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P.01270

PRIME MINISTER

Coal: MISC101(84)10th Meeting

After the usual reports about the situation on the ground, you will wish to concentrate on assessing the implications of the NUM National Executive's decision to call a Special Delegate Conference for Thursday 19 April and to seek approval from the Conference to reduce the majority required under NUM rules to authorise strike action from 55 per cent to a simple majority.

2. Apparently the position under the NUM Rule Book is that Special Delegate Conferences, like the Annual Conference, can change the rules subject to:

- a two-thirds majority;
- areas having been given time to consider proposals and to vote on them.

3. You may wish to pursue the following points:

- i. What is the position under the NUM's rules?
- ii. Is it likely that any area will wish, or be able, to challenge the rule change next Thursday on the grounds that there has been insufficient time to consider the proposal and vote on it?

See attached note

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iii. What are the prospects of a two-thirds majority for the rule change?

(Mr Scargill failed to secure the necessary majority for this rule change at the Annual Conference after he was elected.)

iv. If the rule change is adopted how soon will there be a national ballot, and what is the present assessment of its likely result?

(The 54 per cent majority in support of strike action in the NACODS ballot does not bode well.)

v. Whether or not the rule change is adopted, what other steps are likely to be taken at the Conference to bring pressure on the non-strike areas?

vi. In the light of all the above, what can the NCB and the Government do to influence the outcome of the Conference?

Further meetings

4. You will probably wish to have a further meeting on Monday before you leave for Portugal. Since Mr Walker goes away at the weekend for the duration of the Recess, it will be necessary to establish which Energy Minister will be attending Monday's meeting and will be responsible for the miners' dispute while Mr Walker is abroad. You may also wish the Lord President to chair a meeting of MISC 101 in your absence on Wednesday 18 April.

*PLG*

P L GREGSON

12 April 1984

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COAL DISPUTE - NUM EXECUTIVE DECISION

The meeting of the National Executive Committee of the NUM in Sheffield this morning called for a Special Delegate Conference to be held on 19 April.

A call for a national ballot by moderate members was ruled out of order, presumably on the basis of Rule 43 of the NUM rule book by which national strike action must be proposed before a ballot can be held; it is likely that the moderates made a direct call for a ballot and thus fell foul of a technicality.

Mr Scargill has said that, at the Delegate Conference he will seek a change in the rules to bring the required majority necessary for national strike action below its present 55%. Rule 44(ii) - copy attached - would permit a Delegate Conference to change the rules in this way, providing the necessary two thirds majority was achieved.

12 April 1984

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