

File

39

Daily Coal Report - Friday 14 December 1984

	<u>Number</u>
(i) Working normally	47
(ii) Turning some coal	19
(iii) Some men present	73
(iv) On strike/picketed out	35

40 new faces have reported so far today, bringing to 16,539 the total who have returned since 5 November.

		<u>Change on</u>	
		<u>Yesterday</u>	<u>Last Friday</u>
Scotland	(24 hr attendance) 2,401	+ 9	+ 91
North East	(24 hr attendance) 3,218	+ 24	+ 46
Yorkshire	(24 hr attendance) 3,006	+ 34	+ 153
North Derbyshire	(24 hr attendance) 4,573	- 247	+ 13
Western	(24 hr attendance) 11,141	+ 270	+ 39
South Wales	(morning shift) 127	+ 2	+ 2
Kent	(morning shift) 102	- 9	- 4

Coal Movements

The provisional estimate is that some 970,000 tonnes were moved this week.

42 coal trains ran yesterday.

Law and Order

Again, very quiet. 3,000 pickets reported to be 'roaming' in South Yorkshire, but no trouble.

At Rotherham Magistrate's Court Scargill was today found guilty on

two charges of obstruction. He was fined £200 for obstructing the police, £50 for obstructing the highway and ordered to pay costs limited to £750.

TUC

Today's meeting between the Secretary of State for Energy and the TUC, which was also attended by the Secretary of State for Employment, produced no surprises. The TUC explained their concern about the damage the dispute was causing to the industry's prospects and to mining communities. They urged that negotiations between the NCB and NUM be resumed on a more positive plane. Specifically they suggested that as a basis for a return to work there should be a time-limited negotiation between the Board and the NUM on a new "Plan for Coal" on the themes of expansion, efficiency and growth - areas where they believed there was common ground. They also proposed that pending these discussions the Board should not proceed with its March 6 proposal and that the five pits of particular concern to the NUM should remain open. However, despite their bridge-building aspirations, they were unable to point to any change in Scargill's attitude.

The Secretary of State catalogued the offer available to miners, the negotiations between the Board and the NUM, the substantial concessions already made by the Board, the Board's acceptance of the ACAS compromise proposal, its deal with NACODS, its desire to move towards a low cost, high production industry etc. He pointed out that the flexibility shown by the Board stood in stark contrast to Scargill's intransigence and methods - in particular Scargill's demand that every pit, no matter how uneconomic, should be kept open until exhausted. He pointed out that any future "Plan for Coal" had to recognise the need to deal with uneconomic pits and asked that the TUC should bring every influence to bear on the NUM to recognise this reality. He also said that the Coal Board could not, in good faith, enter a negotiation on a new plan if it knew at the outset that failure was inevitable because of the NUM's attitude.

The TUC said they would be having another discussion with the NUM. But the chance that they will be able to deliver a fundamental shift in attitude by the NUM leadership seems remote.

High Court

A High Court judge has refused to order two Derbyshire NUM officials personally to repay more than £1.7 million of union funds spent on the dispute. He said there was no immediate advantage in taking steps which would bankrupt the officials.

Line to Take

See attached press released.

Distribution: Members of MISC 101, Paymaster General
Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr Gregson (Cabinet Office)

Enquiries: Michael Reidy, PS/SOS for Energy, Tel: 211 6070

Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, today welcomed his exchange of views with the TUC about the miners' dispute, but he said that they had in no way suggested a change in the attitude of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Speaking after his meeting with the TUC Liaison Group, Mr Walker said:

"Obviously the TUC had nothing to bring to this meeting which suggested a change in the attitude of the NUM.

"I reviewed with the TUC what had happened to date, and I explained how the use of considerable resources had created conditions in which the government could say to the miners:

- you can have a good pay increase which compares favourably with other groups;
- we can guarantee that any miner who wishes to continue to be a miner can do so;
- there will be generous voluntary redundancy conditions in areas where pits have to close for economic reasons;
- there is a major investment programme, more than twice that of the rest of the European Community put together; and
- an enterprise scheme to help bring jobs to mining communities.

"I also pointed out that what was on offer to the miners was probably better in total than anything of offer to any other group, and the best offer to the miners since nationalisation.

"Throughout all the negotiations that have taken place, the TUC has agreed with me that what is needed and what everybody wants is a negotiated settlement.

"The NCB has negotiated patiently and at length; it has reached an agreement with NACODS; it is in agreement with BACM; it has agreed to an independent advisory body in the colliery review procedure; and it has accepted a compromise proposal put forward by ACAS during negotiations with the NUM.

"But the NUM rejected that compromise, and we have a situation in which a third of that union balloted against a strike and is at work, while the dispute continues with the two-thirds that has been deprived of a ballot.

"The NCB said during the ACAS negotiations that they wanted to sit down with the mining unions including the NUM and agree a future Plan for Coal. The government has always welcomed that possibility.

"But there has been no movement by Mr Scargill on his demand that every pit, no matter how uneconomic, should be kept going until it is exhausted of coal.

"I told the TUC you cannot sit down and have a good Plan for coal on that basis, because it would not provide a good future for the coal industry. That future includes the cheap and efficient production of coal through a high investment programme. That is the only way for the industry to expand in the way the Government wants, and which the miners should and must want.

"I have always made it clear that if any trade union leader or any of the TUC wish to have talks with me, then I am always available.

"I welcome this exchange of views as I welcome all exchanges of views and I continue to hope that anybody examining the offer being made to miners will recognise that a settlement could be made immediately on the basis of the NCB's very generous offer."

December 14, 1984