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PRIME MINISTER

Coal: MISC 101(84)5th Meeting

You will no doubt wish to stick to the usual format of:

- reports;
- discussion;
- action to be taken.

2. Depending on developments by tomorrow afternoon, the matters which may be particularly worth probing are as follows:

- i. the latest assessment of endurance (allowing for successful achievement of maximum oilburn after four weeks):
 - a. assuming a nationwide strike;
 - b. assuming continuation of production and deliveries from Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and South Derbyshire;

and whether more can be done to maximise endurance;

- ii. what the CEGB is now doing about increasing oilburn following yesterday's decision;
- iii. what is the extent and effectiveness of action outside the coalfields (ie picketing and sympathetic action affecting trains, docks, power stations, depots, etc); and whether more can be usefully done to counter it;

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See attached
Press Report

iv. what are the prospects now of an early meeting of the NUM National Executive following the meeting of the moderate caucus at Leicester today?

v. whether the time is yet ripe for further civil action in the courts;

vi. whether the right messages are getting across in the media to influence both the miners and public opinion; (is enough being done to counter the impression that Scargill is winning? are the anti-democratic implications of the closure of the pits who voted against a strike being brought out sufficiently?)

Information and endurance

3. You will recall that at the last meeting the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said that the Group did not have before them the information about likely endurance providing the necessary background to the policy decisions which had to be taken. The Secretary of State for Scotland made the same point at Cabinet last week. You said in response to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that Ministers had access to the weekly coal and power station statistics. This is true but they are a fortnight out of date (the most recent, which you saw at the weekend are for the week ending 10 March 1984). Moreover the endurance position cannot be immediately deduced from those tables. The Secretary of State for Energy gave an endurance figure off the cuff at Monday's meeting (22 weeks) which was probably too low.

4. I understand that at tomorrow's meeting the Secretary of State for Energy will be ready to give an oral report on the up to date endurance position and how it is being maximised.

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It is important to distinguish between endurance with Notts etc and endurance with Enderman etc is significantly higher - indicating the value of the police operation.

It remains to be seen whether other members of the Group are satisfied with that. Security is of course vital but Ministers must have the information in front of them to permit rational discussion and decisions. I suggest that the best way to handle this at future meetings would be for the Secretary of State for Energy to come armed with a set of numbered copies of a single sheet showing the key figures which would be handed round at the beginning of the meeting and collected again before any recipient left the room.

Electricity supply industry pay negotiations

5. The Secretary of State for Energy may mention the handling of the pay negotiations in the electricity supply industry which are now in progress. Although a high settlement would have damaging repercussions, there would be much to be said for getting this out of the way quickly and quietly.

Next meeting

6. There will be an opportunity for a brief discussion under the Industrial Affairs item at the Cabinet on Thursday. If there are developments subsequent to that requiring decisions before the weekend, you may wish MISC 101 to meet again late on Friday morning (say 11.30am); otherwise it may be sufficient to plan for a meeting on Monday (say 11.00am).

PLG

P L GREGSON

27 March 1984

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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL



HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

27 March 1984

Dear John,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 23 March to Janet Lewis-Jones about the discussion in MISC 101 about a "disregard" for policing expenditure arising out of the miners' strike. As you know, this matter was discussed by MISC 101 again yesterday. The Environment Secretary was invited to announce by means of an early Written Answer the arrangements he proposed to exempt additional expenditure on policing the dispute from the effects of grant holdback, subject to a threshold.

The Home Secretary has considered the matter further in the light of representations made to him yesterday evening concerning the position not only of areas like Nottinghamshire, but also of those police forces which are supplying mutual aid to the forces in whose areas the picketing is taking place. The supplying forces are incurring additional expenditure in their own areas through having to put men on overtime in order to compensate for the men they have sent to the areas affected by the picketing. (The supplying forces normally continue to pay the ordinary salaries of those sent to the areas affected by the strike and the receiving areas pay the overtime and other extra costs). The police authorities of the supplying forces would not understand a refusal by the Government to exempt from penalty the additional expenditure thus incurred. Such a refusal would be inconsistent with the Government's support for the current police operation, and penalties would be particularly inappropriate if the Home Secretary had to exercise his powers under section 14(2) of the Police Act 1964 to direct a Chief Constable to supply mutual aid to another. It seems to the Home Secretary on reflection, therefore, that there is no logic in setting any particular threshold of expenditure above which there would be a disregard, and that the right course is to disregard all extra police expenditure arising from the miners' strike. The Home Secretary has in mind in addition the fact that what is now proposed by the Department of the Environment is a disregard in relation to the miners' strike rather than in relation to mutual aid for whatever purpose. The original rationale for the threshold has therefore in his view disappeared.

