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# Pits strike could go on for years, says Willis

By Paul Routledge, Labour Editor

The coal strike could go on for years, Mr Norman Willis, general secretary of the TUC, said yesterday, as the National Union of Mineworkers took legal action to establish its authority over 30,000 dissident Nottinghamshire pitmen

His comments came at the end of a TUC general council meeting which expressed "grave dismay" at the refusal of Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, to use his offices to encourage negotiations.

Mr Willis gave a "very sombre" report and said that

the government policy of relying on a drift back to work presented a real danger to the industry.

He said: "There will be tens of thousands of miners who will not go back to work until there has been a negotiated settlement. That means the strike could move along not for weeks and months but for years."

The union's Nottinghamshire council meets today to approve rule changes that will exempt the area from a new disciplinary procedure and take away from

**Continued on back page, col 3**

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Continued from page 1

the national executive the right to call strikes in the area.

In the High Court yesterday the union was given leave to proceed with its action against the Nottinghamshire rebels, but Mr Justice Warner refused to grant a temporary injunction stopping the rule changes.

No further TUC initiatives are planned, but the labour movement's seven-man liaison group will be keeping the situation under review. The TUC statement effectively recognized that there will be no further peace moves until the new year.

In the past few days, a further £250,000 has been conveyed to the Miners' Solidarity Fund

● The Nottinghamshire executive yesterday demanded that Mr Henry Richardson, its general secretary, should resign his seat on the union's national executive for supporting yesterday's High Court move (Craig Seton writes).

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