

Left 'ready to ditch Scargill'

By Craig Seton

Mr Roy Ottey, who resigned from the National Union of Mineworkers' executive last October, predicted yesterday that the left-wing areas who had routed moderate opposition to a strike without a national ballot were preparing to pull the rug from under Mr Arthur Scargill, the union's president.

He also suggested that the executive might ask Mr Scargill to resign if the strike ended disastrously and split the union.

Mr Ottey, who represented the power group, resigned after 18 years because Mr Scargill was not prepared to end his defiance of a High Court ruling.

Mr Ottey, aged 60, has written a book, *"THE strike: An Insider's Story"*, about the events leading to the strike.

A miner since he was 15, Mr Ottey said he had predicted in 1981 that a national strike ballot would not be carried and that a strike could split the union. He adds that at an executive meeting last March a motion proposing that a national ballot should be held on a strike call was not put. A motion for area-by-area strikes had been carried by 21 votes to 3 and not, he said, unanimously as Mr Scargill had claimed.

"They routed the moderates completely. It was well planned," he said yesterday.

"I forecast that at the end of the day the left-wing areas, particularly, would reach a stage where they had to lead their men back to work rather than have them going back without the say-so of their leaders. They have got to retain their credibility and in my view they will pull the rug from under Arthur Scargill without any compunction and sacrifice him if necessary."

Mr Ottey believed such a united back-to-work move without a national settlement could gather pace in South Wales, Scotland, Yorkshire and Kent where the strike had been most solid.

The Strike: An Insider's Story (Published on March 6 by Sidgwick and Jackson, £7.95).

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