

PRIME MINISTER

Meeting with the Northern Group of Labour MPs: 1815 at the
House of Commons

You are meeting the officers of the Northern group:
Mark Hughes (Chairman), John Cunningham (Vice Chairman) and
Jack Dormand (Secretary). Mr. Heseltine and Mr. Fowler will also
be present.

The meeting arises from Mr. Dormand's letter of 18 December
(Flag A).

Mr. Heseltine had announced his decisions on 17 December
(Flag B).

A brief from the DOE is attached at Flag C. The line to
take is set out in paragraphs 7-10. As it says, some at least
of the anxieties of the Northern group should have been assuaged
by the decision.

I suspect that they may take the opportunity to raise with
you some more general issues about the North and its industrial
problems. They might try on you the idea of a Minister for the
North, which John Cunningham has advocated in a letter to you
(Flag D). Unless you feel a particular enthusiasm for the idea,
I suggest that you reply that Ministers in economic departments
already devote a great deal of their time and energy to the affairs
of the North of England and that you doubt that the appointment of
a Minister with specific responsibilities would help the welfare
of the region.

One final note: you asked us to arrange this meeting on a
day with plenty of other news. I hope that the **I**nauguration and
the return of the hostages will be enough!

MS

19 January 1981

① Cumbria

2 largest towns -

³
N → N.W. ^{br}

Northen ~~point~~ → Newcastle

Southen → Newcastle

② Newcastle / Leeds. →