

CONFIDENTIAL

Nat Ind

cc:- Mr Ingham
· Mr Duguid

MR SCHOLAR

1. Mr Patterson

2 p.a.

Mus 16/10

Miners' Pay

I think you are aware of the forthcoming difficulty over the publication of figures from the New Earnings Survey showing that the miners' settlement last year, widely portrayed as around 13%, led to a rise in average earnings of only about 8%. I am now a little clearer on when and how this news will become publicly available, and you and others may wish to be forewarned.

The TUC and the CBI have already been given, as is normal practice, advances of most of the material that will appear in the Department of Employment gazette on 29 October as "Part B" of the New Earnings Survey. Part B contains an analysis of wage movements by agreement, and it is difficult to calculate the effect on actual wages. What matters is a table (Table 4) of Part A of the NES, which is an industry-based league table of average earnings, which will be available in mid-November. That table will, if I understand it correctly,, not only indicate how much lower than expected last year's miners' settlement was, but also that the miners' wages have moved adversely relative to those of gas, water and electricity manuals.

The significance of this is, of course, that the figures may well end up being published when the negotiations between the NUM and the NCB are active, and possibly even during the period of an NUM ballot. Mr Lawson will be writing to Mr Tebbit very shortly, with copies to the Chancellor and to the Prime Minister, drawing his attention to this. There may well be a temptation to find ways of avoiding this potentially embarrassing timing. Subject to what Mr Lawson may say, my own feeling is that there are considerable dangers in trying to interfere with the process: it would backfire badly on the miners' negotiations if it were known, it would risk the reputation for impartiality of the Government's statistical service, and it would simply build up further trouble for the future.

J.

16 October, 1981

CONFIDENTIAL