

Kinnock traces Scargill 'errors'

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By Anthony Bevens, Political Correspondent

Mr Neil Kinnock last night traced the history of the pit strike back to two ballot blunders made by Mr Arthur Scargill.

The Labour leader confirmed on Channel Four's *Face the Press* that he had said last year that the miners' president was destroying the coal industry single-handed and that he was the Labour movement's nearest equivalent to a First World War general.

But he insisted on putting the attacks into context. He said: "As a consequence of holding two ballots in a very short period of months in 1982 and 1983, ballots in which the miners turned down by substantial majorities strike action, I felt that the signal was then being given to this government that the miners were lacking in resolution, and were willing to accept orders and closures and a

retraction of the industry that previously had not been the case.

"I think that is the message Mrs Thatcher got, I think it is one of the reasons for the appointment of Mr MacGregor, and for the Government's view of the coal mining industry.

"Now in those circumstances I thought that Arthur Scargill had been tactically in error.

"In having those two ballots of 82 and 83, in which there was substantial no votes, and that was the context, that was the background in which I used that phrase."

But Mr Kinnock again criticized Mr Scargill's decision to refuse the miners a national ballot.

He said: "The use of a ballot at the onset of this strike I think would have had only one result. I think it would have been a very substantial yes vote, and

that would have had the consequences of giving a coherence to the efforts of the miners to save their pits and secure a development that has not been apparent on occasions during the strike.

"I think that would have been the case then, and I think it would have probably shortened the strike."

Meanwhile, Whitehall sources yesterday confirmed that Mrs Thatcher would have been briefing the Queen on the miners' dispute during her weekend visit to Balmoral with Mr Denis Thatcher.

The Prime Minister returns to Downing Street today. After the limited government reshuffle which is expected tomorrow she will be preparing for Thursday's Cabinet, the first since July, and the first opportunity for a full review of the industrial situation.