

# Thatcher plea to miners

By Philip Webster, Political Reporter

The Prime Minister last night issued a plea to striking miners to return to work rather than pin their hopes on another round of talks that might be doomed to failure.

In an interview on the Channel 4 programme *A Week in Politics*, she emphasized in the firmest terms that the Government and the coal board had no intention of backing down on their insistence that the miners' union accepted the right of management to close uneconomic pits.

She said: "You cannot compromise on the right of management to manage."

Mrs Thatcher's remarks reflect the view of ministers that the best hopes for an early settlement of the long-running dispute lies in the continuing return to work by miners.

Ministers are hoping for

another surge back to work on Monday morning prior to the Commons debate on the strike initiated by Mr Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader.

Mrs Thatcher said on the television programme: "I do not want another round of talks to fail. I want them to succeed. I know there are many many striking miners who want to get back and who I believe would accept past procedures and would like to get back on that basis."

"I want them to go back. I do not wish their hopes to be dashed by another round of talks which is doomed to failure. It is because I want these talks to succeed that I do not want the talks to go ahead on a false basis."

She had been asked by Mr Peter Jay, the interviewer, why

the coal board did not take the advantage of talks with the miners without preconditions.

She said there had been seven lots of talks. One might say they had been without preconditions, but they had all foundered on the same thing, the refusal of the union leadership to accept what had always been the case that loss-making pits should close after the due procedures and that the coal board should have the right to make the decision.

Mrs Thatcher denied that the Government's economic policy had been blown off course by the recent increases in interest rates. She said interest rates were a weapon, and that although the Government did not like to use it, it had to be used now and then.

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# Thatcher ready for challenge to leadership

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Mrs Thatcher also said that she was ready to take on challengers for the Conservative Party leadership and that she would never resent a contest.

"I would not mind at all: I came up that way. I could not deny that way to others".

She went on to deny that her decision to challenge Mr Edward Heath in 1975 had been an act of disloyalty.

The party had decided there should be an election. "This is what we all have to face. It happens when you are at the top."

But the Prime Minister said it had never been any preconceived ambition on her part to be leader. "I had no great ambition. Indeed I think I doubted if a woman would ever become leader of the party. I doubted very much whether there would be a woman Prime Minister."

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