

Scargill makes heartland cash plea

From Peter Davenport
Goldthorpe

Harried by a succession of legal actions, threatened with the imminent seizure of union funds and still debating the effectiveness of the return to work, Mr Arthur Scargill went back to the heartland of the coal strike yesterday to prepare for a winter of continued defiance.

The National Union of Mineworkers' president chose the occasion of a meeting in the redbrick miners' welfare hall in the South Yorkshire pit village of Goldthorpe to launch an impassioned appeal for money to carry on the dispute, despite the High Court appointment of a receiver which endangers the day-to-day operations of union headquarters.

"This union must survive and that means practical and financial assistance from the TUC", Mr Scargill said. "It means money to help our organization to function and exist, it means that from all the world over we have to demand more and more from our brothers and sisters."

The meeting was Mr Scargill's first appearance in the coalfields since a special delegate conference decided to snub legal moves threatening the very future of the union by refusing to purge its contempt, pay a £200,000 fine or allow any of its officials to help sequestrators or receivers.

If there had been any doubts about the response to the continuation of the nine-month strike, they vanished in the thunderous reception that Mr Scargill received. Indeed, it appeared that it rejuvenated him. His speech started quietly, almost matter-of-fact, but he ended bristling with confidence and ebullience.

Mr Scargill's mood, and the evident commitment of his audience, would have depressed the National Coal Board and the Government, still pinning their hopes for an end to the dispute on a collapse of support from within the union.

The village of Goldthorpe lies on the main Doncaster-Barnsley road, in the heartland of the Yorkshire coalfield. It has witnessed scenes of violence in the dispute but the miners in the immediate area remain solidly behind the union.

Only two men are working at the village's colliery and at the three others near by, Hickleton, Barnburgh and Dearne Valley, not one man passed the picket lines yesterday.

It remains Mr Scargill's heartland and his reception yesterday, despite the hardship that the strike has brought to mining families, provided proof that support for him personally and for the union's position were as strong as ever.



Mr Scargill leaving the Goldthorpe meeting. (Photograph: Neville Pyne).

He told the audience what they wanted to hear. With every prospect of a grim Christmas and a miserable winter ahead, he assured them that they were winning and outlined the next phase of the dispute.

"The NUM has been to the TUC general secretary and his colleagues and said that the time for mealy-mouthed resolutions in unions and organizations is now at an end. The time for inactivity must come to a stop, the time when this movement must react is now.

Joke about the Receiver

"I am not asking for moral support or resolutions. We are asking for practical assistance and we have asked the General Council to be convened to mobilize industrial action in support of this union."

Mr Scargill was answered with a burst of applause, footstamping and cheers. The fight, he said, was for the pit communities and jobs, and for the miners' children.

He tried to turn the appoint-

ment as Receiver of Mr Herbert Brewer, the Derbyshire solicitor and local Conservative Party official into a joke, saying that he had used the union computer that morning to check some figures on Mr Ian Macgregor and had not asked the Receiver's permission.

The joke masked very real concern within the union about the effect on its day-to-day operations when Mr Brewer takes control of funds

Mr Scargill was on his feet for 42 minutes and at the end he sent his audience home with a message based on the "Here we go" chant that has almost become his personal theme song during the strike:

"You are not saying: 'Here we go.' You are saying: 'Here we are.' We have found ourselves, and with that spirit, they can put a receiver in, they can put sequestrators in, they can smear us and attack us, but there is one thing for certain: that provided we stand firmly together, this union is on its way to the greatest victory in history."