



File  
17  
cc. John Vereker

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

3 November 1982

The Prime Minister held a meeting on Thursday, 28 October to discuss the possible miners' strike. The Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Industry, Energy, Employment, Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr. Gregson were also present.

Now that a pay settlement has been reached with the miners, I will not be recording the conclusions of this meeting, since they were all concerned with the possibility that there would be an adverse result of the ballot. The Prime Minister has, however, asked me to write to you to let you know that she would like to consider at an early date what the Government's policy should be in the future towards power station coal stocks; and, in the light of this year's experience, what arrangements are being made at the power stations for increasing storage and manufacturing facilities for ancillary materials so that stocks of these can match the desired level of power station coal stocks.

As a basis for this, the Prime Minister would like the Official Group on Coal (MISC 57) to prepare a report for Ministers urgently on:

- i. what should be the target level of power station coal stocks next autumn (including if necessary an increase in coal storage facilities) and the steps necessary to achieve this by next autumn;
- ii. the adequacy of the storage and manufacturing facilities for ancillary materials planned for the power stations by next autumn and the steps that might be taken to increase these in the light of i.;
- iii. what further action might be taken to induce coal burning industry to build up its stocks in the late summer of next year.

The Prime Minister would like MISC 57 to report on this matter by the end of November.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Scotland, Industry, Transport and Employment and to John Sparrow and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Julian West, Esq.,  
Department of Energy.

SUBJECT

SECRET AND PERSONAL

NB

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This letter was not sent.  
It is to be used as a  
record of the meeting only.

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

29 October 1982

The Prime Minister held a meeting on Thursday 28 October to discuss the possible miners' strike. The Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Industry, Energy, Employment, Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr. Gregson were also present.

The meeting had before it a minute of 25 October from the Secretary of State for Energy to the Prime Minister enclosing a report by the Official Group on Coal (MISC 57(82)23) on power station endurance in the event of a miners' strike.

There was a discussion of the possible sequence of events immediately following a ballot result in favour of a strike. It seemed likely that a strike would not begin until the second or third week in November. In the intervening period it seemed probable that Mr. Scargill would seek negotiations with the NCB, especially if the vote for a strike was only marginally higher than the required 55 per cent. It seemed doubtful, however, that he would be genuinely ready to reach an agreement on any tolerable basis. The NCB were likely to stand firm both on their pay offer and on their existing statements about closures and redundancies. It would be undesirable for the Government to seek to persuade them to do otherwise.

Concern was expressed about the conduct of the ballot and the fact that the Electoral Reform Society, although giving implied endorsement of the validity of the ballot, was in practice able to do no more than count the votes provided to it by the NUM. The NCB had been encouraged to make available to the press, at an appropriate stage, any information in their possession which suggested that the ballot had been conducted unfairly.

It was recognised that, as soon as the strike began, the police would face a major task in handling mass picketing. It was agreed that it was highly desirable to keep access to power stations as free as possible from interference by pickets. If the result of the ballot was in favour of a strike, the Home and Scottish Offices should arrange urgent consultations with Chief Officers of Police, followed by local discussions with Electricity Boards on detailed contingency plans as envisaged in paragraph 11 of MISC 57(82)23.

/It was noted

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It was noted that early in the strike the question would arise of whether those affected should seek legal redress under the Employment Acts. The probable date for commencement of the 1982 Act, which would make the NUM themselves vulnerable to legal action, was 1 December, in line with the general undertaking that 2 months should normally be allowed after Royal Assent to permit an Act to be printed and made available to the Courts. It was agreed that, for the time being, no advice should be given to the Electricity Boards about the use of remedies under the Employment Acts.

There was a discussion of the CEGB's proposed operational strategy for optimising the stocks of both coal and lighting-up oil as outlined in paragraph 23 of MISC 57(82)23. It was agreed that the CEGB should, at least initially, proceed on the basis of the proposed strategy which would provide overall power station endurance of 16 weeks but that meanwhile every effort should be made to replenish stocks of lighting-up oil as well as ancillary materials and that, if these efforts proved successful, the strategy of prolonging endurance to 20 weeks by optimising the use of coal stocks would be reinstated. The CEGB should be encouraged to explore all available means of securing replenishment without Service assistance including the use of non-union lorry drivers and, if this proved to be practicable, civil helicopters.

It was agreed that the marginal restrictions on electricity demand outlined in paragraph 26 of MISC 57(82)23, which would have only a minimal effect on endurance, should not be introduced before Christmas and that the option would need to be reconsidered nearer that time. Meanwhile however there would be no inhibition on appeals to the public by Area Boards to economise in the consumption of electricity.

