

# Coal board predict the turning point in strike this week

By Barrie Clement, Labour Reporter

The National Coal Board is privately confident that more than half of Britain's 136,000 miners will be back at work within the week.

Coal board sources believe that the numbers abandoning the 50-week-old strike will then accelerate, putting the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers under increasing pressure to sue for peace under terms already laid down by management.

It would need another 6,000 pitmen to return this week to take the working miners over the "magical" 93,000 mark, after which the Government will declare that the miners have "voted with their feet".

An attempt to rejuvenate the stoppage and stem the predicted flow back to the pits was made yesterday by Mr Arthur Scargill, the union's president.

At a national rally in Trafalgar Square Mr Scargill appealed for increased support from the labour movement over the heads of TUC leaders, including that of Mr Norman Willis, its general secretary, who refused to attend the meeting.

But an effort to raise the hopes of his supporters that further talks may be possible was later firmly squashed by the Government.

Mr Scargill told the rally that he had sent a letter to Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, pointing out that the union accepted the modified colliery review procedure instrumental in ending the board's dispute with the pit deputies union last October. It

was a deal it has always been prepared to accept, he said. But Mr Walker later made it known that the letter was merely "a crude attempt at propaganda" in a bid to keep Mr Scargill's members on strike. The only acceptable deal was the one worked out with the

**Mardy pit defiant** 2  
**Photographs** 28

involvement of the TUC last week and turned down by the union. That document already incorporated the procedure agreed with Nacods, he said.

Mr Michael McGahey, vice-president of the NUM, tried to calm the argument between the miners and the TUC over last week's abortive peace formula. The TUC had been angered by the union rejection.

Mr McGahey said that despite the failure of the initiative, the union remained prepared to seek TUC help in finding a solution to the strike.

Speaking to the 5,000 or so supporters who managed to get into Trafalgar Square, Mr Scargill said that the strike was not being resolved because there was not "a willingness on the part of the coal board and Government to negotiate".

He said: "There is no way this union will agree to a solution that will mean the axing of jobs and the closure of pits. What the establishment have not grasped is that we have motivated a resistance movement similar to the one

which worked through the Second World War."

But Mr Walker, in a statement earlier yesterday, said that Mr Scargill's attempt to bring British industry to a standstill had "totally failed".

He emphasized that the high coal stocks at power stations could start to rise again next month.

He hoped that an area council meeting of the Nottinghamshire miners today would endorse the two-to-one vote by their members to end their 15-month-old overtime ban.

The meeting in Nottinghamshire will, however, hear arguments from some delegates that constitutionally only a national delegate meeting could end the ban. It is thought that the council may decide to delay a decision.

If it voted to stop the action it would add 100,000 tonnes a week to the area's output of 340,000 tonnes and considerably increase the mounting pressure on strikers' leaders.

● The Yorkshire miners' president, Mr Jack Taylor, admitted on BBC Television news last night that the miners' strike might end without a settlement because lack of money could force miners back to work, and that might lead to "guerrilla warfare".

● A breach in the most solidly strike-bound area came yesterday when 37 white-collar workers at Cynheidre colliery near Llanelli, South Wales, voted to defy pickets.

## Rise in coal supplies eases demand on oil

By David Young, Energy Correspondent

The oil-fired power stations which have helped meet peak demand for electricity throughout the recent cold spell and preserve coal stocks during the coal strike are gradually being moved back to stand-by status.

Coal is now being delivered to the major power stations in the Midlands at a rate which is allowing some of it to be diverted to stock-piles, as output gradually increases from those mines now back in production.

In addition the later daily lighting-up time and the slightly warmer weather is resulting in falling demand. By this week average demand will have dropped from the peak of 44,600 megawatts of January 8 to less than 42,000 megawatts.

The Central Electricity Generating Board is refusing to discuss the operations of its 86 power stations during the strike. However, by the middle of this week oil-fired generating capacity equal to the output of two major power stations, will be able to move on to stand-by status.

The savings to the board will be enormous. The oil-fired stations have been burning oil costing about £70 a tonne during the past twelve months, using furnaces and boilers which were installed in the early

1970s, when oil cost less than £10 a tonne.

The stations on the Thames, that at Pembroke near the Mobil refinery and that adjoining the Esso refinery at Fawley, have been working 24 hours a day in recent weeks, compared with less than six hours a day during previous winters.

In addition, the CEEGB has asked the South of Scotland Electricity Board to switch on its oil-fired station at Inverkip on the Clyde estuary to contribute to the national grid. The 10-year-old station has been surplus to SSEB requirement almost since the day it was commissioned and the extra cost of running it will be passed on by the SSEB to the CEEGB.

The two main nuclear stations which have been helping meet demands from the national grid are the advanced gas-cooled reactor (AGR) stations at Hinkley Point in Somerset and at Hunterston in Ayrshire, which is run by SSEB. Both stations have been operating at above their design limits and producing electricity at prices which the SSEB says match those of coal stations and at efficiency rates which exceed those for the pressurised water reactor (PWR) which have been put forward by the CEEGB during the Sizewell inquiry

## 100 arrests after rally for miners

By David Walker

More than 100 people were arrested early yesterday evening as the miners' rally in Trafalgar Square petered out in a series of skirmishes between police and demonstrators in Whitehall.

Windows were broken at the Ministry of Defence as crowds dispersed, and there were several incidents where staves and beer cans were thrown at the police. Despite several baton charges Scotland Yard reported that injuries were slight. The police officers hurt suffered mostly cuts and bruises. A Yard spokesman said that a "by and large peaceful march" had been marred by a hooligan element which had deliberately blocked Whitehall.

After missiles were thrown police began to shepherd marchers out of the area and mounted officers moved from the Horse Guards station to clear Whitehall. Most incidents involved young men not identifiable as miners. A later statement by the police blamed "drunken youths".

Estimates of the strength of the protest differed widely between the police's early estimate of 12,000 later upped to 15,000 and the National Union of Mineworkers' count of between 80,000 and 100,000.

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By Barrie Clement, Labour Reporter, By David Young, Energy Correspondent and By David Walker.

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