blaming a tiny minority

● Leaders of 14 unions called for the coal board and miners' union to reopen talks based on the peace initiative put forward by Mr Stanley Orme, Labour's energy spokesman.

● The Plan For Coal, a document signed in 1974 by the NCB, NUM, and the Labour Government, has been resurrected as a possible basis for further talks Page 2

By Glen Allan and Ronald Faux

Dock union leaders meet in London today to decide how to support 2,500 colleagues in Scotland due out on strike from 8am this morning. Port employers predicted last night that the conference of the Transport and General Workers' Union docks committee would decide on a national strike.

The Scottish dockers were asked to strike after the bulk carrier Ostia berthed yesterday at the Hunterston terminal on the Clyde carrying a cargo of coal for the Ravenscraig steel works.

The vessel was tied up without help from tugboat men or quayside workers, who are members of the TGWU. Unloading of the 93,000 tonnes of coking coal began after dockside cranes were operated by members of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation.

Eighteen dockers walked out and their union called on dock workers throughout Scotland to support them. It has been attempting to reduce the supplies of coal to Ravenscraig to strengthen the effects of the miners' strike.

Mr Nicholas Finney, director of the National Association of Port Employers, said: "We are powerless to intervene. The dispute involves purely the TGWU and the British Steel Corporation. It is one of the great frustrations in this dispute that there is really no action we can take at present."

Mr John Connolly, the

union's national docks officer, said: "A national dock strike has been on the cards from day one in this dispute. There is bound to be strong support for it at tomorrow's conference."

Any conference decision will have to be endorsed by a recalled delegate conference later this month and last night it became apparent that there would be opposition from dockers at Felixstowe, Britain's biggest private port, for any strike action.

Mr Bill Sirs, general secretary of the ISTC, said that his members were being trapped in a dispute which essentially involved other workers.

"For many weeks we have been 'piggy in the middle' of warring factions when all we want to do is get on with our own job and make sure the industry survives. My members are not aggravating anyone. It is the miners who are trying to bring closure on another industry."

"If the dockers go on strike, that is their business, not mine at all. My members' job is to unload the Ostia because that is their right, and it is a right we hold on to," Mr Sirs said.

Mr Clive Lewis, Scottish organizer of the ISTC, said that although his union supported the miners' struggle to preserve jobs, his members were not prepared to commit industrial suicide. He was very relieved that Ravenscraig would receive the coking coal,

It would still be three or four days before the delivery arrived, by which time the coke ovens at the steel plant would be seriously short of coal. "We are in great danger of losing ovens as it is", he said.

Sir James Cleminson, president of the Confederation of British Industry, said that a national dock strike could wreck Britain's economic recovery.

"There is one basic lesson that some trade unions have yet to learn: strikes do not preserve jobs, they destroy them", Sir James said.

"The miners' strike has already done some damage, particularly to the coal industry. Another dock strike would be infinitely more serious."

"The impact would be almost immediate in some industries. Within a few weeks it could bring nearly three-quarters of British industry to a standstill and put millions of pounds worth of trade and millions of jobs in jeopardy."

● Mr Tom King, Secretary of State for Employment, also said that a national dock strike would put at risk hundreds of thousands of jobs throughout Britain (Our Political Reporter writes).

The Government appears to be taking a low-key attitude to the possibility of another strike, and there were no special meetings of ministers called to consider the industrial situation.

Hattersley condemns picket violence

By Philip Webster, Political Reporter

Mr Roy Hattersley last night issued the Labour Party's strongest condemnation so far of violence and intimidation on the miners' picket lines.

In a speech that will infuriate the left, Mr Hattersley, deputy leader and Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, said that the violence was perpetrated by a tiny minority and loathed by most striking miners and must not be allowed to prejudice the miners' just case.

Labour could have no truck with violence in any form, including stone throwing, window breaking, bus burning and acts of intimidation against the families and properties of individuals.

In remarks clearly directed against Mr Arthur Scargill, the miners' president, Mr Hattersley said that a political strike did not deserve to succeed. It must be made clear that the strike was an industrial, not political, struggle.

Mrs Margaret Thatcher had to be defeated in a general election. "If we pretend that we can bring her down by direct action, we deceive ourselves and delude our comrades."

Mr Neil Kinnock, the party leader, has been attacked by the left for his denunciations of violence during the dispute. It has accused him of "dancing to the Tory tune" but Mr Hattersley's remarks, in a speech to the Boilermakers' Union in Manchester, seemed likely to provoke outrage on the left.

Mr Hattersley said that if the miners stuck to the industrial arguments they were set fair to

secure the long-term future of their industry; but that would only come about if the miners maintained the support of the people, the trade union movement and the millions who were trade union members.

He went on: "The miners will not receive that support if we allow the Tory Party to propagate the lie that the miners are less concerned with saving the pits than with bringing down the democratically elected government."

Mr Hattersley said that a strike with political as distinct from industrial aims "would never succeed, nor deserve to succeed".

He said: "A strike dependent on violence and intimidation would neither secure the miners' interests nor deserve to do so. The mining dispute is not a political strike, and a massive majority of miners have no wish to make it one."

Mr Hattersley said the mining dispute should have ended months ago. The Prime Minister saw it as the chance to make an example of the traditionally most determined union in Britain. "I have no doubt that Mrs Thatcher actually wants the dispute to continue."

Much that Mr Ian MacGregor, chairman of the National Coal Board, did and almost all he said seemed designed to enrage the miners and to convince even the most moderate members of their union that he was the implacable enemy of unions and unionists, Mr Hattersley said.

Letters, page 9

Unions call for new pit talks

By Our Labour Correspondent

The leaders of 14 unions last night added their weight to calls for the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers to reopen talks on the basis of the Labour Party peace initiative, the existence of which was at first denied by Mr Ian MacGregor, chairman of the coal board.

A statement from the unions, who represent both left and right wings of the Labour movement, demanded an immediate resumption of negotiations within the framework of a formula drawn up by Mr Stanley Orme, Labour's energy spokesman.

A spokesman for the coal board said yesterday that Mr MacGregor had misunderstood Mr Scargill in the television debate on Wednesday night and had believed that the union's president was referring to brand new proposals.

Meanwhile, in another development in the six-month strike, the coal board offered to pay the 5.2 per cent pay offer to working miners if they would agree to drop the overtime ban which has operated in the industry since last November. Miners who have been working mainly in Nottinghamshire have all maintained a common front on the overtime ban, which was called by the union after the rejection of the pay offer.

The statement from the 14 unions said: "We view with total dismay the conduct of the chairman of the NCB who Continued on page 2, col 4

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By Glen Allan and Ronald Faux.

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