

# NUM ignores Labour call for pit ballot

From Paul Routledge, Labour Editor, Sheffield

Leaders of the National Union of Miners decided yesterday to ignore the clear hints from the Labour Party leadership to hold a national ballot. Instead they voted to continue the pit strike indefinitely.

The executive committee of the NUM unanimously agreed on a five-point plan to intensify the 36-week stoppage and invited the churches to give aid to the strikers in a new propaganda offensive against the Government.

Mr Arthur Scargill, the president of the NUM, said: "I am not going to include myself in any slanging match between sections of the trade union and labour movement. What I want to do is unify the movement."

However, the NUM's declaration of its bargaining position yesterday is unlikely to heal the growing rift between left-wing supporters of the miners and moderates on the TUC general council who are arguing that the conduct of the coal dispute should be taken out of the hands of Mr Scargill and his allies.

At yesterday's meeting of the NUM executive it was decided to reaffirm all previous decisions on the conduct of the strike and reiterate that the NUM were available to "negotiate a settlement of this damaging and costly dispute in line with *Plan for Coal*." That form of words is the customary code for the union's insistence on withdrawal of the pit closure programme put forward by the coal board on March 6.

But the board is not willing to resume negotiations on that basis, and a long stalemate in the peace process is now expected despite behind the

scenes efforts by Mr Stanley Orme, Labour's energy spokesman.

The NCB has said that negotiations are "at an end" and that any reopening of talks must start from an acceptance by the union of the board's overall position.

Another 708 miners returned to work yesterday, bringing the number of men returning to work this week to 4,600 and during the past 10 days to nearly 7,000.

The archbishops of Canterbury and York, last night offered to act as mediators in the pits dispute. Dr Robert Runcie and Dr John Habgood said in a joint statement to the Church of England's General Synod: "Should there be a serious request to the bishops from the NUM to act in a mediating or reconciling role, we would respond positively in consultation with other church leaders."

One compromise proposal suggested yesterday during the executive meeting was swiftly dismissed. Mr Sid Vincent, secretary of the Lancashire miners, a moderate who is nonetheless strongly identified with the strike, proposed that the NUM should go back into talks with the coal board on the basis of a five-year moratorium on pit closures.

Mr Vincent's idea drew only a handful of supporters, and was not pressed to a vote.

The idea of a pithead ballot, which Labour leaders wanted to see on the agenda, was mentioned only in passing and was not seriously raised by moderates who want to see such a poll.

Continued on back page, col 8

---

# Labour call for ballot ignored by NUM

Continued from page 1

Their numbers were depleted by the absence of Mr Ted McKay, the North Wales miners' leader, and Mr John Dowling, of the Midlands craftsmen, who was not there because of an interval union dispute about who is actually the representative of the NUM power group on the executive.

At the press conference after the executive meeting, Mr Scargill was scornful of the coal board's return to work figures and suggested that they are inaccurate. But the NUM clearly feels the need to go back out into the coalfields to explain its case both the striking pitmen and to the general public.

Rallies are to be held in every town and village within the mining communities "to explain fully the union's position and what we have offered in an attempt to resolve this dispute".

Furthermore, NUM leaders decided that after the many statements of support from a wide range of organizations, including the churches, the NUM will hold meetings with representatives of those organizations to explain the union's position.

● Mr Scargill met officials from the Soviet Union Embassy in London last night to discuss "further assistance to striking miners from Soviet trade unionists", including more restrictions on coal and oil imports into Britain (the Press Association reports).

**NUM ignores Labour call for pit ballot.**

From Paul Routledge, Labour Editor.

*The Times* (London, England), Friday, Nov 16, 1984; pg. 1; Issue 61988. (725 words)

**Category:** News

© Times Newspapers Limited

**Gale Document Number:**CS18059120