



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister:

Giles Shaw is
seeing Mr Macgregor
on Friday to discuss
"Ophirans". Perhaps
the best time to consider
the Policy Unit paper
attached is in the
context of his report

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29 August 1984

PRIME MINISTER

MINERS' AND DOCK STRIKES

At MISC 101 yesterday, you asked about options for ending the coal and dock disputes.

The miners' dispute is still the central one. The public see the miners' tactics as a serious and violent threat to our industrial structure and our way of life. The dockers' dispute, if it is about anything, is about the extent of other unions' support for the miners.

Options in the Mining Dispute

Until now, the Government has been hoping that the coal strike will be ended by the drift back to work. But the drift has continued slowly for 6 months, with little sign of any acceleration. Moreover, Scargill has been able to keep hope alive through a series of conferences, marches and other stunts. Attrition may work either through the drift accelerating, or via a split in the NUM executive eventually forcing Scargill into a minority.

It is, however, now time for the Government to consider showing that it still means business: this will damage strikers' morale, and may split moderate unionists further

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away from Scargill. There are many options carrying different degrees of risk. This list is reasonably comprehensive, and includes some very tough measures which could well induce wrong reactions at this stage.

1. Increasing Endurance: Options to increase the supply of coal from non--NUM sources

(a) Encourage NCB to expand open-cast coal. Open-cast coal can be exploited quite rapidly once planning permission has been obtained, and can be extracted by non--NUM labour under licence from the Coal Board, or even in private ownership.

Reserves to destruction

(b) Urge nationalised industries to import more coal. Considerable quantities have already been brought in by private industry, often through small ports.

? Reserves

(c) Ask NCB to license more private deep mines. There are already many small privately-owned deep and drift mines in the country. New reserves could be licensed to private contractors. This is the most inflammatory of these three options.

2. Increase endurance by reducing coal burn

(a) Purchasing new oil-fired or gas-fired generating capacity and/or accelerating the nuclear programme offers a long-term option.

(b) Offering industry encouragements to switch from coal to other forms of space heating and power. Probably unnecessary, as the abolition of the coal conversion scheme, coupled with the long strike, have put many customers off coal.

3. Options designed to achieve the NCB objectives of pit closures and demanning

(a) Permit voluntary redundancies, even when people are on strike. Their votes could, however, be important. Could the redundancy take effect from the date of the strike's end?

(b) Start announcing closures of uneconomic pits in militant areas.

(c) Alternatively, announce removal of safety cover on uneconomic pits likely to lead to physical and geological reasons for their closure.

4. Options designed to put pressure on non-working miners to return to work

(a) Announce removal of safety cover at certain pits unless men return.

- (b) Use example of Polkemmet more widely to illustrate the dangers of current Scargill tactics.
- (c) Use speeches and NCB propaganda to drive a wedge between the different factions in the NUM Executive, playing on the split between McGahey and Scargill over safety cover at Polkemmet.
- (d) Consider announcing tougher financial targets for the NCB, and lower capital investment programme, if miners refuse to co-operate - the argument being that the NCB and Government are being more than generous at the moment, and if there is no response from the other side, the policy would have to be reviewed unilaterally. This would be a major shift in policy and would produce very hostile reactions.

5. Options to deal with intimidation and picket-line violence

- (a) Speedier use of stipendiary magistrates and of legal processes so that pickets can see their comrades being prosecuted and punished quickly for criminal offences.
- (b) Mounting serious cases about criminal damage and violence likely to lead to sharp exemplary

sentences. Publicising any such sentences when they are announced.

- (c) Examining the possibility of mounting a conspiracy charge against union leaders inciting pickets to violence.

6. Options to put pressure on the officials of the NUM

- (a) Encourage use of the civil law against secondary picketing, with a view to fining or confiscating mineworkers' funds.
- (b) Run a propaganda and speech campaign pointing out the way in which current union policy is wrecking a once great union.

7. Options to strengthen the hands of miners wishing to return to work

- (a) Continuing to experiment with the policy of finding pits or areas where a critical mass of people may wish to return to work, and then organising transport and policing for them.
- (b) Use speeches and press briefings to encourage the moderate miner to seek a proper ballot.

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(c) Remind the NUM and its regional branches that the new Employment Act with its rules and ballots becomes effective in the ~~third~~^{fourth} week of September. This Act will enable the NCB to obtain an injunction to prevent inducement to strike if no ballot has been held. We are advised that this can probably be done if a miner goes to work on 27 September and then is "persuaded" not to on 28th. This type of legal action centred around the issue of a ballot is less likely to alienate moderates.

Options in the Docks Dispute

The main hope with the docks dispute is, as Tom King described, that it will crumble quickly; or, at the very latest, after the TUC Conference, when the dockers' leaders will feel less need for conscience-saving strike action in support of the miners.

However, we should not bank on this happening, and the list of options for the dockers is very similar to that for the miners. In brief outline, they are:

1. Encouraging law suits against secondary action. We are told there are very strong grounds for regarding the whole of the docks dispute as secondary action.

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2. Seeking secret ballots once the new Trade Union Act is effective.
3. Putting financial pressure on the state-owned or state-supported bad ports covered by the NDLS, particularly the PLA.
4. Increasing air freight, use of small ports, and trans-shipment from Rotterdam.
5. Spelling out the way in which foreign ports and non-striking ports will benefit from the dispute.

CONCLUSION

In the miners' dispute, the time has definitely come for some acceleration in the pace of the return to work, and now is the time to experiment with some tougher measures. During the early days of the dispute, the argument always held sway that tougher action would jeopardise the working records of the Nottinghamshire and other moderate miners. This now looks unlikely in view of the growing violence and extremism of Scargill's campaign, and the substantial investment in moderation made by all those working miners.

The public is appalled by the scenes of violence it sees on television every night, where the Government seems impotent to do anything; and is probably growing weary of the rash of

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strikes which is now characterising the British economy yet again. Whilst it will blame the miners' extremists most, the Government cannot expect to escape some of the aggravation itself.

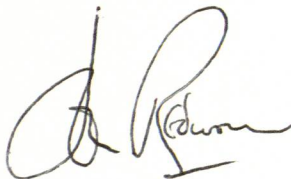
With this in mind, we would venture the following mixed package of measures:

1. Use of law on incitement to strike and ballots in both miners' and dockers' disputes.
2. A speeding up of the criminal law to deal with the scenes of violence, coupled with maximum publicity for the legal action that is being taken.
3. An escalation in the pace of open-cast mining activities, and an exploration of whether more coal can be imported.
4. Ask NCB to evaluate opening the miners' redundancy programme, and the removal of safety cover at half a dozen of the worst pits that are destined to close.

Options to introduce non-coal burning capacity in power stations are by nature much longer-term, and will not influence the outcome of this dispute, but are nonetheless important to reduce Britain's vulnerability to the NUM's forces. An announcement even about designing a new power

station of a non-coal burning type could be useful psychologically to underline the point about strikes destroying jobs but would call into question the Government's oft-stated belief in a strong new coal industry.

Above all, it is vital to show that the Government's trade union laws are not stillborn, and the Government does not only care, but can do something to enforce the rule of law and strengthen the hands of the moderates.



JOHN REDWOOD