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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY

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Andrew Turnbull Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

5 June 1984

Dear Andrew

This morning my Secretary of State discussed the situation at the Orgreave coke works with the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and the chairmen of the National Coal Board and the British Steel Corporation. This meeting fulfilled the remit given my Secretary of State by MISC 101 on 30 May.

There was general agreement that the combined efforts of the police and the British Steel workforce in keeping the works open represented a considerable triumph in the face of mass picketing and intimidation. However, stocks at the works were declining. It would be most important for public presentation of the run-down to be handled with great care, to minimise any opportunity for the NUM to claim a victory.

Currently some 17,000 tonnes of coke were in stock. This week the Corporation expected to move 5,500 tonnes to the Scunthorpe steel plant with up to a further 8,000 tonnes due to follow next week assuming sufficient lorries could be made available. Production of new coke would be minimal unless, against expectations, significant new coal supplies of the right blend could be obtained. Thus for all practical purposes, at this rate of lifting, stocks would run out in the week commencing 18 June. There would be an interval before they could re-start.

An alternative course would be to lift the existing stocks more slowly, say at 2,000 tonnes a week. This would however expose the Orgreave workforce to prolonged picketing and intimidation.

The meeting concluded that the balance of advantage lay in transferring stocks from Orgreave to Scunthorpe as quickly as possible. This would maximise the availability of domestically

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supplied coke to Scunthorpe in the near future. The balance of supply would of course continue to be met from imports.

It was agreed that British Steel, who had promised the Orgreave workforce a minimum of four days notice of a run down, would prepare and clear with Ministers a draft public announcement for release next week. This would emphasise that all available stocks were being moved as part of a successful operation to safeguard steel production and jobs at Scunthorpe.

It was further agreed that British Steel would immediately write to the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire, to inform him of their plans to empty the Orgreave site. The police would then, as necessary, be in a position to demonstrate that they were part of a carefully conceived and well executed operation.

The situation would continue to be kept under close review by all the parties, so that any change of circumstances could be brought immediately to Ministers' attention.

On a more general note the use of civil proceedings was also briefly discussed. Mr Haslam confirmed that British Steel did not now contemplate any early court action; though he stressed that he would wish to reassess the situation were a major steel works to be threatened with closure. He would continue to liaise closely with Ministers, and with the National Coal Board.

I am copying this letter to Hugh Taylor (Home Office), Callum McCarthy (Department of Trade and Industry), and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely
Michael Reidy

MICHAEL REIDY
Private Secretary

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