

# Miners retreat on 10p union levy

By Our Labour Correspondent

Miners' leaders have withdrawn their support from a call to be made at next week's Trades Union Congress in Brighton that a 10p a week levy of all trade unionists should be organized to support their strike. This was being interpreted last night as an indication that the miners' leadership is concerned over the level of support that other unions may be prepared to offer.

Yesterday the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) also refused to bring forward an executive meeting due to take place on Thursday. That would have allowed early talks with the TUC hierarchy on the miners' contribution at next week's Congress.

Mr Len Murray, the TUC general secretary, and Mr Ray Buckton, the train drivers' leader, who is this year's TUC chairman, had a meeting in London yesterday with Mr Roger Birch, the Chief Constable of Sussex, to discuss policing in Brighton next week where there is expected to be a mass lobby of the Congress by as many as 20,000 striking miners.

A meeting of the TUC "inner cabinet" the finance and general purposes committee, decided to "seek the cooperation of the NUM in taking all steps open to them, to ensure that any lobbies of Congress are properly stewarded and controlled." The unprecedented visit by Sussex police chiefs to Congress House indicated the concern being felt by many senior union officials at the prospect of disturbances at Brighton.

The NUM decision to refuse early talks with the TUC was conveyed to Mr Murray by Mr Peter Heathfield, the NUM general secretary, in a telephone call yesterday. The earliest an NUM-TUC meeting could now take place would be Thursday

night in Brighton; it is likely to be held on Friday.

There was evidence yesterday that some senior union leaders are losing patience with the NUM's refusal to agree to talks and the muted threat has been made to the miners' leadership that the TUC general council will wish to make a statement to next week's Congress, whether or not talks are held before. Wishing to have such a



**Mr Birch: Responsible for policing the Congress.**

statement, the finance and general purpose committee recommended yesterday that talks with the NUM had to be held before the weekend, when union delegations in Brighton will be meeting to decide their position on various motions.

The 10p a week levy idea had been put forward by the National Union of Railwaymen in collaboration with the NUM and was due to be discussed at Congress as an amendment to the miners' own motion which calls for "total support" from the rest of the trade union movement.

The fact that the miners have decided not to accept the amendment was said by union sources last night to show that having done the arithmetic of

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likely support at Brighton, the miners had decided that the levy proposal would endanger the main call for backing. A key union in that arithmetic was the 800,000 - strong white-collar union Nalgo which is facing internal criticism over donations to the miners and could have been expected to oppose a levy.

The miners have also, as expected, rejected a call for a 24-hour strike in their support from the furniture workers union, but they are prepared to accept a train drivers' call for all unions not to cross NUM picket lines, and the seamen's demand that unions should not handle "black" coal and iron ore.

Union leaders on the centre-right of the general council,

leaving yesterday's committee meeting, said they were optimistic that a statement for Congress could be agreed between the general council and the NUM. Mr David Basnett, leader of the general and municipal workers, said the TUC could help in alleviating hardship, helping the NUM's financial difficulties and encouraging negotiations for a settlement of the dispute.

● In a Harris poll commissioned by Independent Television News, 71 per cent of respondents opposed the levy idea and 29 per cent supported it, ITN said yesterday. Industrial action in support of the miners was opposed by 79 per cent and supported by 21 per cent.

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