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NBPM

AT 19/6

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

19 June 1984

Leon Brittan

MINERS' DISPUTE: POLICING COSTS

Thank you for your letter of 17 June, in which you described the form of additional assistance that you thought necessary for Nottinghamshire and other police authorities similarly affected, and told me of your wish to give them some indication of your thinking.

I accept, of course, that the pressures on police authorities are heavy, and acknowledge that as time goes on it may not be possible to require of them even the low marginal contribution that the present formula involves. But, like yourself, I would be most reluctant to see a special grant of 100 per cent, and agree that such a grant should be avoided. I confess, however, that I do not see how the arrangements you propose, with payment of a residual amount left until the final claim, would really help, since Nottinghamshire would be told the limit of savings they must make.

The immediate problem is in knowing what to say, if necessary in the House, in order to show the Government's concern and to provide some evidence of movement. My own preference would be to say that representations have been received from the authorities affected, and that they are being considered sympathetically. If necessary, it could be admitted that, with the strike continuing, it has become necessary to reconsider the formula announced last month, and that the police authorities will not be expected to have to make drastic cuts in their budgets.

Very soon, however, we will need to have agreed on the actual changes to be made, and I suggest we ask officials to consider the options urgently. Besides the arrangements you have suggested, there should be possibilities which avoid the implication that the whole cost beyond a certain point will be reimbursed. It might include adjustments to the present formula, including changes in the rate of grant.

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With the strike continuing, it becomes all the more important to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the police operations. It was with this in mind that my officials have written to yours to ask the basis on which additional expenditure will be approved, and I hope that this matter can also be considered.

If I could refer to your previous letter, of 23 May, I would hope that you could accept that all possibilities of offsetting savings in your other programmes should be explored. It is difficult, so early in the financial year, to believe that none could be forthcoming. This year the Reserve is already under considerable pressure, and any savings would be worthwhile an offset to the additional expenditure that is being incurred.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the other members of MISC 101, to George Young and Patrick Jenkin, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours truly
Peter Rees

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