

CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE
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1st May, 1981

The Rt. Hon. James Prior M.P.,
Department of Employment,
Caxton House,
Tothill Street,
London, SW1H 9NF

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Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you on behalf of the unfortunate employees of Hadfields who are to be made redundant in the very near future.

As you will be aware, during the national steel strike last year, the employees of Hadfields epitomised everything that you have been striving to achieve in your two years in office, namely excellent industrial relations, a common sense approach to industrial problems, high productivity and, most important, a desire to work despite intense picketing and personal abuse.

Today, 1,900 of these 2,600 employees face the unemployment scrap heap with the vast majority having no possibility of finding alternative employment.

The problems of the steel industry are well known to you and your Government and I do not propose, therefore, to repeat the factors which have brought about the present situation.

Ironically, those people who were intent on bringing the Government down during the winter of 1980, and were so vociferous in their campaign to jeopardise the future of Hadfields and its employees, have had their future employment prospects safeguarded. Even more ironic is the fact that the British Steel Corporation employees, if made redundant, would "enjoy", at the taxpayers' expense, redundancy terms four or five times better than those that can now be offered to Hadfields employees - statutory redundancy payments and money in lieu of notice.

I hope you will agree that those people to be affected are tragic victims of circumstances totally beyond their control. The taxes they have paid have been used in part to force them out of employment, and yet their neighbours in British Steel employment who face a similar experience at least benefit financially from Government resources.

I wish to appeal to you for consideration by your Department that our employees should have a make-up of severance pay to equate to the redundancy terms offered by the British Steel Corporation. I am not looking for any financial benefit for the Company, but I do feel that such a gesture by you would do much to assuage the terrible bitterness felt towards the Government in their handling of the Steel Industry's problems and pre-empt the possibility of any emotive action that ultimately might be regretted.

I would be delighted to discuss the matter with you.

Yours faithfully,

Derek Norton

DEREK A. NORTON