

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

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Agree to a meeting on 20 Jan?

MR. SCHOLAR

B/K

Yes no

cc. Miss Stephens MS 6/1
Mr. Hoskyns
Mr. Duguid

Ministerial Meetings on the Miners' Pay Dispute

I mentioned to you that we may well need, in addition to the meeting planned for next Tuesday afternoon, a meeting of Ministers the following week to take decisions, in the light of the outcome of the miners' ballot, on what the Government wants the NCB to say to the NUM.

As the paper which Mr. Lawson should be submitting at the weekend will explain, there is a very small window for the taking of that decision. We expect the outcome of the ballot to be known on 19 January, and the NUM executive to meet on 21 January. It will be important for the NCB to be able to avoid giving the impression of uncertainty when the NUM leadership approaches them, as they certainly will, immediately after their executive meeting, asking for more money. Ministers (i.e. those who were concerned with the handling of the MISC 57 report) ought therefore to meet on 20 January - all this, of course, on the assumption of a ballot result authorising industrial action.

And, unwelcome though this may be to Caroline, we ought not to rule out the possibility of a further meeting of the same group of Ministers after the NUM executive meeting on 21 January, in case the executive come up with a proposal that is not covered by earlier Ministerial decisions. But for the moment I think the only meeting that needs to be pencilled in is for 20 January.

As you know, the Department of Energy are under an obligation to send their paper for next Tuesday's meeting early in the week beginning 4 January. We have condoned this being interpreted as during this week; but I would be very grateful if you would reinforce at Private Secretary level a point I have already made to Energy officials, that we really must have it early on Friday, because the Policy Unit will want to have a few hours to look at the final version and to prepare any advice we may want to put into the weekend box.

already done -MS

6 January, 1982

J. M. M. VEREKER

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