On further work, it was agreed that, although in the early stages of a strike the approach would be to rely on existing stocks of coal in power stations, while endeavouring to ensure replenishment of lighting-up oil and other ancillaries, it might be necessary at some stage to examine more radical options for extending endurance, including the use of Servicemen to move pithead stocks to power stations by rail and road, increased coal imports and their delivery to both power stations and coal-using industry, and substantial reductions in consumption. Following an adverse ballot result, the Official Group on Coal (MISC 57) should put work in hand on all available options for extending endurance beyond that provided by existing stock levels and should report to Ministers.

/I am sending

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I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Industry, Employment, and to Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr. Gregson. I should be grateful if you and they would ensure that this record is seen only by those specifically authorised by your Secretary of State to do so.

Julian West, Esq.,  
Department of Energy.



I think we  
may await  
the results -  
in view of the

10 DOWNING STREET

write this weekend.

Prime Minister

There may be no  
need for this record  
to be circulated

Coal meeting record not

I know that you are  
concerned about sensitive records  
and papers being sent out of  
the building.

I believe that I need to send  
to Mr West (Mr Lawson's P.S.)  
the attached to ensure that the  
conclusions of the meeting are put  
into action.

Do you authorize me to send it?

MCS 29/10

NOTE OF A MEETING HELD AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON THURSDAY 28 OCTOBER AT 9.30AM  
TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBLE MINERS' STRIKE

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Present

The Prime Minister  
Home Secretary  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
Secretary of State for Defence  
Secretary of State for Industry  
Secretary of State for Energy  
Secretary of State for Employment

Sir Robert Armstrong  
Mr P L Gregson

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The meeting had before it a minute of 25 October from the Secretary of State for Energy to the Prime Minister enclosing a report by the Official Group on Coal (MISC 57(82)23) on power station endurance in the event of a miners' strike.

There was a discussion of the possible sequence of events immediately following a ballot result in favour of a strike. It seemed likely that a strike would not begin until the second or third week in November. In the intervening period it seemed probable that Mr Scargill would seek negotiations with the NCB, especially if the vote for a strike was only marginally higher than the required 55 per cent. It seemed doubtful however that he would be genuinely ready to reach an agreement on any tolerable basis. The NCB were likely to stand firm both on their pay offer and on their existing statements about closures and redundancies. It would be undesirable for the Government to seek to persuade them to do otherwise.

Concern was expressed about the conduct of the ballot and the fact that the Electoral Reform Society, although giving implied endorsement of the validity of the ballot, was in practice able to do no more than count the votes provided

to it by the NUM. The NCB had been encouraged to make available to the press, at an appropriate stage, any information in their possession which suggested that the ballot had been conducted unfairly.

It was recognised that, as soon as the strike began, the police would face a major task in handling mass picketing. It was agreed that it was highly desirable to keep access to power stations as free as possible from interference by pickets. If the result of the ballot was in favour of a strike, the Home and Scottish Offices should arrange urgent consultations with Chief Officers of Police, followed by local discussions with Electricity Boards on detailed contingency plans as envisaged in paragraph 11 of MISC 57(82)23.

It was noted that early in the strike the question would arise of whether those affected should seek legal redress under the Employment Acts. The probable date for commencement of the 1982 Act, which would make the NUM themselves vulnerable to legal action, was 1st December, in line with the general undertaking that 2 months should normally be allowed after Royal Assent to permit an Act to be printed and made available to the Courts. It was agreed that, for the time being, no advice should be given to the Electricity Boards about the use of remedies under the Employment Acts.

There was a discussion of the CEEGB's proposed operational strategy for optimising the stocks of both coal and lighting-up oil as outlined in paragraph 23 of MISC 57(82)23. It was agreed that the CEEGB should, at least initially, proceed on the basis of the proposed strategy which would provide overall power station endurance of 16 weeks but that meanwhile every effort should be made to replenish stocks of lighting-up oil as well as ancillary materials and that, if these efforts proved successful, the strategy of prolonging endurance to 20 weeks by optimising the use of coal stocks would be reinstated. The CEEGB should be encouraged to explore all available means of securing replenishment without Service assistance including the use of non-union lorry drivers and, if this proved to be practicable, civil helicopters.

It was agreed that the marginal restrictions on electricity demand outlined in paragraph 26 of MISC 57(82)23, which would have only a minimal effect on endurance, should not be introduced before Christmas and that the option would need to be re-considered nearer that time. Meanwhile however there would be no inhibition on appeals to the public by Area Boards to economise in the consumption of electricity.

On further work, it was agreed that, although in the early stages of a strike the approach would be to rely on existing stocks of coal in power stations, while endeavouring to ensure replenishment of lighting-up oil and other ancillaries, it might be necessary at some stage to examine more radical options for extending endurance, including the use of Servicemen to move pithead stocks to power stations by rail and road, increased coal imports and their delivery to both power stations and coal-using industry, and substantial reductions in consumption. Following an adverse ballot result, the Official Group on Coal (MISC 57) should put work in hand on all available options for extending endurance beyond that provided by existing stock levels and should report to Ministers.

*P. L. Gregson*

28 October 1982