

Scargill sticks out for total victory

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by Donald Macintyre
Labour Editor

WITH talks aimed at ending the 17-week-old coal strike due to reopen tomorrow, Arthur Scargill yesterday told a trade union rally in Birmingham: "We are going to win."

The miners' union leader, back at the scene of his 1972 triumph when mass picketing closed the Sattley power station, gave no details of how the talks were progressing. Instead, he called on trade unionists to increase their action in support of the miners.

"We need more than finance, we need more than food," he told his 10,000-strong audience. "We need the physical participation of workers to demonstrate solidarity with our people."

Scargill, renewing his pledge that there would be no "sell-out or compromise", said: "We have come too far for anything other than to win victory." But he warned that industrial action by other workers was needed to "halt the decimation of our pits, our jobs, our mining communities." He added: "Workers in steel, in the power stations, throughout every sector of British industry, must take that action."

Scargill's emotional speech demonstrated that the propaganda war between the two

sides is continuing unabated despite their 14½ hours of negotiations in London last Thursday and Friday. The National Coal Board yesterday published the fourth of its series of full-page national newspaper advertisements accusing miners' leaders of deliberately misleading their members.

This weekend, government sources insisted there was no backing away from the NCB's intention to close 20 pits. They said that Scargill was under pressure to agree to closure on economic grounds or face a protracted strike, lasting to 1985. They added that, if the tone of Scargill's Sattley speech was anything to go by, there would be no chance of a negotiated settlement.

Even so, notwithstanding suggestions on both sides last night that "there is a long way to go," serious negotiations will resume tomorrow morning to try to secure a draft formula which could be put to the miners' union's extraordinary delegate conference on Wednesday and Thursday. The union's 26-member executive is due to

hold its pre-conference meeting on Tuesday afternoon.

With outline agreement already reached on so-called Category A and Category B closures (those arising from exhaustion or severe geological difficulties), it is assumed that discussions still centre on the crucial definition of a third category: what constitutes an "uneconomic" pit.

The unpublished agenda for this week's union conference shows that delegates will have before them several motions calling for "substantial" increases in wages and holding out the prospect of renewed industrial strife next winter. Only one resolution, from the Durham area, attempts to put a price on the claim by seeking a £6 per shift increase for all grades from November 1.

However, one of the main left-wing areas, Yorkshire, is demanding a "commitment to the British miners to keep them at the top of the wages league" and is calling on the executive to "consult the membership and seek authority to take industrial action" in the event of the "NCB refusing their demands."

At present, last year's 5.2% pay offer is still standing on the table for the union's 185,000 members.

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