

Strike 'enforced by mobs'

By Philip Webster, Political Reporter

The Government launched last night its strongest verbal offensive against Mr Arthur Scargill and the National Union of Mineworkers' leadership.

Reacting to the delegate conference's decision to continue the strike, Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, attacked the treatment of delegates who opposed the leadership's line and said that union funds were being used to pay mobs to prevent men from going to work. He criticized Mr Scargill and accused the union of keeping the strike going was by intimidation and violence.

Mr Walker's remarks, in a prepared statement and broad-

cast interviews, marked a significant heightening of the Government's response.

It will be maintained today when Mr Leon Brittan, the Home Secretary, is expected to attack "organized hooliganism" at collieries during the past few days, and accuse the union leadership of countenancing violence on a massive scale. The ministers' aim is to encourage rank and file pressure for a national ballot.

Mr Walker said that Mr Scargill's claim after the delegate conference that support for the strike was solid was absurd. One in three miners, those that had had the right of

ballot, had remained working and opposed to the strike.

Of the two thirds that were prevented from working, the great majority would do so if the were given the opportunity.

"If Mr Scargill really believes that support for this strike is solid, why are NUM funds being used to pay for mobs to prevent men from going to work?"

He said that if the union followed its guidelines on picketing, with six peaceful pickets outside each colliery, thousands of men would return to work.

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Talking of the delegate conference, Mr Walker said that the public had seen the treatment given to delegates who expressed their democratic views. "These decent men have been spat at and have had their cars kicked in - all the methods of abhorrent violence which the country has witnessed in recent weeks have been used by the mob."

He called on Mr Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party, to renew his call for a national ballot on the strike.

Referring to Mr Scargill's reported allegation that some 70 pits would be closed, Mr Walker said: "this is the sort of tripe and total untruth we constantly have from him. He is lying."