

# Hattersley, Denning clash over picketing

By Anthony Bevens  
Political Correspondent

Mr Roy Hattersley, deputy leader of the Labour Party, yesterday clashed with Lord Denning, the former Master of the Rolls, on the purposes and principles of mass picketing and the intervention of the courts in the miners' strike.

Mr Hattersley repeatedly stated in an interview on BBC television's lunchtime *This Week, Next Week* programme that bad laws had to be changed rather than broken.

He also said that mass picketing could be designed as a means of protest rather than as a weapon for intimidation, and that the intervention of the courts could harden attitudes and alienate miners from the law and the rest of society.

But at the end of the duel, Mr Hattersley challenged Lord Denning to say whether he felt the legal process would help or hinder the ending of the strike.

Lord Denning replied: "I have no opinion one way or the other. All I know is that the law ought to be obeyed, and that is all the courts are doing." Mr Hattersley said: "Pathetically simplistic. Pathetically simplistic."

Earlier, Mr Hattersley had said: "I am opposed to intimidation and if there are a very large number of men present on one occasion to intimidate others, then of course I am opposed to it.

"But on the other hand I am strongly in favour of the rights of individuals to demonstrate their opinions and that must mean if a large number of miners want to demonstrate their support for the dispute, they ought to be entitled to congregate and demonstrate that support."

He said that it was a Conservative presence and wholly untrue that it was only intimidation that kept miners out on strike; they were out on strike because they believe in

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the dispute and they believe in solidarity.

"The issue of violence is a side issue," Mr Hattersley said. "It is the issue behind which the Government always retreats when it does not want to talk about the absurdity of closing pits when they ought to be kept open."

Lord Denning then objected that mass picketing was clearly unlawful and challenged Mr Hattersley: "Why does not the Labour Party itself condemn

this unlawfulness?" He also protested about the National Union of Mineworkers' decision to withdraw its funds from Britain in an attempt avoid sequestration.

"All of this is contrary to the law of the land and trying to get around the edicts of our law. What justification is there for any citizen, trade union or the like trying to avoid the law of the land?"

Mr Hattersley replied by asking Lord Denning whether he believed it was in the interests of a unified society "to

pass laws which clearly drive wedges between different sections of the public."

Asked what he would be doing if he were a miner, Mr Hattersley said that he would be on strike, he would not go on mass pickets, but he would be pressing for a ballot.

● Mr Hattersley defended Mr Arthur Scargill, the miners' leader, over his attitude to violence. He said Mr Scargill had made his opposition to violence "absolutely clear", (the Press Association reports).

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