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MUS 13/9



Prime Minister

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of NC

P.01089

MR SCHOLAR

COAL

Provided we are not doing any options by the postponement. I am reluctant, for a while to be invited to discuss this. The Minister could see the document. He must write as in para 3? mus 9/9

The first NCB / NUM meeting on pay is planned for 27 September. Agree that the 15 September slot be used for an appraisal of the pay prospect? And that I

I understand that the Prime Minister's diary at present provides for a meeting on power station endurance in the medium term on Thursday 15 September at 2.30pm. I have been talking to Treasury and Department of Energy officials and we are all agreed that a meeting on that subject at that time would be premature. The reason is quite simply that it would be a waste of time to talk about options for improving power station endurance in the medium term without knowing what the pit closures strategy will be. The Secretary of State for Energy is not going to be able to say anything useful about that on 15 September because he wants to give due weight to Mr MacGregor's views, and Mr MacGregor needs a few more weeks to reach conclusions on this matter.

2. I would therefore suggest:

i. that the meeting on power station endurance/closures strategy should be postponed until mid-October, ie as soon as convenient after the Party Conference;

ii. that the slot on 15 September should be reserved for the time being in case it is required for a discussion of the tactics relating to this year's pay offer to the miners, bearing in mind that the Prime Minister will be away for most of the time between 19 and 30 September; for this purpose it would not be necessary to have all of those originally invited for 15 September; I would suggest that we would need only the Secretary of State for Energy, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Employment.



SECRET

3. If it is agreed to postpone the meeting on power station endurance/pit closures strategy, it would be desirable to place a very firm obligation on the Secretary of State for Energy to come forward with his views on closures strategy not later than mid-October. It would also be desirable to get something put in writing so that the Ministers primarily concerned can think about the matter before the meeting on the basis of the relevant information and an analysis of the options. The Secretary of State for Energy may be reluctant to do this because of the extreme sensitivity of the subject and the Prime Minister will no doubt have similar anxieties. It should however be possible to take care of this by proposing that the paper should be circulated only to those Ministers attending the meeting and Sir Robert Armstrong with a Secret/CMO classification and an explicit instruction that it should not go outside Ministerial offices and should be shown only to those officials from whom it is essential (rather than merely desirable) to receive advice. No doubt you would wish to put the points in this paragraph into a letter to Mr Walker's Private Secretary.

No,

PLG

P L GREGSON

8 September 1983

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