

PRIME MINISTER

Teleprinted to Switzerland
(21.8)

Coal Strike: Media

You may like a further note about the two media points that came up in the course of your conversation with the Lord President this afternoon.

First, the Channel 4 programme tomorrow night. It appears that the information given to MISC 101 about the format of this programme was based on hearsay, and it has proved incorrect. Mr. Scargill will indeed be speaking from Selby, while Mr. Smith will be interviewed at Hobart House, the NCB headquarters. But Mr. Scargill will be on his own in a room and not surrounded by supporters, as first feared.

The programme will open with an introduction from Peter Sissons who leads for Channel 4 on current affairs. He will sketch the origin of the dispute about figures and invite both Mr. Scargill and Mr. Smith to make opening statements. These will be prepared in advance. After the statements, Mr. Sissons will chair a discussion which he intends to allow to range beyond statistics into the more fundamental issues at stake. The programme is scheduled to take 45 minutes in all.

This seems much more satisfactory, though much of course will turn on how well Mr. Smith performs.

The second point you raised with Lord Whitelaw was Mr. MacGregor's reported remark that the Government and legal authorities should consider taking Mr. Scargill to court over picket-line violence.

/We have

Tim; to see o.a.

We have not been able to confirm that this is in fact what Mr. MacGregor said. But in order to clarify matters, the Home Office will be issuing a low key statement tonight in response to enquiries:

"Certainly the police have been, and will be vigilant for evidence of any serious offences committed during the course of the miners' dispute. Any such evidence collected against any individual will be considered by the prosecuting authorities in the normal way."

Privately, I understand that the Home Office remains sceptical that sufficient evidence will in fact come to light to enable charges to be considered against Mr. Scargill.

DAVID BARCLAY

21 August, 1984