

SECRET AND PERSONAL

12a

PRIME MINISTER

cc Mr Ingham

Meeting with the Secretary of State for Energy and Home  
Secretary: Suggested Speaking Note

Scargill and the militants have made headway in recent weeks with the argument that putting pressure on the NCB and the Government is the best way of finishing the dispute quickly.

This argument has been used to:-

Induce NACODS to vote for a strike;

Persuade the TUC to help the NUM;

Appeal to militant elements in the power unions.

If NACODS call a strike it will be a major boost to the  
NUM's morale and will discourage the drift back to work.

Most people, including those in the unions, desperately want to see Scargill defeated but may be beginning to doubt that we have the means of doing it. Many, if they perceive that he is prevailing, will be tempted to offer support, albeit reluctantly. A bandwagon could start to roll.

This tendency would be countered by our demonstrating convincingly that, unless the NUM give up their intransigent position, the strike will go on a very long time.

Our strategy so far has been to keep quiet about measures to prolong endurance so that they are not frustrated. This strategy is vulnerable to adverse comment

about endurance which it is difficult to disprove without revealing our hand.

We may be going into a new phase in which we need to demonstrate that we will survive a very long time, even if that involves some risks. The alternative of carrying on as before may now involve greater risks of giving the militants the initiative. It is also vulnerable to unforeseeable reverses, one of which could tip the balance against us.

The single factor which would most effectively demonstrate our ability to survive a long time is showing that we can and will use the coal stocks at the strike bound pits. We would need, of course, to ensure that we could overcome the inevitable physical resistance at power stations and do it in a way which causes the least possible risk to the handling of existing supplies.

We could combine this with actions against the NUM under the civil law, with use, if possible, of the 1984 Trade Union Act.

As to timing, I recognise that we will not want to take action while the NCB are trying to get a negotiated settlement with NACODS. But, whichever way that goes, I think that we should be ready with a package as soon as those negotiations are complete - which probably means the end of next week.

Could the Energy Secretary and the Home Secretary give thought to this and produce ideas by the middle of next week? We would need to put the NCB in touch with the police to devise a plan of campaign if we are to move into a public phase of taking coal from pit-heads in the strike areas.

F.R.B.

26 September 1984