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*Prefer the larger group*

Ref. A084/817

PRIME MINISTER

Proposed Ministerial Group on Coal

At Cabinet last Thursday (CC(84) 9th Conclusions, Minute 1) you said that you would arrange for a small group of Ministers to monitor developments in the coal industry. Although it is not yet clear whether there will be strike action on a national scale, I suggest that we should go ahead now with setting up a Ministerial Group in the MISC series to consider all aspects of the situation which may be of concern to Ministers: industrial relations, law and order, power station endurance, the effect on the economy, the scope for mitigating action by the Government, and the handling of the media.

2. You will probably wish to chair the Group yourself. There may however be advantage in having an understanding under which either the Lord President or the Home Secretary, who is already Chairman of the Civil Contingencies Unit, takes the chair at some of the meetings. It may indeed be convenient for the Home Secretary to pursue some of the more detailed points relevant to the CCU's remit of ensuring the supplies and services essential to the life of the community through the CCU machinery. If you wish to keep the new Group to the minimum, we could probably confine it to the Lord President, Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretaries of State for Energy and Employment. You may however prefer to broaden it from the outset to include certain other Ministers whose departmental interests could become engaged in due course, ie the Secretaries of State for Defence, Scotland (particularly because of his electricity responsibilities), Trade and Industry, and Transport.

3. On this basis the composition would be as follows:

Prime Minister (Chairman)  
Lord President of the Council  
Home Secretary  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

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Secretary of State for Energy  
Secretary of State for Defence  
✓ Secretary of State for Scotland  
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry  
Secretary of State for Employment  
Secretary of State for Transport

4. I should be grateful to know whether you are content that we should make arrangements on these lines. The timing of the first meeting will need to be kept under review in the light of developments.

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Approved by  
ROBERT ARMSTRONG  
and signed in his absence

12 March 1984

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file to 24

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

The Prime Minister saw your minute of 12 March on the proposed Ministerial Group on Coal. She prefers to establish the larger Group and agrees with the composition which you have suggested. She wishes to take the Chair herself though with an understanding that the Lord President should deputise for her on occasions.

ANDREW TURNBULL

14 March 1984

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