

# Shipments diverted to beat strike

By Edward Townsend, Industrial Correspondent

More than 65 per cent of Britain's imports and exports is getting through to customers without hindrance despite the docks strike, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce reported yesterday.

The association said many of its members are resorting to ingenious methods to maintain their businesses but are keeping their ideas secret for fear of retaliation by strikers.

The strike has held up some shipments of bulk materials and liquids but suppliers are re-ordering and having loads split into smaller amounts and landed at strike-free ports.

The association has recorded instances of grain, animal feedstuffs and oils used in food manufacture being diverted and successfully imported that way.

A national survey of the impact of the strike is being conducted by the association. The results are expected within 10 days. A spokesman said: "There are no shortages, but the strike will prove to be time-consuming and a hassle and it will certainly turn out to be very costly indeed".

The National Association of Port Employers said last night that there were 8,570 registered dockworkers on strike yesterday and 5,991 at work.

● The National Coal Board has told miners' leaders that output will be cut in half to 50 million tonnes this financial year, even if the pit strike ends immediately (our Labour Editor writes).

Figures given confidentially to leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers disclose that the board will be unable to meet its five-year plan to produce nearly 500 million tonnes of coal by the end of the decade.

Union negotiators pressed Mr Ian MacGregor, chairman of the board, yesterday to keep open every pit because the industry could not otherwise fulfil its production targets which call for output of 100 million tonnes a year until 1989.

Mr James Cowan, deputy chairman, also told the miners that many pits would find it difficult to resume normal output for as long as three months.

● A court case against Mr Scargill, due to be heard at Rotherham today, has been adjourned to a date to be fixed, it was announced yesterday. He is accused of obstruction at Orgreave coking plant on May 30, and was granted unconditional bail.

# Power workers to call for pit votes

By Our Labour Correspondent

Moderate union leaders are mounting a concerted drive to win acceptance for ballots of workers in the key steel and power industries before any decisions are taken to back the miners' strike.

Steel unions are to meet at the end of this week amid indications that at least three of the 14 will press for a ballot. Leaders of two main power unions will also push next week for a ballot before any decision is taken.

The latest manoeuvrings indicate the reservations that some union officials have about last week's overwhelming vote at the TUC conference in Brighton which pledged "total support" for the miners and in particular urged unions not to cross official National Union of Mineworkers' picket lines.

The power unions, which meet on Monday, will be pressed by the right-wing leaderships of the two most important unions to hold a ballot among the industry's 118,000 traditionally moderate workers.

Power stations are seen as critical in mobilizing support for the miners and in spite of the overwhelming vote last week the electricians' union, with 40,000 members in elec-

tricity supply and the 28,000-strong Engineers and Managers Association, will resist strongly becoming involved in supportive action.

The EMA executive meets tomorrow to decide its policy, but there is little doubt that it will go along with the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union in calling for a ballot.

Mr Eric Hammond, who this week took over from Mr Frank Chapple as general secretary of the EETPU, said yesterday: "There is a means within the industry to hold a ballot and it would be a way of avoiding divisions among the unions.

"A ballot seems to be a sensible and rational way of handling this matter and a better judge of whether the sprinkling of hands raised against last week's general council statement were a reflection of the membership's view," Mr Hammond said.

● The Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers announced yesterday that it had passed the one-million membership mark after a vote by two of its three satellite sections, the foundry and construction workers, to join the main body of the union.

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