

Coal board abandons hope of deal with Scargill

By David Felton, Labour Correspondent

Senior National Coal Board officials are reconciled to the fact that it will not be possible to reach a negotiated settlement to the pit strike with Mr Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, and instead are hoping that pressure can be brought on the miners by the TUC and Labour Party.

In the wake of the final breakdown of peace talks the emphasis of the board's strategy is likely to shift to trying to persuade the two wings of the labour movement to use every possible influence on the miners' union leadership to modify its consistently hard-line opposition to pit closures.

But in apparent anticipation of those developments, the union's executive in Sheffield yesterday decided to seek wider political and industrial support from the Labour Party and TUC in an attempt to heighten the impact of the eight-month strike.

A special rank-and-file delegate conference is to be held in Sheffield on Monday. Later there will be five mass regional rallies to which Mr Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour

Party and Mr Norman Willis, general secretary of the TUC, have been invited to speak.

The invitations to Mr Kinnock and Mr Willis were seen as attempts to preempt any moves by them to modify the miners' union's militant opposition to pit closures.

A meeting of the TUC's "inner cabinet", the finance and general purposes committee, will be held, probably on Tuesday. It may become the forum for an attempt by union leaders to draw the TUC into a more central negotiating role.

The rallies, which are designed to wind up support among both the union rank and file and the public, are to be held in Edinburgh, Newcastle upon Tyne, Sheffield, Birmingham and Cardiff.

It is understood that Mr Willis has told the miners' union that he will speak at some of the rallies, although the position of Mr Kinnock was not clear last night. Mr Scargill is due to meet Mr Kinnock today to ask for full Labour Party support before going on to a meeting with leaders of transport unions.

Mr James Cowan, the

National Coal Board's deputy chairman, signalled the board's acceptance that it may not be able to move miners' leaders away from their negotiating position. He said yesterday: "I do not see any hope whatsoever of reaching a settlement with Mr Scargill." There was no feeling whatsoever that the NUM, led by Mr Scargill, was making any effort at getting a settlement, he said.

Mr Cowan said that at least Mr Scargill's rhetoric had been consistent. "At least give him the benefit of consistency, but I give him no marks for negotiating."

Mr Ian MacGregor, the board chairman, said he was becoming "very discouraged" and argued that the miners' union had never shown any intention to negotiate an end to the dispute.

Senior board officials hope that their exhaustion of patience with the union will be shared by Mr Scargill's colleagues in the labour movement who they hope will seek to persuade him that the deal agreed with the pit deputies union, Nacods, is the best that he can possibly secure.

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Walker relying on union pressure

By Julian Haviland, Political Editor

With the indefinite abandonment yesterday of negotiations to bring the miners' strike to an end, Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, made plain in an interview with *The Times* that ministers were now relying wholly on growing pressure being brought to bear on Mr Arthur Scargill from within the National Union of Mineworkers and the labour movement.

After a week that saw several signs that ministers were dissatisfied with the performance of Mr Ian MacGregor, Chairman of the National Coal Board, Mr Walker also defended him strongly, saying he was "doing a fine job".

Asked what the Government proposed to do in the present stalemate, Mr Walker said there were increasing signs "of a recognition by many of those who have been kept out of work that the basis of the dispute is

very bogus, that they have a very good and generous offer.

"I hope the result will either be pressures in the executive of the National Union of Mineworkers, or pressure from those miners who have been kept out by the mob. Perhaps there will be pressures from the TUC - I don't know."

The miners had been made the best offer since nationalization.

He was asked what evidence there was that, after six or seven months, they were ready to accept that view.

He said there was a great deal of evidence: more than 200 miners now working at Bilston Glen, nearly 250 working at Shirebrook, and "enormous turnouts with very high production figures" in areas such as Leicestershire and Staffordshire. In the past three months, the number of pits totally on strike had fallen from 111 to 93.

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panies, as well as the solicitor, if a client decided to sue for negligence. Solicitors wanted to be sure they would not surrender any rights to Access, Mr Coles said.

In such cases credit card companies are expected to agree to be nominal defendants only leaving the action to be dealt with by the solicitor who is covered by professional indemnity insurance.

It will be for individual firms to make arrangements with the credit card companies and agree terms for using the facility. But Mr Coles emphasized that the cost would not be passed on to the client.

"The solicitor must charge the same fee as he would do anyone and he then pays a percentage to the company."

Libya declares food drive for striking pitmen

Collections, including food, are being made in Libyan workplaces for British miners, it was announced yesterday from Tripoli.

Mr Arthur Scargill, miners' union President, said: "We have not received any food from Libya or any other aid."

He expressed surprise that Independent Television News, which interviewed Colonel Gaddafi last night, was prepared to talk to a leader disapproved of by so many.

Colonel Gaddafi, who met Mr Roger Windsor, NUM chief executive, in Tripoli, told ITN that five miners had been killed "by the police of the Government"; and that some striking miners' children had died of hunger.



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By David Felton, Labour Correspondent and By Julian Haviland, Political Editor.

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