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Prime Minister

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PRIME MINISTER

cc Mr Hoskyns
Mr Duguid
Mr. Ingham

Publicity Strategy in the Run-Up to the Miners' Ballot

I think you should know that officials have been working on a strategy for the Government's publicity stance in the next few weeks before the miners' ballot on 14/15 January. This is based on three principles:-

- i) Ministers should keep in the background, leaving the main attributable effort to the NCB. Clearly we want to avoid giving any credibility to Scargill's attempt to turn the ballot into a political event; and the NCB have already sent out special copies of its in-house newspaper to all miners, trying to persuade them that the offer is reasonable (a summary of what the NCB is saying is attached to this note, on the basis of the PA report this afternoon).
- ii) In our briefing behind the scenes, we should avoid giving the impression that the Government is prepared to find more money to pay for a higher settlement, without of course going so far as to indicate that at this early stage Ministers have decided what to do if the miners voted for industrial action.
- iii) We should make every effort to get into circulation, again on an unattributable basis, facts indicating that the miners have no grievance, and have been made a good offer.

I understand from the Department of Energy that Mr. Lawson has endorsed this strategy, and we here also think it right. Bernard Ingham will co-ordinate the effort on (ii) and (iii). I have consulted Robert Wade-Gery, and he is also happy with it. Detailed briefing, with which I need not trouble you, will be circulated by Mr. Tebbit to his colleagues most closely concerned before Christmas.

Content for us to proceed on this basis?

Yes
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21 December 1981

J.V.

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