

File M 18/9/84

WINNING THE WAR AGAINST SCARGILLISM.

This note is intended to be a Coda to our recent conversations. It is based on my deeply held view that the outcome of the strike is fundamental to your political position.

The Street sees you as the embodiment of everything that Scargill is trying to attack. Even a minor victory for Scargill would be a major defeat for you.

The longer the strike continues the more vital it is that the public are provided with a defeat of Scargill and his political strike. Such a defeat would be the most powerful reaffirmation of your political vision.

There is an enemy within. We are at war. At home. Prosecute it with the same degree of determination and control as you exercised in the Falklands.

All of the negotiating positions taken by the NCB, except the first claim of the right to close 'uneconomic' pits, if accepted by Scargill, would have undoubtedly been seen by the public as a surrender by you. 'In line with its responsibilities' simply does not mean anything much in English. At best it can be said to be open to different interpretations. We are fortunate that Scargill rejected it.

Immense pressure continues to be put on MacGregor to settle. From within his own organisation and from outside. I can tell you more about this when I next see you.

MacGregor is an acute business negotiator who has not yet fully understood that he has been cast in the greater role of statesman. His close advisors at the NCB have no broader vision than the running of their business. He has his 'wets' as you had yours. He is more likely to give in to them.

This is the greatest danger for you.

To meet it, paradoxically, the safest course for you would be to ensure that Ministers and MacGregor abandon all attempts to settle the strike by negotiation. Scargill is not only temperamentally unable to compromise, he cannot and survive the leadership ballot that is soon to be required by law. Wavering miners will not return to work while negotiations are taking place or in prospect. Nothing short of absolute victory for the government will prevent people seeing a settlement as a victory for Scargill and violence.

It is clear from the docks settlement and from the reluctance of the power workers to assist Scargill that the majority of trades union members abhor Scargillism as much as you do.

All strikes can be broken provided the management have the will and the nation has the stamina. I have absolutely no doubt as to the latter.

This strike is unlikely to end until the majority of miners see that there is no possible advantage to be gained for them by remaining on strike and the maximum possible disadvantage.

After six months of constant contact with working and wanting-to-work miners and with striking miners I suggest the following steps be taken.

1. The government to repeat frequently that there is absolutely no question of surrender. MacGregor to echo this, equally forcefully.
2. The working miners to be given an increase in their wages of the order of 4.5 per cent, backdated. Two weeks notice could be given to all miners that those not reporting for work on the appointed day and remaining at work for, say, a month thereafter, will not receive the back-dated element of any final pay settlement.
3. The NCB to announce that if Scargill will not put its position to a ballot based on a fair question they will withdraw all offers so far made. Scargill is unlikely to risk a ballot. The concessions already made will be neutralised.
4. The NCB to announce, before the NACODS ballot, that any pit that is forced to close because of the withdrawal of safety cover may well lead to permanent redundancies for all grades of worker.
5. A pit or two to be closed as an earnest of the NCB's determination.
6. The NCB to announce that any miner convicted of an offence connected with the dispute i.e. on the picket line or against NCB property will be sacked and not re-employed under any circumstances.
7. You to be increasingly identified in the public mind with your troops. They are, the police, the working miners wives, the working miners, the victims of Scargillism - the NCB whose property has been damaged, the Road Hauliers who have had lorries burnt and, above all, the victims of intimidation.

The Street is beginning to speak of your aloofness. They say you seem to be 'sitting on the fence'. Your army needs a boost to its morale. The best boost would be a sight of its General in the field. The greatest impact would be derived if you were seen on television, utterly without physical fear (as I know you are), walking the streets of the villages where the intimidation is at its worst.

The ordinary Briton for whom you hold such affection and who reciprocates must not be condemned to the kind of slavery through intimidation that Scargill practices and others will practice on a wider and wider scale if he achieves any kind of victory in this dispute. Only you have the opportunity and the bottle to defeat Scargillism.

I conclude with a thought from the past, so often the mentor of the future.

|| There is no avoiding war; it can only be postponed to the advantage of the enemy.

The Prince. Niccolo Machiavelli.

David Hart. 18th September 1984.