

# Scargill denounces 'blatant state interference' in miners' strike

From Paul Routledge, Labour Editor, Sheffield

Sir Robert Megarry, the Vice-Chancellor, was yesterday accused of "state interference" in the coal mining strike by Mr Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers.

In his presidential address to the extraordinary annual conference of the NUM, the miners' leader also predicted that a the strike moved "towards autumn and winter", the union's negotiating position would improve.

"From the start of this dispute - in fact from the day our overtime ban began last November, there has been a lot of talk, particularly from the media, about democracy," Mr Scargill said. "I have noted with interest that those who are most vociferous in attacking our union, telling it what it should and should not do, are in fact the non-elected editors of newspapers or non-elected judges.

"They include such public figures as Vice-Chancellor Sir Robert Megarry, who is now openly trying to run the affairs of our organization. I would hope that conference rejects this blatant state interference in the affairs of an independent and democratic trade union.

"Indeed, what Sir Robert Megarry is trying to do is in violation of ILO conventions, but his actions reveal clearly the level and weight of state

interference with miners in this dispute."

Mr Scargill added: "Through the police, the judiciary, the social security system - whichever way seems possible - the full weight of the state is being brought to bear upon us in an attempt to try and break this strike".

Mr Scargill continued: "On the picket lines, riot police in full battle gear, on horseback and on foot, accompanied by police dogs, have been unleashed in violent attacks upon our members.

"We have seen in our communities and villages the level of police harassment and intimidation which organized British trade unionists have never before experienced."

Mr Scargill went on: "Preventing the right of people to move freely from one part of the country, or even county, to another; the calculated attacks upon striking miners in the streets of their villages; the oppressive conditions of bail under which it is hoped to silence, discourage and defeat us - all these tactics constitute outright violation of people's basic rights.

"It may well be that we will have to go before the European Court of Human Rights to challenge these flagrant acts of injustice".

Against such a background, the NUM President insisted,

not one miner should be going to work. He said: "I appeal to those who are still at work: search your conscience. No trade unionist can justify crossing an official picket line. No trade union official can condone or collude in such an action."

Repeating his charge that the dispute had cost the British taxpayer £3,000m, Mr Scargill said that negotiations with the National Coal Board over the past week had continued for a marathon 25 hours. "Throughout this dispute, however, it has been clear that the board's negotiators are manipulated in every move by the Prime Minister, who seems obsessed with trying to defeat the National Union of Mineworkers.

"MacGregor (Mr Ian MacGregor the board chairman) is reported to have said that rather than settle this bitter and costly dispute, which has already savaged our nation's economy, he would prefer to see the miner's strike continue in order to defeat our union. We will not be defeated. The magnificent courage and determination of our people will see us through to victory."

Mr Scargill declared: "There can be no compromise in our union's principled opposition to the Coal Board's pit closure programme. Ours is a supremely noble aim: to defend

pits, jobs, communities and the right to work.

"We are now entering a crucial phase in our battle for the survival of this industry. For the first time since the strike began, even the pundits and the experts have started to admit that the pendulum is swinging in favour of the NUM.

"Coal stocks have dropped dramatically; there are little more than 14 million tons at the power stations, and the situation in industry generally is becoming critical.

"As we move towards the autumn and the winter, even the most intransigent Tories must recognize that our negotiating position will improve while that of the Coal Board, backed by the Government, will slowly deteriorate".

The conference had the task of rededicating itself to the union's policies of protecting pits and jobs, he concluded. "We are fighting in defence of our communities for the right to work and for our dignity and self-respect.

"The sacrifices and the hardships have forged a unique commitment among our members. They will ensure that the NUM wins this most crucial battle in the history of our industry. Comrades, I salute you for your magnificent achievements and for your support - together, we cannot fail."



Mrs Anne Scargill arriving at Mansfield Magistrates' Court yesterday while her husband Mr Arthur Scargill, the miners' leader, attended a special delegates meeting of the National Union of Mineworkers at Sheffield University.

Mrs Scargill appeared in the court to formally plead not guilty to charges of obstructing traffic and obstructing a police officer. She was arrested with three other women outside Silverhill Colliery, at Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire. During the hearing a bail

condition imposed at the court in May which prohibited Mrs Scargill from entering the Nottinghamshire coalfield to demonstrate or to picket was lifted.

Mrs Scargill, aged 41, of Yews Lane, Worsbrough Dale, near Barnsley, South Yorkshire had been caused "considerable difficulty" by the restrictions, her solicitor Mr John Howell said. She was often asked to attend meetings with her husband.

Their case was adjourned until October 22.