

Scargill intimidates TUC - MacGregor

S. Tms 19 AUG 1984

by Roger Ratcliffe and Kim Fletcher

IAN MACGREGOR, the chairman of the coal board, yesterday accused Arthur Scargill, the miners' president, of seeking to intimidate other unions at next month's TUC conference in Brighton into supporting the miners.

Speaking from his home in Kintyre, MacGregor said: "Scargill has gone out of his way to intimidate his own members, now he wants to intimidate other unions. And he wants to steam up the left periphery of the TUC to take part in various embargoes to help the NUM. But he has to depend on the national organisers of these left-wing unions because the members won't do it. So he is urging these left-wing leaders to de-democratise their unions too, just as he has the NUM."

He said he hoped there would be plenty of NUM pickets at the TUC in Brighton so that there would be fewer in the coalfields. September 3, the start of the TUC conference, has been mooted as the date for a possible attempt by rebel miners for a return to work.

With the TUC looking increasingly the focus for moves in the 23-week-old dispute, members of the national working miners' committee - an eight-man team with members from Yorkshire, the midlands and South Wales meeting in secret each week - have written to every member of the TUC general council, which meets this Wednesday. The letter asks them not to support resolutions calling for support for the strike.

The appeal runs: "How can the leadership of a union which has not asked its whole membership about the strike, ask the TUC for support? Do not support the NUM until we have had a national ballot and then, if we do decide to strike, give us all the help we need to get the matter resolved."



"Do you want soccer violence or pithead violence?"

Other working miners, representing colleagues in Lancashire, Nottinghamshire and the Midlands, have written to Eric Hammond, the moderate gen-

eral secretary-elect of the electricians' union, the EETPU, asking him to put their case at the TUC.

For the moment, however, the coal board is continuing to put its faith in an increased return to work. Miners hoping to lead a revolt against the strike in Yorkshire, Britain's biggest coalfield, yesterday confirmed September 3 as the date for a proposed return to work in the county. They said they were also planning a possible confidence-boosting rally the Saturday before.

The leader of the newly-formed Yorkshire working miners' committee, a miner living in the Barnsley area who is remaining anonymous, claimed there was widespread support for a return

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to work. He said: "The only thing that's holding them back is the worry about intimidation and picketing. They are now saying that if we fix a date, they'll all go back together."

The Yorkshire committee is hoping to co-ordinate through the national working miners' committee. Their union, however, claims their activities will have negligible results.

Coal board officials, while delighted at the efforts of the return-to-work committees and the publicity they have received, remain aware that such moves will have little effect on the strike until men wanting to work actually turn up at pit

gates in large numbers: and only then can the real effect of the various movements be judged.

Caution was also sounded yesterday by a chief constable in one of the coalfields who said: "We've had a lot of back-to-work stories during this dispute. All too often they mean a lot of extra work for police and only a handful going back."

There is no doubt, however, that the back-to-work movements are getting increasingly well-organised. In the last two days men from the national committee have organised the printing of thousands of anti-strike leaflets with the heading, "Fight back now - a factsheet published by democratic miners for democratic miners". It will be circulated throughout the coalfields this week. They paid for a half-page advertisement in

yesterday's Daily Express, appealing for funds to fight court actions, compensate victims of intimidation and finance the campaign.

The miners' union is at pains to deny the effect of the return to work and the two sides will both produce fresh figures when Scargill debates the matter with Ned Smith, the board's industrial relations director, on Channel Four on Wednesday.

The board claims that 905 men have returned to work since July 2 but it is not clear how many of these men have remained at work. Last week the board refused to give figures for individual pits. It said as a matter of policy it did not give pit-by-pit figures - but six weeks ago, at the height of its drive to get men back in North Derbyshire, the board was delighted to

give the day-by-day, pit totals.

Bilston Glen, the showpiece Scottish pit where the board has concentrated its efforts to get men back, has demonstrated the difficulty of assessing the effect of the return. While the union and board do not disagree on the number going in, the union claims that few are NUM and even fewer are underground workers. Thus last Friday, of 86 going in, the union was adamant that only 24 were NUM, of whom 20 were underground workers.

● In a rally at Rotherham, south Yorkshire, the Yorkshire miners' leader, Jack Taylor, said that no other union was going to control the miners' dispute but that nothing short of full support from other unions would be enough.

Additional reporting by Ros Franey