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P.01340

MR TURNBULL

cc Sir Robert Armstrong

COAL AND DOCKS DISPUTES: POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

I attach a note of points which the Prime Minister may wish to cover at this evening's discussion.

*PLG*

P L GREGSON

16 July 1984

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Coal and docks disputes: possible strategies

PRIORITIES

The political and economic stakes are much higher for the Government in the coal dispute than in the docks dispute. Priority should therefore be: end the dock strike as quickly as possible, so that the coal dispute can be played as long as necessary.

DOCKS

Endurance

Even if no problem over food and oil and ~~some freight still carried through Dover, and small non-Scheme ports~~ and by air, serious disruption to industry will soon be felt and there will be pressure on Government to find a solution.

Plan for servicemen (not used in docks since 1950) can only make limited contribution (shifting a few high priority cargoes) and could be counter productive (sympathetic action by road haulage, threat to oil supplies, severe picketing and law and order problems). Also possible need to bring in amending Bill to Emergency Powers Act 1920.

Strategies:

- i. Settlement through third-party intervention (eg ACAS, inquiry into operation of National Dock Labour Scheme)
- ii. Eroding rank and file support for strike particularly in non-Scheme ports (especially by hammering home that there is nothing to be gained for them, that they are being dragged into someone else's quarrel and that they have never been given a say in the matter)

2800.  
13 Ro-Ro.  
Access to equipment.  
Load pilots.  
1000 tons a day.  
50 lorries a day.

T.R.W.H.  
(Clemison.)  
Terry Beckett  
CBI.





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*Major employers.*

*Not scheme ports*

iii. Civil action in the courts

a. under existing Employment Acts

b. under Bill shortly to be enacted

(what particular grounds of action and what kind of plaintiff would command maximum public sympathy?)

what would the TGWU's reaction be? what would be the reaction of other trade unions?)

*2) no letters before strike*

*Approved  
2 months after Royal Assent*

iv. Closing ports

(If the strike is prolonged, some ports, eg London, might become totally unviable. Should they be allowed to close, with a final buying-out payment of the registered dock workers as at Preston? Would this help or hinder the effort to bring the strike to an end?)

*£35,000*

COAL

*Long distance Trans.*

Endurance

Power stations until mid January; possible March or later if we succeed in increasing coal movements. But industrial and domestic consumers may be in difficulties from autumn onwards, especially if imports through small non-Scheme ports cannot be maintained.

Strategies:

i. Talks

Scargill will not agree to anything acceptable to us unless and until there is a major crumbling of support. Therefore NCB line on 18 July will have to be:

- rest on proposals already tabled
- no further meeting to be arranged unless it is clear that progress can be made



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ii. Getting the miners back to work

(Can we identify at least one pit so far totally strike bound, which has already had its annual holiday and where at least 50 miners would be willing to be bussed in regularly, through pickets, if promised police protection getting to and from work and at home?)

iii. Civil action in the courts

(Will the new Bill, when enacted, offer new possibilities - eg loss of immunity through absence of a ballot? Is it likely that a national ballot would be forced in this way? If so, would there be a majority for continuing the strike? If the NUM refused to comply and had its assets sequestered, would it bring the end of the strike nearer? What would be the reaction of other unions?)

iv. Redundancies and closures

(It appears that redundancy compensation can be offered to miners on strike but that the total package will be less than for working miners through ineligibility for unemployment benefit. How many of the 20,000 would be ready to accept redundancy on this basis? Or is it tactically better to use this as a lever to get more miners back to work? Is there a danger of losing decisive anti-strike votes in an eventual ballot? If the redundancy applications were accepted, would it be feasible and desirable to close one or more pits, without any of their miners resisting redundancy or transfer? If such closures were to proceed would it undermine Scargill's position or help him to stir up more hostility against the NCB?)

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Hobart House, Grosvenor Place, London SW1X 7AE

- BT  
- AT  
- Lynch all pg.

**NCB**

CHAIRMAN  
Ian MacGregor

→ File

July, 1984.

- Sent July 13 by post

- NCB issuing it to Sunday  
press.

Jw.

Dear Colleague,

As you know, the NCB and NUM have been talking together for the last few days and we are due to meet again next Wednesday, July 18. I thought it would be helpful to let you know what we agree about and what we don't agree about:

We agree there are no compulsory redundancies in our plans for the industry.

We agree that investment in our industry should continue at a high rate.

We agree that the NCB should seek to expand its markets both at home and abroad.

We agree that miners should be well above the average of industrial pay (the NCB offer 5.2% back dated to November 1983 still stands and is more than the offers accepted by power workers, water workers and railmen).

We agree that when a pit has to close, any miner who wants to stay in the industry will be offered another job with transfer benefits provided by the Coal Board. There are well-known generous arrangements for men made redundant.

We agree that miners should share in the benefits of improved profitability and growth.

We agree that exhausted pits should be closed.

We agree that unsafe pits should be closed.

We agree that there are "other reasons" for closure.



SO FAR SO GOOD

What do we not agree about?

We do not agree about the "other reasons" for pit closures.

The NCB say that when a pit cannot be beneficially developed we should not continue to waste human or financial resources or equipment on it and we should come to an agreement on such pits.

The NUM does not agree. They say pits should be kept open even when they are of no benefit to the industry.

The NCB cannot accept the NUM's position on this point, as the NCB will not sanction a policy which might do harm to the industry.

This is why the NCB refused to withdraw the proposals they put forward on March 6 which will provide security and stability in the industry. We, however, agreed to re-examine those proposals to take account of the changes that have occurred in the needs of the market and the loss of output resulting from the dispute.

So there you have it. It's a small but significant point. On the other hand, in view of the very large amount of agreement we have achieved, it seems to me, it would now be in the best interests of all of us to go back to work and resolve this dispute. That is what the Board will be trying to achieve when the negotiations resume on Wednesday.

Yours sincerely,

