

Give miners their say, Labour urges Scargill

● Mr Roy Hattersley put Labour front bench support behind calls to consult the NUM membership on the future of the pits strike.

● Top-level moderates in other unions are urging the TUC to take the initiative in the dispute away from miners' leaders and work towards a settlement

● Militant miners' leaders are preparing to carry on the strike into next year, although another 956 men returned to work yesterday

● Trade union leaders expressed anger at the booing and jeering of Mr Norman Willis, TUC general secretary, by miners on Tuesday.

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By Anthony Bevins, Political Correspondent

The Labour leadership last night urged the National Union of Mineworkers to consult its membership on the future of the pit strike, when Mr Roy Hattersley said in a BBC television news interview: "I do believe that the miners' opinions ought to be tested and tested directly".

Later on ITN Mr Hattersley made it clear that his intervention was with the backing of Mr Neil Kinnock, the party leader.

He said: "The miners have got to be consulted about where things stand. Mr Kinnock and I would urge consultation. We urged it at the beginning of the dispute and we have urged it throughout the dispute. And I think that as the debate progresses and the negotiations progress in some form or other the miners have to be asked their rank and file opinion."

The Government last night welcomed the Labour front-bench conversion to the Government's long-standing view that the mineworkers should be balloted on the issues behind the strike, and the coal board's offers.

Mrs Margaret Thatcher said in the Commons on October 25, after the settlement with the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfir-

ers, that she believed most of the strikers would like a ballot so that they could return to work.

She then added: "They are being prevented only by the leadership of the NUM, supported by the Labour Party and mob violence".



Mr Roy Hattersley: "Strong case for consultation"

Although Labour sources see the initiative as a continuation of an existing party-line, the fact is that there has been no call for a ballot or consultation on any of the coal board's offers.

Mr Hattersley said: "I think there is the strongest case made out for consultation at every stage as various offers were made by the coal board, some of them, in my view,

wholly unacceptable. It would have been right for the miners to have their opinions polled in some way, so I stand by consultation now as I have done throughout the dispute."

The Labour leaders believe that consultation would unite the miners. It is argued that even if it went against a return to work it would strengthen their negotiating hand.

Whitehall sources believe that Labour is trying to salvage a political disaster, attempting to avoid the chaos of a slow drift back by getting the men back on a ballot. But one senior source suggested that a strong surge back might be better for the industry; if a majority crossed picket lines, the hardliners would be crushed for good.

Mr Hattersley's appeal, if spurned by today's NUM executive meeting at Sheffield, might just stimulate that process. But the pressure on the strikers was also increased by the Labour movement's united condemnation of the abuse of Mr Norman Willis, the TUC general secretary, in South Wales on Tuesday.

Mr Kinnock endorsed Mr Willis's statement of support for the miners and criticism of

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Bringing the message: Mr Arthur Scargill in Rugeley, Staffordshire, yesterday to address striking miners.

TGWU on collision course over strike

Labour leaders back pit ballot

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picketline violence. The party leader said: "He spoke for millions of trades unionists whose instinct to support the miners is as strong as their opposition to the use of violence. And that includes me."

Speaking on the BBC's *Newsnight* last night Mr Scargill rejected Mr Hattersley's suggestions, saying that only a week ago a special delegate conference was held for consultation with NUM area councils and members.

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By Anthony Bevins, Political Correspondent.

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