The course proposed by the Home Secretary would also make it easier to limit the amount of any special payment which may have to be made to Nottinghamshire or other police forces in recognition of their additional expenditure. The Nottinghamshire County Council estimate the cost to them of the dispute at £5.5M up to the end of March, but we do not yet know on what basis this estimate has been prepared. When he sees the delegation from the Nottinghamshire County Council on Thursday, the Home Secretary proposes, subject to the agreement of MISC 101, to say that the Government cannot at this stage decide on the extent of any additional help but agrees that some further help for Nottinghamshire will be necessary and that its extent will be decided when the amount of the additional costs is known.

I am sending copies of this letter to Andrew Turnbull (No 10), the Private Secretaries of other members of MISC 101, to John Gieve (Chief Secretary's Office), and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,
Hugh Taylor

H H TAYLOR

J F Ballard, Esq.

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NIP 25 4 XXX 329

MINERS EXECUTIVE MEMBERS MEET IN SECRET

NINE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS EXECUTIVE MET IN SECRET TODAY, CALLED FOR AN URGENT MEETING OF THE FULL EXECUTIVE AND URGED ALL MINERS WHO HAD VOTED AGAINST THE STRIKE TO RETURN TO WORK IMMEDIATELY.

ONE OF THE NINE, MR JACK JONES, THE LEICESTERSHIRE MINERS' LEADER, CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD THE SUPPORT OF 14 OF THE 24 VOTING MEMBERS OF THE NUM EXECUTIVE IN SEEKING A NATIONAL BALLOT OF THE MEMBERSHIP.

'WE DECIDED TODAY TO APPEAL TO ALL OUR MEMBERS WHERE THERE HAS BEEN A DEMOCRATIC VOTE THAT THEY SHOULD RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO THEIR NORMAL PLACE OF WORK AND START WORK,' HE SAID AFTER THE GROUP'S MEETING IN LEICESTERSHIRE.

'AND TO THOSE AREAS WHERE THEY HAVE NOT HAD THE OPPORTUNITY OF A RECENT DEMOCRATIC VOTE WE ARE SAYING: PRESSURISE YOUR AREA TO ENSURE THAT OFFICIALS ALSO SEEK A NATIONAL BALLOT, AND IN THE MEANTIME WE LEAVE IT TO YOUR CONSCIENCE TO RETURN TO WORK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, PENDING THAT NATIONAL VOTE.'

THE UNION'S NEWLY-ELECTED GENERAL SECRETARY, PETER HEATHFIELD, SAID HE WAS 'ASTONISHED' THAT THE RIGHT HAD HELD A 'CAUCUS MEETING' AND THAT THEY SHOULD ADVOCATE THE CROSSING OF PICKET LINES.

HE SAID THAT UNION PRESIDENT ARTHUR SCARGILL AND OTHER NATIONAL OFFICIALS WERE CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN A HIGH COURT ACTION IN LONDON AND AN EXECUTIVE MEETING COULD NOT BE CALLED AT THIS STAGE.

A NATIONAL COAL BOARD SPOKESMAN SAID: 'THE DECISION REPRESENTS A RESPECT FOR THE VIEWS OF THOSE MEMBERS OF THE UNION WHO HAVE VOTED AGAINST A STRIKE. IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT A MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE ARE IN FAVOUR OF A NATIONAL BALLOT.'

AREAS REPRESENTED AT TODAY'S MEETING IN GROBY WERE LEICESTERSHIRE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, CUMBRIA, NORTH WALES, NORTH WEST, POWER GROUP, SOUTH DERBYSHIRE, THE MIDLANDS AND THE WHITE-COLLAR SECTION COSA.

THREE OTHERS UNABLE TO ATTEND BUT INDICATING SUPPORT WERE DURHAM, CUMBERLAND AND DURHAM POWER GROUP.

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PRIME MINISTER

The Secretary of State for the Environment is unable to attend MISC 101, but he will have had a bilateral earlier in the day with the Home Secretary to discuss costs of policing. Difficulties are arising in the areas providing men as those remaining behind are having to work overtime. Devon, for example, could find itself incurring penalties (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop is agitated).

The Home Secretary may suggest that all extra policing expenditure in connection with the dispute should be freed from penalty, not just amount over a threshold.

He may go on to discuss whether there ought beyond that to be a grant where expenditure is substantial.

Maxwell-Hyslop
pp. A. Turnbull.

27 March 1984



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

Also enclosed are:

(i) a note on Mr Walker's
meeting with Mr MacGregor on

Thursday evening

(ii) A paper by officials on
oil burn

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