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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

Prime Minister ⁽²⁾

*Little here that we have
not looked at several
times already*

AT 25/9

Andrew Turnbull Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

25 September 1984

Dear Andrew,

Some time last week my Secretary of State offered the Prime Minister some personal thoughts on the miners' strike. I enclose his notes, which I should be grateful if you would let the Prime Minister see. They have not been copied to anyone else.

Yours,

Dinah

MISS D A NICHOLS
Private Secretary

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THE MINERS' STRIKE

Some Considerations

1. The bitterness which failure to "win" the strike which those who have stayed out will feel, and their anger at those who have gone back to work, will cause almost impossible problems of personal relationships. Fear of this is no doubt a factor deterring many from going back to work. Some thoughts from this, which are designed both to help those who are now working, and to encourage others to go back.
2. First, the "drift back to work" is infinitely the best way for the strike to end. There will be great bitterness between those who worked, and those who stayed out to the bitter end, if Scargill orders the strikers back. If they drift back, the difference will be only one of who went back first, not of those who worked as opposed to those who struck.
3. A drift back to work would no doubt leave the hard core of out-and-out Scargill supporters out - may be for good. But that would be no bad thing.
4. We need incentives to encourage those who want to go back. A series of measures could be designed which would lapse after a certain period of time. These could include:- bonus payments for those who started work again within, say, 4 weeks of the offer: redundancy pay offers could be withdrawn for those who were not back within, say, the four weeks. It might be possible to devise a further incentive connected with the National Insurance Contribution. We could make the 5.2% pay offer available to those in work by means of a special payment as we have discussed. Care needs to be taken to avoid the charge of "buying" loyalty.
5. The NCB should surely announce the closure of some uneconomic pits now. It would be possible to choose perhaps 4 pits with the worst cost record, and which are totally strike-bound. Nothing would be worse than to get the men back to work, then start

closing pits, (and then, perhaps, have another strike!) Nor would it be fair on those who went back, to close their pit immediately.

6. All those who worked at a pit announced for closure would be offered jobs at another pit. If they chose to go to a pit which was partially working, they would be welcomed there, and the fear of reprisal would be greatly reduced. The NCB could find them new houses and pay removal expenses to get them out of the village where they now live quickly. This would make it much easier for them to go back. Those who insisted on staying out would in due course be made redundant.

7. By developing a policy of this sort it might be possible to draft pitmen who want to go back to other pits, helping them to move, and thus encouraging the drift back to work. The hard core would either find their pit had closed, or that they were all expected to work in pits from which the "scabs" had been spirited away. The only way to avoid the present intimidation, and the fear of future reprisals, is to move people to pits where the hard core will not be coming back to work. Incidentally this might enable a larger number of pits to close than the 20 or so the NCB want to close. Production could be concentrated on efficient modern pits.

8. There is also a need to accompany these measures, (which should be taken together) with an act of generosity. This should not be a gesture to help Scargill and his militants, but one to meet the one point Scargill is making which has caught the public sympathy. This is his point that pitmen live in communities, which are crippled when a pit closes. Not only are all the earners made unemployed, but the village hall, football pitch, bowls green etc. are no longer maintained by the NCB, or so he argues.

9. This may be a fairly bogus point: massive redundancy pay is offered; many miners are re-employed elsewhere; and there may be other opportunities. In any case it happens when any large employer closes down. Nevertheless this is the one part of Scargill's case with which the public sympathise. I know that the NCB have announced measures to try and bring in other industries where pits close, but it may be that an increased and much publicised plan to attract new employers and modernise the villages could be devised. This would make the whole package seem more humane - indeed it would be a mixture of managerial firmness coupled with generosity both to individuals and to communities. It would need to be sold as a new initiative to end the strike, to deal fairly with individuals, without prejudicing the essential need for management to manage.

10. All of these measures would of course have to come from the NCB. The hand of Government in them should not be seen. Nor does this attempt to suggest the timing of such an initiative: that would depend on all the other events going on at the time (ACAS, TUC, NACOD's etc.).