

Why Scargill vetoed ballot

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by Donald Macintyre
Labour Editor

ARTHUR SCARGILL, president of the NUM, says today that the union "may well have lost" a ballot if it had held one before the start of the year-long miners' strike.

In an interview with TVS, to be screened at noon, Scargill says that critics of his strategy have "suggested, quite wrongly in my view, that the evidence was that we would have won a ballot prior to the dispute taking place in March 1984".

Scargill says the miners were faced with a "stark choice" between accepting or resisting the National Coal Board plan to cut jobs and close pits.

Scargill says: "You can't really hold a ballot vote in the same kind of conditions, on pit closures, as you can, say, on wages. Because wages affect everybody equally.

"When you have to close a pit in South Wales, it does not have the same impact or meaning in Nottinghamshire or

another part of the Midlands."

Scargill's remarks come two days before the union's delegate conference votes on an executive recommendation - passed against Scargill's wishes - to call off the 17-month overtime ban. The moderate Nottinghamshire area will not attend the conference.

The end to the ban will pave the way for immediate talks aimed at settling pay for 1983-5.

The executive of the pit deputies' union Nacods meets tomorrow to decide whether to hold a strike ballot over the closure of Bedwas colliery in South Wales and over the NCB warning that a strategy to deal with pits irreparably damaged by the strike should not be regarded as "action within the industry's normal joint review procedure."

● An attempt to replace the South Wales miners' president, Emlyn Williams, and the secretary, George Rees, on the NUM national executive was rejected yesterday by an area delegate conference in Pontypridd.

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