

SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL
until 3.30 pm on Tuesday 29 May 1984
then CONFIDENTIAL

FROM C D HARRISON
29 May 1984

MR TOWERS

cc PS/Chancellor
PS/Chief Secretary
PS/Financial Secretary
PS/Minister of State
Sir P Middleton
Mr Littler
Sir T Burns
Mr Lavelle
Mr H P Evans
Mr Folger
Mr Kelly o.r.
Mr Robson
Mr Bartlett
Mr Gill - B/E
Mr Turnbull - No 10 —

nbpm

Dub
29/5

Mr J. Webb

EFFECT OF MINERS' STRIKE ON APRIL TRADE FIGURES

Since we spoke this morning I have heard that the Department of Energy have revised downwards their estimate of the effect of the miners' strike on the April trade figures. Out of the overall deterioration of £0.4 billion in the balance of trade in oil in April, the effect of the strike has been revised downwards to £120-150 million.

2. The Department of Energy apparently do not yet have complete figures. But other influences included an increase in oil company stocks now estimated at around £150 million (thought to be due to Gulf tensions etc), a fall in North Sea production equivalent to £70-80 million, and a fall in deliveries to companies (excluding power stations) of around £100 million. This leaves a ~~negative~~ residual of around £120-160 million, which the Department of Energy attribute to ~~a~~ statistical "noise", possibly partly a result of distortions due to the Easter holiday period.

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3. I spoke last Thursday with Mr Robson in PE, and this morning with the Department of Energy, and we are agreed that no figures should be given to the press on the impact of the miners' strike on the oil balance. The Department of Energy are also not giving any figures on the increase in oil company stocks, and if asked will simply talk generally about the effect of Gulf tensions. So the briefing line to take is:

"No doubt some of the deterioration in the balance of trade in oil in April was due to the miners' strike. But in addition, there was substantial rebuilding of stocks by oil companies, possibly because of Gulf tensions, and a fire on a North Sea rig which led to lost production".

Only if another, very wrong, figure starts gaining currency among commentators should you mention that possibly a quarter of the ^{change}~~effect~~ might have been due to the strike.

C D Harrison

C D HARRISON

RESTRICTED

Mr Turnbull

FROM: C D HARRISON

29 May 1984

ALL RECIPIENTS OF APRIL TRADE FIGURES

NOTE

Since it has now been decided that the estimates of the effects of the miners' strike on the trade figures should not be revealed to the press, please reclassify my submission of 23 May to the Chancellor as "Secret and Personal until 3.30 pm on Tuesday 29 May then Confidential". (The estimates have in any case now been revised; please see my minute of today's date to Mr Towers - not to all).

CF

CD Harrison

C D HARRISON

*I passed this out yesterday.
Could you please reclassify?*

*Dms
30/5'*