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Daily Coal Report - Friday 31 August 1984

Prime Minister

CDP
31/8Pit categories

	<u>Number</u>	<u>plus on holiday</u>
Working normally	35	10
Turning some coal	8	1
Some men present	12	1
Not working	107	-

MB

These totals are the same as yesterday.

Attendance at Bilston Glen in Scotland today was 134, 1 more than yesterday's record. The total number working in Scotland this morning was also a record - 193, up 3. The NCB have delayed making any final statement about the future of Polkemmet colliery, whose 4 faces were discovered to be seriously flooded on Monday night after safety cover was withdrawn for a week. While the Board wish to be seen to be making strenuous efforts to investigate the damage, they have little hope that anything can be saved. The Board have however announced today that while a final decision on Polkemmet's future has still to be made, the Polkemmet miners, who voted overwhelmingly against a strike on 9 March, would not lose the opportunity of transfer or redundancy benefits. Conditions at the third and only remaining face at Castlehill pit in Fife have today reached "a state of emergency" as the NUM has again withdrawn safety cover.

Attendances in the North East were similar to yesterday. About 500 pickets appeared at Wearmouth colliery, but there was little trouble there.

27 men reported for work in Yorkshire this morning, one less than Wednesday's record. The breakdown between areas is as follows:
North Yorkshire - Allerton Bywater 4 (1,000 pickets), Gascoigne

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Wood 2, North Selby 4 (up 1); Doncaster area - Yorkshire Main 4 (up 2, 400 pickets), Markham 1, Carcroft Park workshops 1 (around 800 pickets in the area as a whole); South Yorkshire - Kiverton Park 7 (2,000 pickets, 7 arrests), Silverwood 2, Brookhouse 2.

The overall attendance in North Derbyshire was slightly down on yesterday's record, although this is probably accounted for by the greater number of rest days taken on a Friday. Warsop had 134 men (down 19), Bolsover 190 (down 13), and Shirebrook 143 (equalling yesterday's record). Whitwell colliery, which entered the some men working category yesterday, had 5 men in again today. Each of these pits had between 50 - 250 pickets, other collieries in the area only had 20 - 60.

Six men reported for work at Bold colliery in Lancashire, 1 more than yesterday.

Coal Movements

128,000 tonnes were dispatched by the NCB yesterday. 36 coal trains ran, again a record. The NCB estimate that total movements for the week should lie in the range of 480,000 - 500,000 tonnes, despite holidays on Monday and Tuesday.

Law and Order

Two serious incidents occurred in South Wales today. 39 miners seized a transporter bridge across the River Usk at Newport last night, in an attempt to block the river and prevent ships carrying coal reaching Llanwern steelworks. The takeover lasted four hours and all the men were arrested on public disorder charges. Some more serious charges may follow later.

Last night around 100 striking miners started occupying a private jetty owned by BSC at the Port Talbot steelworks. They have climbed onto three 120 feet high cranes and are refusing to move. Police have been pelted with bricks, planks of wood, nuts and bolts. The men say they are expressing solidarity with the South Wales

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striking miners and Dr Kim Howells of the South Wales NUM is speaking on their behalf. They have demanded that a ship carrying iron ore should be sent away from the port unloaded. This afternoon BSC were considering whether to take legal action against named individuals involved (not the NUM itself) under the law of trespass.

A set piece confrontation had obviously been organised at Kiverton Park colliery in South Yorkshire this morning. 2,000 pickets gathered, plus a TV camera crew, and representatives of the NCCL, and the Policewatch organisation. 7 arrests were made as pickets "ran wild" in a nearby estate. A police horse was badly injured.

Planning continues to contain events on Monday, when Mr Scargill has claimed that every pit, coke works and NCB property in the country will be picketed. Monday is also the day when the NUM is organising a large picket for the TUC Congress at Brighton, although it is reported that they have requested this to be peaceful.

Dispute in the Docks

Dockers at the important ports of Dover and Felixstowe voted overwhelmingly this morning to remain at work. 400 members of the GMBATU who work at Sunderland, South Shields, Hartlepool and Blythe docks in the North East also voted to continue working. 200 dockers at Goole did the same. Grimsby and Immingham are now working normally following yesterday's meetings; Hull remains solidly on strike. At Tilbury, where union solidarity has traditionally been particularly strong, around 100 men out of 800 are reported to have crossed picket lines.

This afternoon Moss Evans, the transport union leader, said he would be prepared to enter talks with the dock employers and BSC to discuss quota agreements. He said: "We want BSC to meet our docks group and talk positively about arrangements to keep Ravenscraig, Llanwern and other steel plants open. But in considering these arrangements BSC should agree not to use scab coal."

Preparations for the TUC Congress

Following last night's meeting between the NUM 3 and the TUC 3, the TUC General Council voted by 38 to 5 today to put forward a "unifying" formula which would involve approving the NUM motion calling for "total support", but arranging for the withdrawal of amendments tabled by other unions to this motion which call, amongst other things, for a 10p weekly levy on all trade unionists. If this formula is supported by Congress on Monday, which looks the most likely outcome at present, the NUM gain a temporary media advantage, and "support" for:-

- (i) blacking of all coal, coke or substitute oil movements which cross NUM picket lines; and
- (ii) a campaign to raise cash for alleviating hardship in the coalfield and for maintaining the NUM's financial position.

In practice, the "blacking" element of the motion is likely to be passed with everyone concerned knowing that it will not be possible to bring it into effect. Bill Sirs of the steel workers union ISTC and John Lyons of the power station workers union have both denounced the formula, said it will be unworkable, and that it is most unlikely to gain their members' support. There may however be some further transport difficulties in the aftermath of the passing of this motion.

Lambeth Council support for striking miners

Last night Lambeth council - leader "Red Ted" Knight - voted to spend £750 on entertaining NUM pickets who would be going to lobby at the TUC Congress next week. Conservative opposition leader Mr Peter Davies said that this decision was a blatant abuse of ratepayers money. He added: "The Labour controlled council is now spending its money on wining and dining pickets on the rates."

Line to Take

It is a cruel irony that the miners should, striking for a better future, find themselves facing one that is worse. Next week the TUC should not be endorsing the unlawful mass picketing and intimidation. Nor should they ignore the views of the third of miners who have had the opportunity of a ballot about the strike - over two-thirds decisively voted against strike action. The future of all of us, and not just those miners starting their 26th week on strike, depends on everyone in Britain working together and rejecting the attitudes of confrontation.

Some outside commentators [a recent NIESR report] have suggested that coal stocks will run out before the end of the year. In fact our stocks will last well into 1985. Some calculations have discounted the very considerable production which is continuing to be made available from the pits which are at work. Drawdown of coal stocks over the summer has only been at a very low level.

[Yesterday's lines to take on the Strength of the NCB's case, the Orme initiative, and Polkemmet colliery may also be useful. The Secretary of State for Energy has written articles which will appear in this week's Sunday Times and Mail on Sunday.]

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