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PRIME MINISTER

CLOSED SHOP - E(79)43

21.9.79

Since I will not be able to attend the meeting of E on 27th September, I thought it would be useful to send you a few comments on Jim Prior's paper. John Biffen will attend the meeting in any case and may have other points to raise when we have seen the accompanying paper E(79)44.

24/9.

2. I am increasingly doubtful whether Jim Prior's proposals are sufficiently robust. The fact that the TUC have not seriously challenged the proposals in paragraph 6, could be one indication that we have not gone far enough. Personally I would prefer to see conscientious objection to a particular union being allowable as well as objection against joining any union. There could, for example, be individuals who had religious objections to joining communist dominated unions but not other unions. Of course there are difficulties, including those raised by some employer groups, but I should like to suggest that we go for the wider definition.

3. Again on paragraph 8, I am not sure I follow the intention of the last sentence where Jim Prior suggests a provision which deems it unreasonable to expel a member for crossing a picket line. As I understand it, it would remain "reasonable" if a union expelled a member for disobeying a union strike call,

/ so that



so that provision would have only very limited application if it were relevant at all. If it proved possible to draft some definition of unreasonableness, perhaps we could consider also bringing in refusal to join a political strike or refusal to join a strike which had not been properly approved by a majority of the membership, say by secret ballot. There would of course be difficulties in giving the courts powers to decide whether or not a particular dispute was political. But, however that may be, I hope that colleagues will re-consider the adequacy of the approach to which we are so far committed.

4. I am sending copies to other members of E Committee and to Sir John Hunt.

*Martin Hall*

ff. (G.H.)

25 September 1979

[Approved by the  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
and signed in his absence]