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6

Prime Minister (4)

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PA

MR MOUNT

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MCS 14/10

cc Mr Scholar ✓
Mr Ingham
Mr Wolfson
Mr Shipley

M

THE MINERS

You and the others concerned here may wish to have an assessment of where we stand in relation to the miners, in the light of the prospective ballot on 28 - 29 October and of our preparations for industrial action.

Prospects For The Ballot

You may have seen Paul Routledge's forecast of the question on the ballot paper, in today's Times. It reads as follows.

"Are you in favour of the special conference recommendation that the national executive committee be given authority to take industrial action (if necessary) to prevent the closure or partial closure of any pit, plant or unit (other than on grounds of exhaustion) and at the same time bring about a satisfactory settlement of our wages claim?"

The Department of Energy are unable to confirm that that will be the question: they tell me that Paul Routledge is a close associate of Scargill anyway, and is probably drawing on the draft that Scargill will put to his executive. If the ballot paper does turn out similar to this forecast, there is no doubt that it will have succeeded in closely linking closures and pay, albeit in a hopelessly ungrammatical fashion. That will have the effect of considerably increasing the stakes: a Yes vote, prompted by the fear of closures, strengthens the executive's arm over pay; but a No vote, prompted by unwillingness

to strike over pay, weakens the executive's ability to threaten industrial action over closures.

It is worth recording how the miners voted last time (January 1982). On an 82% turnout, 55% of those voted against industrial action, and 45% for. A minimum of 55% in favour is of course required to authorise industrial action. The breakdown of the votes is attached at Annex A. I think all of the reasons for caution on the part of the miners last year apply with at least as great force this year: the fact that they have no genuine pay grievance, the reasonable nature of the offer in comparison with inflation or the going rate, and their financial commitments (mortgages and cars) which would have to be met without strike pay. The only factors working in the other direction are the fear of closures, which is real, and the possibility that the miners may feel that the general climate of industrial relations is worsening, making industrial action more likely to command public support. But the miners will know that our endurance in the face of a strike (of which more below) is much higher than last year. The Department of Energy at this stage believe that the ballot will be too close to call; I am still optimistic that Scargill will not achieve the necessary 55% majority.

The PR Campaign

Ministers have agreed that it is right to leave the NCB to persuade the miners that the offer is generous under the circumstances, and that it will not be increased even in the face of a strike threat. From my reading of the press over the last two weeks (and I think Bernard Ingham shares this view) the NCB are doing a good job so far. I have been sent copies of some of their briefing papers, which contain all the points we would expect them to make; and I understand that the Department of Energy will be writing to me shortly with further details of the campaign. I have discussed with them the need to prepare now for the possibility of an adverse vote, and the more active campaign the Government itself will have to run should industrial action begin, and at my suggestion Ivor Manley, the Deputy

Secretary responsible, will be calling a meeting shortly.

Meanwhile Bernard Ingham has been taking the line with the lobby that the Government is quite prepared for a strike and that there is no question of our leaning on the NCB to increase the offer. The Department of Energy have suggested to me that in order to ensure that the miners really do know that they would be voting for a strike, we could now take the line that we are somewhat pessimistic about the outcome. I think this would be going a bit far: but we could certainly go as far as indicating that the Government recognises that, because of the wording of the ballot, the voting might well go the wrong way, and that we are fully prepared for a very long strike if necessary.

Endurance

MISC 57 meets on Friday morning to go over the endurance position, with which I think all concerned are broadly familiar. I attach for convenience the latest power station statistics (Annex B): you will see that coal stocks at power stations in Great Britain now exceed 27 MT. You will recall that officials have been working to an endurance target established last year by ministers of 20 weeks. Allowing for maximum oil-burn during a strike and various other measures, that would require 30 MT at power stations in Great Britain, or 27 MT in England and Wales alone. The Department of Energy are satisfied that, not withstanding the overtime ban, we are well on target to those figures by the beginning of November. Indeed the effect of the overtime ban is probably beneficial, in that miners will be getting a dose of what it is like to lose a proportion of their pay, but deliveries of stocks from pitheads to power stations seem to be being reduced by only one third. And, of course, the NCB is saving money by not paying overtime.

I understand, and this will have to be explored more fully in MISC 57, that the CEGB is yet again revising its calculations of the number of weeks of endurance represented by the likely

level of coal stocks. It may be that because of the distribution of stocks, and their tendency to deteriorate over time, that endurance will be somewhat less than 20 weeks. We need not be too concerned about that, because as ministers already know, the critical element in endurance this Winter will be supplies of ancillary materials. MISC 57 will be receiving a further report from the Department of Energy about them. The main problem will be over lighting-up oil, and depending on the assumptions we make about the ability to replenish power stations covertly, endurance will be in the 16-20 week range, provided weather conditions are average. These figures do of course assume no power cuts and no use of troops, and are subject to analysis in MISC 57.

