

Walker tells TUC to make miners drop rigid demands

● The Government told the TUC the pit strike could not be settled until mineworkers' leaders dropped opposition to closure of loss-making pits.

● Mr Arthur Scargill, NUM president, was fined £250 with £750 costs at Rotherham on two charges of obstructing police on the picket line.

● Striking miners and their families in Kent will not go without food or presents this Christmas because of gifts from abroad. Page 2

● Two working miners failed in their High Court attempt to get two Derbyshire NUM officials to repay £1.7m spent on the pit strike Page 2

By David Felton, Labour Correspondent

The Government placed the onus for a new peace initiative in the 40-week miners strike yesterday firmly on the TUC's shoulders, insisting there could be no settlement until mineworkers' leaders dropped opposition to closure of loss-making pits.

Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, told the seven senior TUC leaders monitoring the strike that there would be no point in the National Coal Board holding fresh negotiations with Mr Arthur Scargill while the miners' president continued his impossible demand that mines should close only when reserves had been exhausted.

TUC leaders will discuss the next move with leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers next week before reporting to the TUC's finance and general purposes committee and then the full general council, where there are likely to be renewed demands that miners modify their hard line.

TUC officials stressed that there was no intention to bring pressure on the NUM because Mr Walker and the Government had laid down as a precondition of any further talks that Mr Scargill should be more flexible.

Despite that assurance, it was suggested by senior sources that a change of tack by the miners

would be necessary before negotiations could start.

Mr Norman Willis, TUC general secretary, with the NUM's acquiescence, put forward the three-point plan, which involved the coal board "not proceeding with" its March 6 proposals for a four million tonne reduction in capacity with the loss of up to 20,000 jobs, a guarantee that the five named pits said to be most at risk would remain open and a commitment to have urgent discussions on revisions to the expansionary 1974 *Plan For Coal*.

Those discussions, on which there would be a deadline for reaching an agreement, would consider the question of uneconomic pits. Mr Willis said there would be a return to work if the first two points were agreed, to allow the talks on the industry's future.

The TUC's aim, during what were described as 90 minutes of "calm, eventempered and reasoned discussions", was to change the agenda set by Government to draw the question of uneconomic capacity into wider considerations of the industry's future and Britain's energy requirements.

But Mr Walker, who was accompanied by Mr Tom King, Secretary of State for Employment, was adamant there could be no talks until Mr Scargill's attitude changed. "What we

have in this case is a man who has gone into negotiations and has never moved and after every negotiation he boasts that he has not moved and will not move in the future," Mr Walker said.

Mr Willis described the first meeting between union leaders and the Energy Secretary since the strike started as disappointing. The TUC team argued that while the Government accused the NUM of intransigence, the miners had made concessions. But Mr Walker told them that the miners had been made a marvellous offer.

There was no comment on the talks last night from the coal board.

● Mr Scargill, speaking at a miners' rally in Grimethorpe, South Yorkshire, said: "My appeal to members of the TUC is to recognize what the members of the seamen's union have been doing and to recognize what members of the rail unions have done."

"Instead of trying to talk to people like Walker they should start implementing that policy in the power and steel industries. If they do that, and get industrial action behind this union, you will have them back to the negotiating table."

"We do not want the TUC or anyone else to go along and argue a case which effectively undermines the arguments of the NUM."

Miners' leader not to appeal

Scargill fined for obstruction

By Peter Davenport

Mr Arthur Scargill, the mineworkers' president, was found guilty yesterday of two charges of obstruction during mass picketing of the Orgreave coking plant in the early months of the miners' dispute.

He was fined a total of £250 and ordered to pay prosecution costs up to a maximum of £750.

Mr William Probert, a stipendiary magistrate, sitting at Rotherham, South Yorkshire, told Mr Scargill: "I take the view that your actions on that morning demonstrated a poor example to those you seek to lead. I have taken into account everything said on your behalf and the difficulties your actions gave to those officers engaged in the preservation of law and order at Orgreave."

Mr Scargill displayed no emotion as the verdicts were given but outside the court, surrounded by a crowd of shoppers and supporters, he appeared unchastened.

Mr Scargill said last night he was not going to appeal against his conviction yesterday.

He added: "I am not going to

appeal against this sentence or this judgement because in this political climate I have no faith in getting a fair trial and certainly no faith in getting a fair judgement from the courts."

Mr Scargill was asked if the court's decision would stop him joining further picket lines. He replied: "Why should it? I have not been charged with any offence in connection with picketing because it is not an offence."



Mr Scargill talking to reporters yesterday

Mr Scargill had pleaded not guilty to obstructing the highway outside the Orgreave plant on May 30 and not guilty to obstructing Chief Supt John Nesbitt in the execution of his duty on the same day.

The court had seen repeated showings of a brief BBC news video film which shows Mr Scargill's arrest.

The prosecution said that police had warned Mr Scargill and his supporters to keep moving. When approached a second time he refused to move on the court was told.

Mr Scargill denied that the first conversation had taken place and alleged that there had been a deliberate plot to arrest him.

Mr Scargill was fined £50 for obstructing the highway and £200 for obstructing Chief Supt Nesbitt.

Mr Michael Mansfield, Mr Scargill's counsel, told the court that Mr Scargill had not been receiving salary during the dispute and he was not in a position to pay heavy fines or costs.

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By David Felton, Labour Correspondent and By Peter Davenport.

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