

# 'Star Chamber' move could split miners

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By Barrie Clement, Labour Reporter

Mr Arthur Scargill is to tighten his grip on the National Union of Mineworkers with new measures to order working miners to join the 16-week-old strike.

Under a proposed rule change, a national and area network of disciplinary committees would have the power to expel any miners or sections of the union who commit "any act which may be detrimental to the interests of the union".

It looks certain to be passed at a shortened annual conference of the union at Sheffield University on July 11 and 12.

The resolution will immeasurably strengthen the militants, and will allow the committees to define the "interests of the union" and - according to moderates - will hasten the break-up of the union.

The seven-strong national disciplinary committee will be presided over by Mr Mick McGahey, the Communist vice-president of the union, who will have a casting vote. A national appeals body will have the final word in such cases. There the president, Mr Scargill, will also have a casting vote.

A motion, drawn up by the national executive, which briefly discussed the matter at its fortnightly meeting in Sheffield yesterday, will also clamp down on members who leak internal documents to the press. The committees will seek to suppress information provided by NUM members such as that on which this article is based.

The annual conference, which will be attended by about 250 delegates, is likely to vote by a majority of about 80 per cent in favour of the new measures.

The moves are seen by moderates as an attempt to stop court actions such as those recently taken by working miners which have resulted in

rulings that the leadership cannot claim that the present strike is an official stoppage. The national executive is promoting a "catch-all" clause in the rules which will allow for the strong central control of the union. It could be argued by militants that the current calls for a national ballot on the strike could be overruled by the committees.

One local miners' leader, who supplied *The Times* with part of the preliminary agenda for the conference - and would be disciplined under the new rules - said it was now inevitable that the union would break apart.

"Arthur Scargill has set up a Star Chamber. I am for the strike personally, but my members have voted against it, and they will not come out until there is a national ballot."

The motion will be discussed at a pre-conference executive meeting, and there will be considerable pressure on the leadership to change its mind. But executive sources said yesterday that the resolution was unlikely to be materially changed.

● *The Sun* is not published today, for the third day running (the Press Association reports). The dispute started on Tuesday when *The Sun* refused to publish a statement from print workers supporting the miners. Since then the management has been calling for an assurance of uninterrupted production and the National Graphical Association has refused.

● The Queen has given her assurance in a letter to Mr John Holmes, aged 69, a former factory shop steward from Doncaster, that she is following "closely" developments in the miners' dispute, after he wrote asking if she could intervene.

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