

Miners welcome Acas formula as basis for settlement

By Paul Routledge, Labour Editor

Peace talks in the 31-week-old pit strike resume today with only superficial pointers towards a settlement.

Leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers last night welcomed as "a basis for settlement" a formula put forward by officials of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) on the controversial issue of colliery closures.

The proposed settlement would only permit the shut-down of coal mines within the scope of the expansionist 1974 Plan for Coal, which is a substantial concession towards the strikers' position.

But the National Coal Board has tabled its own version of machinery for the future operation of the industry, which has not yet been discussed between the parties. The coal board version sharply contradicts the Acas and NUM peace stance.

Mr Arthur Scargill, president of the miners' union, said last

night that the miners had considered proposals for an independent colliery review procedure "and would be willing to accept this as a basis towards a negotiated settlement".

He added: "It is now with the coal board and their response".

The miners' president was not aware that the board had already privately rejected the peace plan, and was putting forward its own formula that

would leave the board with the final responsibility for the closure of "uneconomic" mines.

Officials of the conciliation service were considering over night where they stood on the various proposals put forward by both sides. Their earlier initiative suggested that they sided with the striking miners, but the coal board is fighting back against any such settlement.

● Mr Ian MacGregor, chairman of the coal board, said last night: "At today's meeting a paper was discussed which represented Mr Pat Lowry's (The Acas chairman) impressions of what the NUM had said to him last Saturday. It did not include the NCB's position. It was not an Acas document therefore. The document did not provide the essential undertaking we need to run the business. There is also on the table a document which does represent our views. It will be further discussed tomorrow."



Mr MacGregor: His move now.

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