

PRIME MINISTER

Coal Industry Dispute: Presentation for Panorama

I attach a copy of Mr. MacGregor's article in Thursday's Evening Standard. This is an exemplary presentation of the Government/NCB case on coal. He has rightly refused to be drawn into the higher politics and has kept attention firmly on the issues of the industry. On television last night, he successfully deployed an additional argument, that this dispute is not just about jobs in coal but, through making low cost coal available, about jobs for the rest of the economy.

For Panorama, you could develop five themes:

- (i) As far as the Government is concerned this is not a dispute about the future of trade unions or the working class, but about how to achieve a well paid, efficient and prosperous industry producing cheap coal.
- (ii) The theme should be "Think about it"
- think about the pay offer;
 - think about the Government's record of investment;
 - think about the generous provision for early retirement and remember that the manpower run-down will require few if any compulsory redundancies and that such as there are will attract generous redundancy terms;
 - think about the facts on production where the cut sought is only 4% but is necessary to bring production into line with demand;
 - think about the facts on imports where the UK is a net exporter and imports are largely for special coals.
- (iii) Workers in other unions should think about who it is they wish to support - those who have voted to continue working or those who wish to deny this opportunity to others.

/ (iv)

- (iv) On trade union legislation you should emphasise that this provides an additional remedy but it is up to the employer who wishes to protect either his business or the position of his employees to decide whether and when to seek such remedies.
- (v) On law and order you will want to defend the role of the police and to emphasise that they are acting in defence of the common law. You could turn the question round by asking whether the police should have stood aside and shrugged their shoulders, saying the problem was too big. The need for such a large deployment of police is regrettable but there is substantial understanding that it has been necessary to prevent pickets, by weight of numbers and intimidation, from preventing those who wish to do so from getting to their place of work.

~~AT~~

6 April 1984