

Coal board says 85% of miners are back on first day of return to work

Flying pickets hit Wales and Yorkshire

● The return to work in the coalfields was held up when miners refused to pass pickets demanding an amnesty for colleagues dismissed in the strike

● Mr Arthur Scargill, the miners' leader, said such an amnesty was essential for peace in the industry. He refused to cross one of the picket lines

● The pickets, from Kent and other militant pits, were respected by many miners. The National Coal Board reported an 85 per cent return to work

● Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, advocated selling part of the coal industry to co-operatives of management and workers

By Paul Routledge, Labour Editor

Flying pickets from the militant Kent coalfield slowed up the return to work at the official close of the year-long pit strike yesterday, but the National Coal Board reported that 85 per cent of miners were back at their jobs.

The unexpected arrival of strikers demanding a total amnesty for men dismissed during the dispute caught the police and coal board managers unawares in Yorkshire, where picket lines prevented 22,000 men from abandoning the conflict.

At pit after pit in the coalfield where the strike began in March last year, a handful of Kent miners combined with local militants to turn back the thousands of men seeking to carry out the national return to work decision.

Mr Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, refused to take his members through a picket line at Barrow colliery in South Yorkshire. He said later: "What we need is an amnesty for those dismissed. Until and unless we get it, you will not have peace in the coalfields."

Encouraged by their success in Yorkshire and parts of South Wales yesterday, Kent union leaders are now spreading their net in the hope of relaunching the strike until all 700 men dismissed by the board after being convicted of various criminal offences are reinstated.

Mr Jack Collins, secretary of the Kent pitmen, said: "We know that there are tens of thousands of miners disgusted at the decision reached last Sunday, and we will be asking them to join us."

The coalfield militants, who number fewer than two thousand, managed to prevent a return to work by 10 times their number by carefully selecting their targets yesterday.

They chose the colliery where Mr Scargill was leading the return to work, and the Kinsley conflict.

On other pages:

War of wills; Scargill profile; S Wales contempt; Chief Constable's view; Parliament; Letters

Drift, South Kirby, Frickley, Prince of Wales, Cortonwood, Cadeby, Kellingly, Kiveton Park and Armthorpe mines, together with Shafton workshops. Not all of these are traditionally hard-line units but they represent a spread right across Yorkshire.

The Kent pickets arrived the night before the return to work was due, and stayed with sympathisers in the pit villages.

At Frickley the 1,000-strong return to work march was met by about 40 pickets, including the Kent strikers, and after a short discussion the men

decided not to go into work. Their decision was reinforced by dismissal notices delivered to more men on the morning of the "march back".

The coal board said that half of the Yorkshire workforce returned yesterday.

There were other disturbances in Northumberland and in the Midlands in the general pattern of an orderly return to work, but generally speaking the board was able to report an "encouraging" response to the union's national appeal for an end to the strike. Only 15 per cent of the 186,000-strong workforce was estimated to be still out on the first full day of "normal working".

Only 5,400 of the miners still on strike were in Scotland, where the area decision to remain out until there is an amnesty for about 200 dismissed men looks certain to be rescinded at a recalled delegate conference today. Men in the Ayrshire collieries of Barony and Killoch voted to resume work, and across the coalfields the board reported a 56 per cent attendance.

Only in Kent is the strike still practically solid, with 1,700 of the area's 2,000 men still out.

The return to work in Wales was disrupted by the Kent pickets at Trelewis Drift, near Bedlinog and Blaenserchan, Gwent, and there may be protests against the Kent actions.



Miners at Merthyr Vale colliery yesterday, scene of the Aberfan tip disaster in 1966. (Photograph: Jeremy Nicholl.)

Tax change by Lawson may raise food prices

By David Smith
Economics Correspondent

A subtle move to raise £500 million or more in value added tax revenue is under consideration for the Budget in 13 days. The tax would be raised from goods which are now zero-rated, such as food, newspapers, books, children's clothing and new non-residential construction, without imposing the tax directly on the selling prices of the goods concerned.

This could be achieved by changing the status of goods which escape VAT from zero-rated to exempt.

Producers of goods which are zero-rated can reclaim VAT they have paid on the materials and services which go into the

Israelis lecture 11 envoys on need for 'iron fist' policy

From Christopher Walker, Jerusalem

Israel yesterday summoned 11 ambassadors, including those of the US, Britain and France, to try to justify its "iron fist" policy in occupied southern Lebanon. It called on their governments to persuade Lebanon to drop its moves at the UN against the policy.

The envoys represented countries with places on the Security Council, which have diplomatic relations with Israel and those which contribute men to Unifil, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, which Israel accused of hampering its drive against "terrorists" in Lebanon.

During the 60-minute meeting Mr Uri Lubrani, the co-ordinator in Lebanon, denied any Israeli involvement "direct

"The Shia Muslims of southern Lebanon will not live in peace if our people do not live in peace in northern Israel", he said.

Mr Kimche's assertion that the recent upsurge in attacks against Israeli soldiers was directly attributable to statements by Lebanese leaders was countered by foreign correspondents at a later briefing on the diplomatic session.

The ambassadors, representing the US, Britain, France, Denmark, Australia, The Netherlands, Egypt, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Italy, were told the crackdown was imposed "because violence begets violence" and the Israelis had been attacked while evacuating.

'Star Wars' agreement urged by Genscher

From Michael Binyon
Bonn

The West German Foreign Minister, Herr Hans-Dietrich Genscher yesterday appealed to the Russians and the Americans to reach agreement on space weapons at their talks in Geneva next week, and said there must be "no standstill" in East-West relations.

His call came in an interview with West German radio in Finland, where he is accompanying President Richard von Weizsäcker on a state visit. He flew there from Moscow after talks on Monday with Mr Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Herr Genscher said the Europeans wanted to make a

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