

The miners' dispute

Writ claims funds used for picketing

By David Felton, Labour Correspondent

The latest round of legal action in the miners' strike, mounted yesterday by working miners seeking to have the Yorkshire area of the National Union of Mineworkers put into receivership, is the most recent of more than 20 individual cases brought since the strike started.

Two miners from Manton colliery, near Newark, Mr Ken Foulstone and Mr Robert Taylor, have issued writs against the five trustees of the Yorkshire NUM alleging that the area funds are being misused because they are financing unlawful picketing.

The case, which is expected to go before the High Court on Monday, is the second major action brought by the two men. The first, in which they successfully sought injunctions which declared the strike in Yorkshire unofficial, led to the £200,000 contempt fine being imposed on the NUM and a £1,000 fine on Mr Arthur Scargill, union president, for refusing the terms of the court order.

Legal action has been mounted by working miners in every coalfield, with the exception of south Wales where lawyers said last night that plans were being laid for legal moves to prevent the NUM expelling working miners from the union.

Yorkshire campaign to bring strikers back

The National Coal Board in Yorkshire yesterday launched a new initiative to capitalize on the return to work in the traditionally militant coalfield (Peter Davenport writes).

All 54,000 miners in the area received a letter urging them to join the drift back and offered help in avoiding picket line "aggro and intimidation".

The letters were sent by first-class post and included a tear-off slip for strikers who want to return. Freepost envelopes were included to be returned to the four area headquarters in Yorkshire.

A spokesman at Doncaster said: "The letter is just a way of responding to the many calls received by colliery managers from men who want to come

back to work. We have shown that we can get men to and from work safely but obviously they are concerned about intimidation back at home.

Working miners' groups are said to be planning a new legal offensive next week, but even without any new actions there are already several cases still going through the legal process. Writs have been served on individual members of the NUM executive seeking to have them made personally responsible for the £200,000 contempt fine.

Sequestrators acting for the High Court have traced £2.7m of union funds in Dublin which will be frozen and probably used to pay the fine.

A further case will be brought in chambers in the High Court today in which Nottinghamshire miners will ask a judge to award costs of their legal actions so far against Mr Scargill, which could run into several thousands of pounds.

The Strike in Scotland is still regarded as official following the refusal of a judge in the Court of Session in Edinburgh earlier this week to order the NUM to hold a national ballot.

The NUM attitude to the plethora of legal actions has been to ignore most of them.

Kinnock in clash over pitmen

By Philip Webster
Political Reporter

Mr Neil Kinnock was criticized yesterday by left-wing Labour MPs for rejecting Mr Arthur Scargill's request to attend the National Union of Mineworkers' rallies called to bolster support for the coal strike.

In a bitter clash at a private meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Mr Dennis Skinner, the miners' MP for Bolsover, told Mr Kinnock that the miners were at the forefront of the battle for jobs and that at the next election it would be remembered that he "was not on the front-line."

Mr Kinnock later replied to Mr Skinner: "I know where the front-line is. I have been there." But he gave warning to the party, in a performance which impressed many MPs, that there did not have to be a Gallipoli over the strike. "We are not interested in a glorious defeat," he said.

Mr Skinner was backed by several other MPs in calling on Mr Kinnock to reconsider his decision.

Powerful support for Mr Kinnock's stance was voiced by his predecessor as leader, Mr Michael Foot, who said that Mr Kinnock and Mr Stanley Orme, the Opposition spokesman on energy, had given all possible help to the miners.

Student union threatened over pits payment

The London School of Economics Students Union faces financial collapse if left-wing students carry out their plan to force its treasurer's resignation because he is refusing to make an illegal payment to the National Union of Mineworkers (Colin Hughes writes).

The student union's general secretary, Mr Ed Lucas, has resigned over the £4,000 payment. The union voted earlier this year to pay the proceeds of its bar gaming machines to the striking miners.

Mr Michael Moszynski, the union's senior treasurer, faces a motion of censure at a general union meeting later today.

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