

Pressure grows in Wales for pit return

Leaders of the South Wales miners will come under increasing pressure today to lead the men back to work without an agreement being signed and continue the struggle on a pit-by-pit basis.

As one lodge in the coalfield yesterday called for the move "to save the union", National Coal Board figures showed that the number of working men had more than doubled to 1,054. Up to last Friday, only 509 men out of 19,000 were working in what remains Britain's most militant coalfield.

In spite of the increase Dr Kim Howells, the union's research officer, said there was a "dawning sense of elation" that the figure was not much higher.

The number who had gone back to work was still less than 5 per cent of the workforce in South Wales, he said.

The South Wales executive received a mandate from 600 delegates who attended a conference last week to continue the strike and stand firm behind the national leadership.

But it has emerged since then that at several meetings at the weekend the vote on whether to return was close.

While Mr Emlyn Williams, the area president, and the rest of his executive must be confident of the continued support of the majority of the members, there is a growing realization that South Wales could be isolated by its own militancy.

On the table before the executive today will be a letter from Mr Tony Ciano, lodge chairman at the Cynheidre colliery, calling for a return to work without a settlement.

Only six of the 28 pits in the coalfield, including Mardy, Rhondda, remain solid to the strike.

● The coal board and the Central Electricity Generating Board have agreed their annual contract in expectation of an end to the miners' strike (Our Energy Correspondent writes).

Under an agreement which expires next year the electricity board takes at least 95 per cent of its annual requirements from the coal board, making it the British coal industry's largest customer but leaving it flexibility to buy up to 5 per cent on the world markets.

The full costs of the miners' strike to the electricity board will not be known until after the strike ends and not officially published until next August.

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Mr McGahey and Mr Scargill arriving at Congress House, London yesterday. (Photograph: John Manning)

Miners return in mood of despair

From Peter Davenport, Allerton Bywater, West Yorkshire

Record numbers of miners went back to work yesterday at the beginning of a critical week in the dispute.

In three key areas, Yorkshire, the North-east, and South Wales, the National Coal Board reported the highest return to work figures of the 11-month dispute. More than 1,200 men went back in Northumberland and Durham, 1,162 in Yorkshire, and 565 in South Wales. The South Wales figure doubles the number of working miners in the area.

Mr David Hunt, Under Secretary of State at the Department of Energy with special responsibility for coal, spent the day with Mr Michael Eaton, the coal board's chief spokesman and director of its North Yorkshire area at his headquarters at Allerton Bywater, near Castleford. It was a pre-arranged visit during which the minister met every colliery manager from the area.

Mr Hunt said he believed most men in the industry felt complete and utter despair at the lack of progress towards a negotiated settlement. He said: "They now recognize that it is the NUM that slammed the door on a settlement." He accused the union's leadership of "hijacking" the union from its members.

He added: "The NUM executive must be reaching the conclusion that they were

bounced by Mr Scargill to rejecting the TUC's very reasonable and honest document."

He said that Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, had received a letter from Mr Scargill during the morning and that the minister had written back saying that the TUC document was still available and if accepted there could be further talks to settle the dispute.

Mr Eaton added that the record number of miners indicated feelings of despair and disillusionment by men who felt they were being badly led. "It is not a question of the men being starved back as the union says. More than 3,000 men are not all starving on the same day."

In Yorkshire some coal board officials conceded that they would have liked to see many thousands more returning to work yesterday so as to provide conclusive evidence that the strike was truly broken. However, more than 41,000 miners remain loyal to their area union.

The highest return to work figures were in the North-east with 1,212 "new faces" reporting during the morning and with several dozen more expected on later shifts at two collieries. Board officials in the area said that more than 40 per cent of the coalfield's 22,000 miners were now back at work.

Man fined £25 for Scargill 'bearhug'

Samuel Bates, aged 60, a 6ft 2in tall former Royal Marine who took part in the Normandy landings, was fined £25 with £15 costs in Derby yesterday for grabbing Mr Arthur Scargill in a "bearhug".

Bates, a retired wood machinist, of Sevenoaks Avenue, Mackworth, Derby, was summoned before Derby magistrates for threatening behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace, and pleaded guilty.

Miss Deborah Ellor, for the prosecution, said that Bates was in Derby market place on November 24 last year when a National Union of Mineworkers rally was taking place. Suffering from angina, he had a dizzy spell and sat on the platform, but then he leapt up, grabbed Mr Scargill in a bearhug and they fell to the floor.

Bates, who paid his fine immediately after the case, said: "When we fell over on to the platform Mr Scargill said only two words, 'Ey, up', he was so surprised, I have never been violent with anyone before and I can't imagine anyone else moving me to so much anger."

● A total of 7,785 have been charged with 10,153 offences so far during the miners' dispute. Sir Michael Havers, QC, the Attorney General, said in a parliamentary written answer.

● Thirteen people, 12 men and a woman, appeared before Bow Street magistrates on charges arising out of the coal

strike demonstration in London on Sunday. Charges they faced included assaults on the police and using threatening words or behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace. All were remanded on bail to dates in March.

The 13 were: David Ellis, aged 25, of Cookson Street, and David Needham, aged 21, of Rosewood Court, both Kirby in Ashfield, both Nottinghamshire miners; Peter Sandy, aged 38, public affairs director, of Mafeking Avenue, Ilford, Essex; Jan Clombor, aged 25, unemployed, of William Covell Close, The Ridgeway, Enfield, Middlesex; Christopher Norwood, aged 19, of Avonway, Colchester, Essex; and Michael Brighthouse, aged 21, of Stratford Road, Herne Hill, south London; both students: Paul Harvey, aged 21, of Edward Street, Harwich, Essex; Dermot Trainor, aged 28, of Orwell Terrace, Dovercourt, Harwich, Essex; Graham Farrell, aged 27, of Fulham Park Gardens, Fulham, south-west London, all unemployed; Rachel Winters, aged 19, of West Beech Road, Wood Green, north London; Peter Lynton, aged 21, of Upper Street, Islington, north London; Peter Kelly, aged 20, of Sullivan Road, Crystal Palace, south London, all unemployed; Nathaniel Wall, aged 22, a patient at the Tropical Diseases Hospital, St Pancras, central London.



Bates after his court appearance.

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From Peter Davenport and Allerton Bywater.

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