

Scargill only wants conflict, Walker says

By Anthony Bevins, Political Correspondent

Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, said yesterday that Mr Arthur Scargill, the miners' president, did not care about the coal industry or the miners. Instead, he said, he wanted conflict.

In the bluntest ministerial attack made so far against Mr Scargill, Mr Walker expressed doubts about any new initiative to bring the coal board and the National Union of Mineworkers together for negotiations.

He said in an interview on the BBC radio programme, *World at One*: "I think Mr Scargill personally, as an individual, throughout this dispute has never been interested in the future investment programmes. He has never been interested in the conditions of miners. He has stuck to one demand.

"He knew it was impossible to accept and I do believe that his desire was to continue with conflict."

Mr Walker said that he would rejoice if the NUM was willing to enter constructive negotiations with the board on a programme for the next five years, but he added: "I do not

believe Mr Scargill is in that sort of game."

He also blamed Mr Scargill for the divisions that have split mining communities, saying that if there had been a ballot the miners would have been united in their actions.

He said: "Because this man decided to operate in a way in which he would try to deprive them of the ballot, the NUM is divided and impoverished, mining communities are divided, and violence and victimization has been used on a massive scale."

Mr Walker welcomed the latest return to work figures and said that if there had been no violence and intimidation a majority of miners would already have gone back.

He wanted to see an end to the dispute as quickly as possible so as to return the industry to its programme of heavy investment and market expansion, along with replacement industries for miners affected by the closure of uneconomic pits.