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Ref No 59

30 May 1984

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Speaking in Oxford today, Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, said:

"The battle we are witnessing is not a battle to improve miners' pay and conditions but a battle enthusiastically supported by Marxists to see whether or not the mob, using mob violence, can rule.

"Only the courageous and tenacious action of the police has stood between these rights and freedom, and the triumph of violent mob rule. As a result this country has been saved from chaos. If the police had not done their duty then by now violent mobs would have closed every power station in the country, even though the power workers want to work. The mob would have closed every steel works in the country, even though the steel workers desperately want to work. The mob would have closed every coal mine in the country, even though virtually all those mining areas that have had a chance to vote have voted to work, not strike.

"But the rule of law has been maintained and the mob has failed everywhere. From Ravenscraig to Orgreave, from Nottinghamshire to Lancashire, the mob, often violent, has tried and failed because the police have protected ordinary workers from mob intimidation.

"The Government is determined to continue to uphold the right to work and freedom under the law.

"It is quite clear that this mob violence is not in the interests of miners. For what have the miners on offer? A pay deal better than that already accepted by steel workers, railway men, power workers or gas workers; a capital investment programme which is in the very first rank among capital investment programmes for the industries of this country; and a guarantee that where totally uneconomic pits now need to be closed, every miner working in them will be able to continue to work in the industry if he wishes to do so. None of these are reasons for a day's strike let alone for mob violence around the country.

"Mob violence will achieve nothing. Organising violence or posturing on picket lines will lead nowhere. I believe that the majority of workers in the coal industry realise the futility of these tactics and how many people they alienate; they understand what is now needed is to get back to a joint effort to take advantage of a great opportunity and make this industry an industry that brings prosperity and success to the miners and their families."