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REC.	27 SEP 1979
ACORN	MR RAYNER
COMES TO	CST FST NST (L) NST (2) SIR D WASS SIR LAUREY MR LITTLER

MR UNWIN
 MR TOWER
 MR WICKS
 MR RIDLEY

27 September 1979

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe
 Chancellor of the Exchequer
 The Treasury
 Parliament St
 London SW1

Dear Sir

MINEWORKERS PAY

The miners' pay claim was formally delivered to the National Coal Board (NCB) by the Joint National Negotiating Committee of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) on Monday. The claim is precisely in line with the resolution of the NUM's annual conference last July and calls for

- (i) a return to 1 November as the annual settlement date (this was traditionally the date of settlements but the 1971 settlement was not made until 1 March 1972 when the Wilberforce Court of Inquiry published its report after the miners' strike of the preceding winter. Though the Inquiry said that the settlement date could in due course revert to 1 November it has remained at 1 March since then as a result of the insistence under earlier incomes policies on 12 month settlements).
- (ii) new grade rates ranging from £140 per week for the highest grade of face worker to £80 per week for the lowest grade of surface worker, representing increases of £55 per week (65%) and £18.65 per week (30%) respectively, with intermediate rates and increases for other grades.
- (iii) a protection of earnings scheme when men have to take lower paid work because of accidents.
- (iv) the revaluation of allowances (eg for wet working conditions etc).
- (v) a commitment by the Board to reduce the working week.

The National Coal Board tell me that the claim was presented unemotionally and in low key, although with considerable emphasis on the union's determination to return to a November settlement date. The NUM sought a response "in principle" to their claim from the Board by 10 October so that it might be considered at their next National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting on 11 October. The NCB were non-committal but believe they may need by then at least to give the NUM an indication whether they will contemplate an advance in the settlement date, and to give their fuller response to the claim before the following month's NEC on 8 November.

The NEC are required by the July Conference resolutions to hold a coal-field ballot of any response falling short of the claim. Such a ballot is therefore inevitable and NCB's preliminary view is that the most favourable time for it to be held would be in the early part of December.

The Board will be considering shortly their tactics and how they might respond to the claim and will let me know their proposals for handling it. I will then write to colleagues again.

D A R HOWELL

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David

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