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Rt Hon Lionel Murray OBE
General Secretary
Trades Union Congress
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31 July 1979

Handwritten signature/initials

Thank you for your letter of 30 July conveying the General Council's views on the working papers that I sent to you on 4 July setting out the Government's proposals for legislation on picketing, the closed shop and financial aid for postal ballots by trade unions.

I understand that the General Council feel strongly about these matters, but I must say that I am surprised that they should regard these proposals as other than limited compared with the legislation on industrial relations carried by previous Administrations of either Party, and notably by the last Labour Government. It is quite true that the Government is also reviewing those provisions of the Employment Protection Act which we believe actually prevent the creation of jobs and that we are looking too at union immunities, particularly in regard to secondary action which can seriously affect employers and employees not directly involved in a dispute. But this is no more than the Government made plain was their intention in the Manifesto on which we were elected. They are, as you say, part of a wider approach which we believe is essential to get this country moving again with a better balanced framework of legal rights and obligations within which unions can operate effectively and responsibly. And we shall consult fully on these matters as we establish just what it seems right to do.

I shall examine very carefully the comments on the Government's proposals contained in the paper enclosed with your letter. I do, however, want to make plain immediately that the Government do not see those proposals as constituting a major incursion into the basic rights of trade unions. They will, if enacted, undoubtedly limit the capability of people to employ picketing and extend closed shops in ways which have given rise to widespread public concern. There would be no point in putting forward the proposals if they did not. But the Government do not accept that they represent a major incursion into basic trade union rights. They are intended to be directed at particular problems that need to be remedied.

I look forward to discussing these matters and clarifying the Government's proposals in the light of the General Council's comments



at the meeting which has now been arranged for 3pm on 22 August. /y
That meeting will take place at the Department's new premises at
Caxton House in Tothill Street to which by then we shall have moved
from the present address.

*Your sincerely
T. P. Jones*

1 AUG 1979