Jr.

14 October 1982

HOW THE MINERS VOTED

The voting pattern on an executive recommendation to reject the offer and authorise industrial action "if necessary,"

| Area | Valid votes | Yes | % | No | % |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| Yorkshire | 51,797 | 34,425 | 66 | 17,372 | 34 |
| Nottinghamshire | 29,305 | 8,894 | 30 | 20,411 | 70 |
| S. Wales | 19,626 | 10,687 | 54 | 8,939 | 46 |
| Colliery Staff | 16,158 | 2,206 | 14 | 13,952 | 86 |
| Durham | 12,895 | 5,880 | 46 | 7,015 | 54 |
| Scotland | 11,632 | 7,313 | 63 | 4,319 | 37 |
| Midlands | 11,627 | 3,118 | 27 | 8,509 | 73 |
| Derbyshire | 10,053 | 4,978 | 50 | 5,075 | 50 |
| North West | 6,373 | 2,577 | 40 | 3,796 | 60 |
| Northumberland | 5,481 | 2,018 | 37 | 3,463 | 63 |
| Durham Mechanics | 5,371 | 1,720 | 32 | 3,651 | 68 |
| Power Group | 4,260 | 711 | 17 | 3,549 | 83 |
| Cokemen | 4,028 | 1,286 | 32 | 2,742 | 68 |
| Scottish Enginemen | 3,864 | 2,069 | 54 | 1,795 | 46 |
| S. Derbys. | 2,827 | 455 | 16 | 2,372 | 84 |
| Leicester | 2,736 | 610 | 22 | 2,126 | 78 |
| Kent | 2,271 | 1,217 | 54 | 1,054 | 46 |
| N'land Mechanics | 1,848 | 585 | 32 | 1,263 | 68 |
| N. Wales | 958 | 173 | 18 | 785 | 82 |
| Durham Enginemen | 633 | 142 | 21 | 521 | 79 |
| Cumberland | 622 | 325 | 52 | 297 | 48 |
| Power Group 2 | 226 | 88 | 39 | 138 | 61 |
| TOTAL | 204,621 | 91,477 | 45 | 113,144 | 55 |

Majority of 21,667 on a turnout of 82 per cent

WEEKLY COAL AND POWER STATION STATISTICS (1)

ECS Division, Dept. of Energy, Thames House South, Millbank SW1P 4QJ. Phone: 01-211-6928

Week ending3.10.81: 11.9.82 18.9.82 25.9.82 2.10.81

COAL
STATIONS
POWER

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| COAL | PRODUCTION | deep mines | 2.30: | 1.93 | 2.29 | 1.77 | 2.26 |
| | (m. tonnes) | opencast | 0.29: | 0.34 | 0.33 | 0.31 | 0.32 |
| | | TOTAL | 2.59: | 2.27 | 2.62 | 2.08 | 2.58 |
| COAL | PRODUCTIVITY(2) | 'overall' o.m.s | 2.40: | 2.39 | 2.50 | 2.29 | 2.46 |
| | (tonnes/manshift) | 'production' o.m.s | 9.53: | 9.77 | 10.02 | 9.32 | 9.84 |
| COAL | UNDISTRIBUTED STOCK | | | | | | |
| | (m. tonnes) | TOTAL | 20.79: | 21.59 | 21.48 | 21.25 | 21.15 |
| STATIONS | COAL STOCKS | (m. tonnes) | 19.70: | 25.33 | 26.08 | 26.54 | 27.18 |
| | COAL CONSUMPTION | " | 1.60: | 1.35 | 1.32 | 1.35 | 1.37 |
| | COAL RECEIPTS | " | 1.81: | 1.89 | 2.07 | 1.81 | 2.01 |
| POWER | OIL STOCKS(3) | " | 1.35: | 1.36 | 1.39 | 1.37 | 1.47 |
| | OIL CONSUMPTION(3) | " | 0.03: | 0.06 | 0.07 | 0.07 | 0.07 |
| | OIL RECEIPTS(3) | " | 0.17: | 0.04 | 0.10 | 0.06 | 0.17 |
| POWER | ELECTRICITY SUPPLIED (4) (GWh) | | | | | | |
| | Nuclear | " | 481: | 666 | 646 | 613 | 772 |
| | Other Steam | " | 3,634: | 3,174 | 3,102 | 3,246 | 3,273 |
| | TOTAL | " | 4,115: | 3,840 | 3,748 | 3,859 | 4,045 |
| | TOTAL - temperature corrected | " | 4,127: | 3,874 | 3,877 | 3,836 | 4,027 |

(1) Great Britain unless otherwise stated. All latest figures are subject to revision.
 (2) NCB mines only. (3) Oil-fired boilers only. (4) Steam stations only.

