

File
MS

Polkemmet Colliery

On Monday 20 August, 6 men returned to work at Polkemmet. As at other Scottish pits where men have gone in, the NUM immediately withdrew safety cover. To comply with statutory requirements, the power was then switched off underground, leaving no pumps working. The Board said then that there was concern for the pit.

2 While safety cover was withdrawn, NACODS refused to cross picket lines, so the only men at the pit were management and the 6 or 7 returned workers.

3 Safety cover was restored on the night of Monday 27 August; but by that time it was impossible to travel the shaft because of water. By Tuesday, there were some 13 million gallons of water in the pit, flooding the shaft to a depth of 80 feet. Flooding continued at a rate of 1.7 million gallons a day.

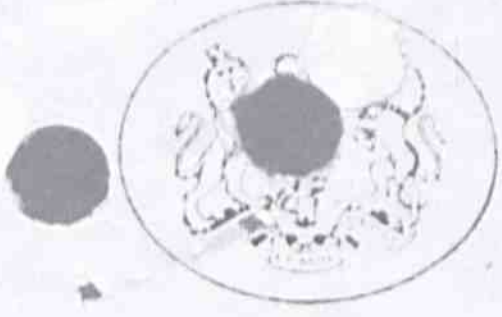
4 Emergency equipment was brought in and underground examinations began. Those investigations continue.

5 The pit normally employs around 1400 men. Its annual production of around 400,000 tonnes goes almost exclusively to Ravenscraig steel works. The NCB Area Director has let it be known that all men at the pit could be offered employment elsewhere, should it be lost.

6 The Board has indicated that the damage is such that full production could not be restored within a year, even if recovery proved possible.

7 The Board has given no commitment yet as to the future of the pit. It is concerned to give a clear demonstration that

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everything reasonably possible is being done with a view to saving it. The pit has, however, been a regular heavy loser, in financial terms, and it would be wrong to create the expectation that everything physically possible will be done to save it, regardless of cost.

Coal Division
Department of Energy
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