

TUC and miners' leaders to seek way to reopen talks

● Leaders of the TUC and the miners' union will tonight explore the prospects for a new initiative to break the pit strike deadlock

● Tory MPs reacted angrily last night when the Government asked the Commons to approve an extra £800m for the coal board

● The NCB reported 975 "new faces" back at work yesterday, compared with 2,282 returning miners on Monday last week

● Eleven men appeared in court at Pontefract on charges arising from an attack on Mr Michael Fletcher, a working miner

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By David Felton, Labour Correspondent

Senior TUC leaders will tonight explore with the National Union of Mineworkers the prospects for a new initiative to break the deadlock in the conflict over pit closures.

The seven-man team appointed by the TUC to liaise with the NUM will look for ways of producing a formula for re-opening negotiations with the National Coal Board although there are few signs that the board and the Government will be receptive to such approaches, preferring instead to rely on the return to work to undermine the strike.

There appeared yesterday to be a significant slowing in the numbers of miners returning to the pits with the coal board reporting 975 "new faces" compared with 2,282 who returned to work on Monday last week.

On the basis of yesterday's figures the board's estimates point to a return to work by less than 2,000 miners this week while last week a record 5,959 NUM broke the strike. So far this month just over 13,000 miners have returned to work.

The TUC's "inner cabinet", the finance and general pur-

poses committee, yesterday heard a report on the dispute from Mr Norman Willis, the general secretary, but did not discuss a letter from Mr John Lyons, leader of the power engineers, which called for a reappraisal of the TUC policy of backing the nine-month NUM strike.

The committee had been expected at least to discuss the prospects for reopening peace talks but it decided only to adjourn until early tomorrow morning before a full meeting of the TUC general council when Mr Lyons's letter is certain to be raised.

It was suggested last night by union sources that no specific proposals will be put to the NUM leadership by the TUC team although they will attempt to persuade the miners' leaders that new talks could be held on the basis of a renegotiation of the ten-year-old Plan for Coal.

The committee also heard that the TUC has handed over £250,000 to the NUM in the last few days to alleviate hardship.

● Mr Leon Brittan, the Home Secretary, last night accused Mr Arthur Scargill, president of the NUM, of single-mindedly refusing to restrain his followers from violence against the police, working miners and their families, and refusing to condemn it. This "shameful silence" showed the world where moral responsibility for the violence lay, he said.

● Mr Scargill returned yesterday from a two-day visit to Paris for talks with leaders of the French miners' union. They discussed ways of further extending support for British miners, the NUM in Sheffield said.

● Mr Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader yesterday refused to take up Mr Scargill's challenge to make his position on the miners' strike clear, but reaffirmed that he would attend the Stoke rally with Mr Scargill on Friday as planned.

Other mining news, page 2

Security reviewed for working pitmen

From Peter Davenport, Doncaster

Senior police officers in Yorkshire yesterday were urgently reviewing their tactics to offer increased protection at home to miners who have returned to work.

They are trying to identify men who may be particularly vulnerable to attacks, in the hope of providing better security for them and their families.

The review comes after what the National Coal Board in Yorkshire yesterday called "a campaign of insidious intimidation". A spokesman claimed that even the elderly parents of back-to-work miners were now being visited by groups of men and warned, in no uncertain terms, of what could happen to their sons if they do not change their minds and rejoin the strike.

"These are the old, the lonely and the sick members of society that the union is supposedly pledged to defend. They are being put in fear," he said.

The review also comes after another attack at home of a working miner, Mr John Head. Mr Head, aged 40, is a foreman blacksmith and member of Cosa, the white-collar section of

the NUM, who works at the Yorkshire Main colliery at Edlington, near Doncaster.

But the intimidation backfired when Mr Head's wife, Patricia, clubbed one of his attackers with the butt of an unloaded air rifle, causing cuts which required hospital treatment.

Up to 20 men, which Mrs Head claimed were striking miners, gathered outside the home in Wellington Road, Edlington, and a brick was thrown through the living room window, hitting her husband on the head. Some of the men then burst into the house.

Mrs Head said yesterday: "It was terrifying. One of them got into the house and punched my 16-year-old son in the eye, knocking him to the floor. That's when I hit the other man with the end of a gun which we kept in the bedroom for protection, although it wasn't loaded."

Mr Head needed eight stitches in the wound caused by the brick. He had returned to work last week, one of about 20 miners to defy pickets at the local colliery.

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By David Felton, Labour Correspondent and From Peter Davenport.

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