



## The miners' strike

# Moves today to seize assets

By Frances Gibb, Legal Affairs Correspondent

New High Court moves will be made today to seize the assets of the National Union of Mineworkers after the expiry at midnight last night of the deadline for payment of the £200,000 fine imposed for contempt of court.

Lawyers for the two Yorkshire miners who brought the contempt proceedings will apply before Mr Justice Nicholls for leave for the issuing of writs of sequestration.

The City firm of chartered accountants, Price Waterhouse, has agreed to act as Commissioners of Sequestration if the judge agrees to the writs and would act to seize the assets as soon as possible.

The same firm handled the sequestration of the assets of the South Wales area of the NUM when it failed to pay a £50,000 contempt fine at the beginning of August.

Mr Justice Nicholls imposed the £200,000 fine and one of

£100 on the miners' president Mr Arthur Scargill, 14 days ago for breach of injunctions granted to the two Yorkshire miners. Those were aimed at officials declaring the Yorkshire area strike official and from threatening to discipline miners who crossed picket lines.

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Last week Mr Scargill's fine was paid anonymously, and so far as the court is concerned, his contempt has been purged.

The NUM is thought to have transferred large sums of money from its general fund to its constituent area unions in the form of hardship money and other strike-related costs. Funds held by the unions are thought to be beyond the reach of sequestrators.

Mr Michael Meacher, Labour's chief social services spokesman said yesterday that the government can no longer deduct £1.5 a week from striking miners' social security payments if the courts sequester the NUM's funds.

Since the strike began £15 a week has been deducted from supplementary benefits for miners' families on the assumption that they are receiving strike pay, although no strike pay is provided by the union.

If the miners' funds are seized, he said, "the government can no longer continue to deny striking miners to be receiving strike pay."

Mr Arthur Scargill and miners' union leaders were yesterday preparing for a siege of Sheffield. Mr Scargill's wife arrived at the NUM headquarters and began unloading a carload of food.

## 'No Scargill surcharge' on fuel bills

By David Vines, Energy Correspondent

The Government has not decided to add the £500m cost of the miners' strike to electricity bills as a "Scargill surcharge". Mr Peter Walker, the Secretary of State for Energy, said yesterday.

"The cost has still to be calculated. There have been increased costs because of oil burning but there have been savings... £700m planned investment in the coal industry has not been made."

Mr Walker stopped up the Government's energy conservation campaign with a speech to 1,500 company directors in London, calling on them to appoint energy managers and take advantage of government aid.

"If Britain had done as well as some of our competitors we would be spending one billion pounds a year less on energy".

# Papers reveal NCB concessions

## NCB observations for Nacods talks

The board accept entirely that a major component in the management of the industry depends on understanding and trust between the board and Nacods. It is the board's wish that such trust should be established and maintained.

You opened this morning by referring to a number of items previously discussed and I think agreed satisfactorily between us and indeed the board's attitude confirmed to you in recent correspondence. However, I will refer to them again so that there may be no misunderstanding.

### Officials' Attendance at Work - 1974 Guidelines

The board have withdrawn the August 15 statement and management have been instructed to observe the pattern of behaviour which has been established in each area with regard to the 1974 guidelines. Arising out of this information, management has instructed that payments arising shall be paid retrospectively to all officials.

The points raised in this connection by you this morning will be pursued immediately. We hope to clarify the position later today.

## Negotiation papers tabled in the confidential pit peace talks

The NCB has promised "completely to reconsider" its March 6 colliery closure programme, but the striking miners insist that it must be withdrawn without reservation. The documents tabled by the

two sides in the conflict were yesterday being closely studied by the NCB, the pit deputies' union, Nacods, and the TUC.

Copies of both key papers in the possession of the *Times* are reproduced in full, below. The first document was tabled by the National Coal Board when it went into talks with the pit deputies on Tuesday morning.

The second is a glossary with policy comments from the NUM.

As previously stated, the board are very ready to re-examine the Review Procedure and to adopt any amendments which will improve its effectiveness. The association will appreciate of course that this must be done in a way which will meet with the approval of all the parties concerned, including NCM and RACM.

The board believe that the procedure as it stands is unique and something that we should all make work. This will, of course, require the active effort of all the parties, not just that of management.

You clearly are concerned that the arrangements should work, so that at local colliery level as well as area level, an early and continuing understanding of the proposed plans should be readily understood and put in the form of five-year production opportunities. We believe that if this is done it should remove the fear you have that actions will be taken covertly which would shorten the life expectancy of standing among all the parties concerned.

Given that this is done we would expect that there should not be conflict over investment or plant decisions. If however, such conflict arose that could be dealt with from that early stage within the Review Procedure so that all parties could be given ample time to brief themselves adequately.

If at the end of this process, the matter was still in doubt and might lead to a fresh shortening of a colliery's life expectancy, this question, as has already happened in the past, can be referred for national consideration and, indeed, would then be subject to the Review Board and full weight given to its findings, just as would be the case in any question of a distinct closure proposal.

**NUM comments on document**  
Officials' attendance at work - 1974 guidelines: This is a matter solely for Nacods and does not involve the NUM at all.

**Consolidation Procedure:** This is a matter solely for Nacods.

**Supervision of work in cavities - the Hammond case:** This is a matter relating to Nacods - we have certain observations but they are not relevant to the dispute between NCB and NUM.

**Closed shops:** Discussion of the closed shop is a matter for Nacods - we have our own view on what agreement should be reached between the NCB and the NUM but that does not concern Nacods.

**CENTRAL ISSUES**  
The five pits: The coal board proposal on this matter cannot be accepted - the NUM have already stated in the verbal promise from the board that the five pits will be kept open on the basis of the NUM's mining engineers' estimations.

This NCB document proposals on the five pits is even less acceptable than that contained in the board's published document dated July 11 1984. The board's South Yorkshire

Area Director has already said that if Cottonwood is retained as opposed to being kept open in line with NUM submission he will close it within 18 months.

**March 6 proposals:** The coal board's proposal to Nacods is completely unacceptable to the NUM. (a) It does not withdraw the not closure programme; (b) it refers to "objectives for the industry Areas"; (c) its reference to the "market" and to a new set of objectives is an indication that the board will continue to pursue a closure programme.

**Colliery Review Procedure - Independent Review Body:** The coal board response to the Nacods request is full of dangerous omissions: (a) it refers to sections i, ii, iii and iv to "closure". The board will interpret Nacods' acceptance of this as acceptance of the closure programme. (b) Even the Acas proposal tabled on the morning of October 2 provided the NUM "closure" is defined in better than this.

**Page 4 general comments:** The reference to the market and to production opportunities in the board document are a clear departure from *Plan for Coal*. The general tenor of this page reflects the "falsehood" ministry of Ian MacGregor. The NUM cannot accept this.

The first paragraph of the board's document is tantamount to saying: "If you accept the coal board's not closure programme then we'll discuss any amendments to clause 3(c)."

Clause 3(c) would be irrelevant if the points referred to above were accepted, and the NUM cannot in any way agree to this coal board document, which projects a closure programme involving 10 pits and the destruction of 70,000 jobs.

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By Frances Gibb, Legal Affairs Correspondent.

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