

# Kinnock defends his stance on pit strike and the rule of law

By Julian Haviland, Political Editor

Mr Neil Kinnock yesterday defended his leadership of the Labour Party and implicitly claimed the support of most of the labour movement for his attitude to the miners' strike and to the rule of law, two matters on which he has drawn the fire of the extreme left.

He said that the division in the party was "between a sliver in the party which does not make winning the next election its priority, and the vast majority which has no other priority."

He distanced himself from Labour Party members who have argued, as one socialist lawyer did in the party's official newspaper last week, that unjust laws should be disobeyed to preserve democratic rights.

Mr Kinnock disdained historical comparisons with unjust uses of the law against the Tolpuddle martyrs and other labour movement heroes. Such analogy was interesting, but should not be confused with present conditions.

Our democracy was flawed, he said, and had been weakened by the passage of the past five years and the present Government, but flawed democracy was not the same as a dictatorship.

Nor was it the same as the virtual absence of democracy which greeted the early reformers, who sometimes had to espouse the course of illegality when there was no alternative.

"We ought to talk about 1985 and commit ourselves to gaining the power to change laws", he said.

Mr Kinnock stood by his new year message that laws were to be accepted, even if abominated, until they were changed. That had been and would be his position, and there would be no deviation from it.

Mr Kinnock, who was being interviewed on BBC radio's *The World This Weekend*, disputed the claim of his interviewer, Mr Gordon Clough, that a large part of the labour movement had seen him as not solidly identified with the miners' strike.

Mr Kinnock accepted that he had not been helped by some of Mr Arthur Scargill's words and actions. If the miners had "not been so ready to chase off and deal with the sideshows", then people would have understood that the Prime Minister was telling lies when she said the miners wanted to produce mud. The enemies of the miners were basing their case on fantasy.

Mr Tony Benn, Labour MP for Chesterfield, yesterday repeated his call for Labour to prepare for a general strike in support of the miners.

Interviewed on BBC Television's *This Week, Next Week*, he described the miners' dispute as "the ultimate defence".

Mr Benn said that if the strike were won by the Government, trade unionism in the mining industry would be virtually extinct and it could be banned in the Civil Service.

He said he would not stand against Mr Kinnock for the party leadership this year.

## Oil burning pushes cost of dispute to £2,400m

The cost of the miners' strike has risen sharply in recent weeks as a result of winter power demands, a report says today.

According to the stock-brokers, Simon and Coates, the cost of the strike has increased to about £80 million to £85 million a week, as power stations have had to burn larger amounts of more expensive oil. Before the end of August, the cost of the strike was about £60 million a week.

The brokers estimate that the total strike cost for 1984 has risen to £2,400 million. Of this £1,800 million is a direct cash cost, and the rest results from lower coal stocks. During the next three months Simon and Coates expect cash costs to rise by a further £700 million.

Their analysis shows that the Central Electricity Generating Board is now burning almost twice as much oil as in July, and eight times as much as in a normal December.

On the strike's wider impact, the analysis says there is no evidence that production in other parts of the economy is being affected. But the extra oil burnt and lost coal exports are adding £350 million a month to the overseas trade deficit.

● Mr Arthur Scargill has issued a libel writ against Sir Woodrow Wyatt, the former Labour MP, complaining of words in a *News of the World* article by Sir Woodrow. Sir Woodrow and News Group Newspapers have indicated the application will be contested.

● Shortage of coal in 90 primary and nursery schools in Ayrshire has meant that Strathclyde Regional Council's education department has had to end education for 20,000 children today.

● A Conservative MP is to complain to the Arts Council that public funds have been used to help striking miners who ambush coal convoys taking supplies to the Llanwern steel plant in South Wales.

Valley and Vale Community Arts Group has admitted that it has taken photographs of the lorries and passed them to the National Union of Mineworkers.

The arts group, which receives a grant of £750 a year from the South East Wales Arts Association, has submitted photographs to an exhibition depicting the strike.

Mr Peter Hubbard-Miles, MP for Bridgend, said yesterday: "I think these photographs are being used for intimidatory purposes so that the NUM can wreak some sort of vengeance against the lorries."

A spokesman for the NUM in South Wales admitted they had received photographs from the group, but they had paid for them. "We did not need their help in identifying scab lorries,

## Return-to-work groups encouraged by NCB

From Tim Jones, Cardiff

All 19,600 miners in South Wales, Britain's most militant coalfield, will receive letters today from the National Coal Board telling them how they can return to work in groups.

Miners wanting to return are being told that their prepaid replies will be treated in the strictest confidence and that no approaches will be made to them until there are enough of them at individual pits to form organized groups.

Mr Cliff Davies, the board's South Wales area deputy director (mining), claimed it had become increasingly apparent since Christmas that miners were impatient with their leaders' lack of initiative in getting the strike settled.

"Many have been in contact with us to say if they could be organized into groups they

would be prepared to return to work".

● Hundreds of striking miners are expected to return to work today in north Derbyshire which is regarded as a barometer for the rest of the country.

With 5,450 of the coalfield's 10,800 men already clocking on, seven of nine pits are producing coal. But Mr Scargill has urged working miners to rejoin the strike.

"Anyone who has gone back should come back out on strike", he said in Workshop on Saturday. "If they do, as far as I'm concerned this union will forgive, but if they continue to work and continue to ignore the union they will be stained in the eyes of the union movement."

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By Julian Haviland, Political Editor and From Tim Jones.

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