

# NUM chiefs vote to expel defiant Notts area

By Paul Routledge, Labour Editor

Working pitmen in the Nottinghamshire coalfield are to be expelled from the National Union of Mineworkers unless they accept the authority of the union's national executive.

It voted yesterday by 17 votes to four to recommend to a special delegate conference on January 29 that the 30,000-strong traditionally-moderate coalfield should be thrown out for changing its rules to become an independent "union with a union".

The national executive's decision brings to a head an internal conflict within the union over the 44-week-old strike about pit closures, just as the union is suing for fresh peace talks with the National Coal Board.

The Nottinghamshire area executive has been called into emergency session this morning to decide what to do about the expulsion threat. It is now dominated by working miners

## Rail stoppage

The 24-hour rail stoppage planned for next Thursday is to go ahead, Aslef, the train drivers' union, and the National Union of Railwaymen, confirmed yesterday. The London to Edinburgh route and the service from London through Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield, as well as commuter services round these towns, could be halted, but no commuter services in London are expected to be affected. Southern Region should not be hit.

since elections which ousted striking branch officials, and they are expected to confirm their defiance of the national union.

Miners' leaders agreed yesterday to field their full 24-man executive in any future negotiations with the board, and made it clear that they want to get back to the negotiating table.

The executive welcomed the activities of various third parties - including the churches, the TUC and the Labour Party - in seeking a resumption of talks to end the three-month deadlock in negotiations, but signalled continuing adherence to the union's hard-line demand for withdrawal of the March 6, 1984 colliery closure programme.

The board last night spurned the peace overtures from the mineworkers, arguing that it would not be worthwhile restarting negotiations unless the union first dropped its demand that there could be no

pit closures on economic grounds.

The board has made it plain for many weeks that it will not go back into talks until the union accepts ahead of such discussions that there must be an economic factor in the decisions about prolonging the life of collieries.

The executive vote to expel the Nottinghamshire "dissidents" is certain to be carried out if the working miners there fail to take advantage of the three-week breathing space to abandon their defiance of the national union.

The conflict had arisen because Nottinghamshire pit branches voted overwhelmingly to delete national rule 30 from their constitution, in order to remove themselves from the suzerainty of the national executive.

Mr Arthur Scargill, the union president, argued yesterday that by so doing they had turned themselves into a "Spencerite-management union" of the non-political kind formed after the 1926 general strike by a local MP, George Spencer.

Unless the miners in the moderate coalfield recant and change their union rules back again the expulsion process will be set in train. And although a legal challenge to the decision is confidently if gloomily awaited, most NUM leaders are adamant that the painful verdict must be carried out.

Moderate areas joined the left in taking the decision, although four area leaders were opposed to it: Mr Trevor Bell, of the white-collar section, Cosa; Mr Ted Mackay, of North Wales; Mr Ken Toon, of South Derbyshire; and Mr Jack Jones, of Leicestershire.

Most of their members, like the Nottinghamshire miners, are working in defiance of the national strike.

Mr Scargill read out a letter to the executive yesterday from the Northumberland miners' secretary Mr Sam Scott, which conveyed the anxieties of the Ashington NUM branch. About 30 men at the 600-man pit attended a recent branch meeting and warned their leaders that unless there was a new peace initiative, some of their number might cross the picket line and go back to work.

Northumberland has been one of the strongest pro-strike areas, and any sign of revolt there is treated very seriously by the NUM leadership, but yesterday's communication was not regarded as evidence that a majority of the 600 men at the pit is preparing to return to work. NUM assets, page 2

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