

PETER WALKER'S MESSAGE TO NEIL KINNOCK

Speaking on World at One on Tuesday 16 October the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Neil Kinnock, expressed the view that the ACAS compromise would have provided a strong probability of a settlement if the National Coal Board had withdrawn what he described as a 20 pit hit list.

I have informed Mr Kinnock that he is clearly under a misunderstanding for there is no hit list of 20 pits and the National Coal Board, by accepting the ACAS compromise, will see that any pit closure in future will be subject to the procedure agreed to in the ACAS compromise.

Therefore what the Coal Board have agreed to is in the words of the ACAS formula:

"The colliery review procedure will be amended to include as a final stage an independent review body whose function would be to consider a reference from any one of the parties on any closure matter about which there is disagreement.

"Full weight will be given by the parties to the advice of this independent review body."

It is understandable that, if the Leader of the Opposition considered that there were pits that were going to be closed irrespective of the ACAS compromise, he remained critical of the Board. But now he knows that this is not the case, and since he has stated publicly that the ACAS formula provided a strong probability of settlement, I hope he will now use his influence to see that the National Union of Mineworkers accept this formula.

It was NACODS that following their ballot to support strike action settled all their problems with the NCB on procedures and the pay of NACODS members.

It was NACODS who then requested that the Coal Board should go to talks with ACAS. It was the Coal Board who responded to this request and not only went to the talks at ACAS but accepted the compromise formula put forward by ACAS, a formula which Mr Kinnock describes as having a strong probability of obtaining a settlement.

I do therefore hope that all concerned - the Labour Party, the NUM and NACODS - will carefully consider that it is in the interests of the coal industry and the nation that they accept this reasonable compromise proposed by ACAS.

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