

Scargill raises spectre of further year's strike

By David Felton, Labour Correspondent

Mr Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, who spent part of Christmas on the picket line has raised the spectre of the pits' strike lasting for another 12 months.

The miners' leader, accompanied by his wife Ann, helped picket a power station in Yorkshire on Christmas Day and later visited the union's headquarters in Sheffield to oversee operations of the strike coordinating centre.

Speaking on the picket line at Ferrybridge power station, where a miner died earlier in the strike, Mr Scargill said: "The Government had better understand that if they don't want the dispute to go on until Christmas 1985 they must allow the coal board to negotiate with the NUM."

Asked if he would be talking to Mr Ian MacGregor, chairman of the National Coal Board, in the new year he said: "When he returns from his sunshine holiday in Palm Beach it is a possibility that he might decide that the dispute has gone on long enough and that he should negotiate. I only hope that Mrs Thatcher and Mr

Walker who are preventing negotiations taking place will accept that there should be negotiations."

Mr MacGregor is due back from his family holiday next week but there is little likelihood of an early resumption of negotiations to end the strike with the Government insisting that the miners modify their

It was tragic that the light of Christmas had failed to penetrate the darkness of the pits dispute "because of apparent unwillingness to attempt to resume efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement", the Archbishop of Liverpool, the Most Rev Derek Worlock, said in a Christmas Day message.

hard line opposition to pit closures and the union is showing no signs of agreeing.

Leaders of the Scottish TUC, having seen the failure of their English counterparts to bring about a reopening of talks, have asked for a meeting with Mr George Younger, Secretary of State for Scotland, to press him to help open the way for fresh

negotiations between the board and the NUM.

The board will concentrate its efforts in the new year on encouraging an increase in the numbers of striking miners returning to work. Those had tailed off before the holiday break.

With most pits due to start working again on January 2, a series of newspaper advertisements placed by the board will point to the benefits of an early return to work, with earnings to the end of the financial year largely tax free.

The board's propaganda campaign will also highlight what it regards as the futility of the strike and the unwillingness of Mr Scargill and the NUM leadership to compromise to get a negotiated settlement.

● More than 200 miners who gave up their Christmas holiday to fight a serious fire 850ft underground at Rawdon colliery in south Derbyshire, yesterday succeeded in containing the blaze. Two coal faces at the pit have been lost along with mining machinery worth several million pounds, a coal board spokesman said.