

Matched  
Coal

PA

MR SCHOLAR

cc Mr Mount

POWER STATION ENDURANCE

There is no need for the Prime Minister to do more than acknowledge Mr Lawson's note of 18 January. She may be concerned about the position on lighting-up oil: my understanding is that the Department of Energy aim to have sufficient lighting-up oil in power stations by next November to match 26 million tonnes of coal.

Mr Lawson's note will however form part of the background to the Prime Minister's meeting, now planned for 27 January, on pit closures. You have seen some of the detailed work done by the Department of Energy for that meeting, and Mr Lawson knows that both we and the Treasury have been shown it. But I understand that he has concluded that it would be wrong to circulate formally to his colleagues material of such sensitivity, and that the note he will produce for the Prime Minister's meeting will be short, and confined to the central judgement of the maximum rate of pit closures the unions will tolerate without a national strike.

J.S.

19 January 1983



cc: J (B)

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Prime Minister<sup>2</sup>

SECRET AND PERSONAL

ms 18/1

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PRIME MINISTER

POWER STATION ENDURANCE

Following your endorsement of the MISC 57 report circulated on 3 December, my Department has discussed with the CEGB plans for coal deliveries to their power stations in the next few months. These plans will ensure only a modest fall in coal stocks this winter, consistent with steadily increasing endurance, and a smooth build-up to 30 million tonnes for November. Stocks of ancillary materials will by then be sufficient for 20 weeks endurance. Meanwhile, the figures for coal endurance in this minute assume some replenishment of the less bulky ancillaries, though not of lighting-up oil.

The accelerated rate of deliveries now underway will very largely counter the effects of high winter coal-burn. Stocks at CEGB power stations are expected to fall slightly from 24½ million tonnes at the beginning of January to just under 24 million tonnes in March (assuming average temperatures for those months). Thereafter, stocks will increase to 30 million tonnes by late summer. Power station coal stocks in Great Britain as a whole should not fall below about 26 million tonnes this winter, compared with a minimum of 13 million tonnes last year.

If there is a coal strike this winter, endurance will be the longer the later it starts - rising from about 20 weeks for a strike beginning today, to about 23 weeks for one beginning in mid-February, 25 weeks in mid-March and a peak of 27 weeks in May/June, reducing again to no less than 24 weeks in November.

I am copying this minute, for the usual limited circulation, to the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Scotland, Wales, Industry, Transport and Employment, Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Sparrow.

*[Handwritten signature]*

Secretary of State for Energy  
18 January 1983