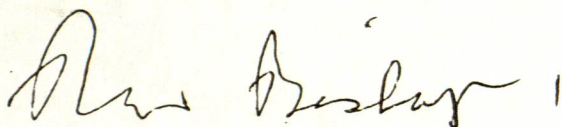


01 211 6402

The Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Durham
Auckland Castle
Bishop Auckland
County Durham
DL14 7NR

5 October 1984



Thank you for your reply to my letter. I appreciated your saying that my letter to you was reasoned and informative, and that you admired both the courtesy and the compassion which I expressed.

I appreciated this because it was certainly my intention to explain to you my sincere belief that both the National Coal Board and the Government have endeavoured, and are continuing to endeavour, to provide coal miners, their families and communities with a good future, and that they fully understand the miners' present problems.

I am sure your reply to me was intended to be what you described as "an urgent discussion between Christians about the frighteningly difficult problems which we all face".

I would like however to express my concern about some of the fundamental arguments in your letter.

Your prime argument is that the Government does not seem to care for the unemployed. The words 'not seem' are of course important. It may be a criticism of our failure to convey not just our concern but our actions to meet the problems of the unemployed.

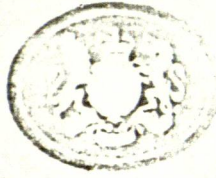
I know of no problem which dominates more the thinking and the anxieties of both myself and the government. As somebody whose father was an unemployed factory worker in the 1930's, there is nothing that I hate more passionately than the despair of unemployment. I must ask you to examine the range of measures

that this government is currently applying in order to relieve the burdens of unemployment created by the worst recession this century. Just let me list this year's expenditure upon government schemes designed to tackle this problem:-

<u>Youth Training</u> :- To provide training and planned work experience to enable school-leavers to compete more effectively in the labour market.	£820 million
<u>Young Workers' Scheme</u> :- To encourage employers to take on more young people into permanent full-time jobs.	£56 million
<u>Community Industry</u> :- To provide temporary jobs for disadvantaged young people who find particular difficulty in finding and keeping jobs.	£26 million
<u>Enterprise Allowance</u> :- To help unemployed people who wish to start up in business.	£66 million
<u>Community Programme</u> :- To provide temporary jobs for the long-term unemployed of community benefit.	£561 million
<u>Full-time and Part-time Job Release</u> :- To encourage employed people approaching state pension age to give up work early and release jobs for the unemployed.	£315 million
Renovation of local authority housing	£1005 million
Grants for private housing home improvements	£450 million
The inner city urban programme dealing with the special concentration of social need for the inner city.	£255 million
Grants to eradicate derelict land	£74 million

All this expenditure has been motivated by the desire to ease the problems of unemployment.

You go on in your letter to create the image of a nasty government, however, by claiming cuts in those services which are of particular value to the poor. A rather remarkable allegation



against a government which in its first five years more than doubled expenditure on the health services in cash terms and substantially increased it in real terms, thereby allowing the numbers of nurses and doctors to be increased. An unfair allegation about a government which, during a world recession in which manufacturing production has been dramatically cut, so that the means of exercising compassion were reduced, decided that no old age pensioner suffered and kept its election pledge to protect pensioners from the ravages of inflation. To keep our word at a time when the gross national product in real terms was falling was, of course, a very considerable financial burden. Government expenditure on the elderly is now nearly £10 billion more per year than it was in the year before we came into office. We have more than doubled expenditure for the elderly in this period.

You seem in your letter to imply that there is something wrong in finding money for what you describe as military adventures in the Falklands. I hope I don't have to presume from this that, as an Anglican Bishop, you would have allowed the military adventures of the Fascist Junta in the Argentine to succeed, and the freedom of citizens for whom we had responsibility to be destroyed. As to your mention of the fact that we spend money on keeping up the police force, I can assure you that there are 70,000 people working in the coal industry who are very relieved we have done that.

What concerns me most about your letter and your sermon is the difference of your emphasis and attitude between Mr Ian MacGregor and Mr Arthur Scargill.

Mr MacGregor has offered the miners what everybody agrees to be a good pay offer, plus a guarantee that all miners will be able to continue working in the industry if they wish to do so, plus a massive investment programme in the future, plus a programme to bring new businesses to mining communities. For this Mr MacGregor is not just condemned but is chosen by you as the person who should be removed from office.

But Mr Scargill receives only an aside in your sermon to the effect that you hope Mr Scargill will not continue as a absolutist but become a compassionate and realistic negotiator who cares more for people and for their future than for an ideology. In your letter you merely describe Mr Scargill as having a personal intransigence.

Do let the public know in more detail how you really view Mr Scargill. I know you have made a considerable study of Marxist theory and practice. Where do you feel he fits into all of this? I am sure you have read his article in "Marxism Today" in which he displayed a Marxist contempt for democracy, and his article in "New Left Review" in which, referring to his mob successes at the Saltley coke depot, he wrote "Here was the living proof that the working class had only to flex its muscles and it could bring Governments, employers, society to a total standstill". What are your thoughts on this?

Do you feel that the writings, oratory and actions of Mr Scargill are just those of somebody displaying a degree of personal intransigence, or do you feel that they are the actions of somebody on a political crusade which is contrary to the desires of the majority of the people in our country. I posed to you the important question - what if Mr Scargill continued to go for conflict and adhered to a demand that he knew that neither Government nor the National Coal Board could ever agree to. Your reply to that question was remarkable. You replied you would go for a cooling off period in which pits not working would continue not to work and working pits would continue to operate. The strike would continue, without the pickets. But I must ask you, as a Christian and as a Bishop - why do you think Mr Scargill keeps up the mass picketing? Why does he ignore the guidelines of the TUC, and his own union, that only 6 peaceful pickets can operate at any colliery entrance? Why have there been 7,000 arrests on criminal charges? Why are there victimisation and beatings up on a massive scale? And why has Mr Scargill never on any occasion appealed for violence by the picket mobs to stop? There would be no need for police if Mr Scargill abided by the guidelines of his own union on picketing but of course what there would be would be a massive return to work of miners that have been deprived of a ballot.

You argue in one passage of your letter that Mr Scargill has very strong support - seemingly never strong enough to ballot his members, seemingly never strong enough to rely on the peaceful picket as opposed to the mass mob.

You go on to argue that redundancy payments are all very well but redundancy means no further jobs for the redundant and no jobs for their children.

You must look at the facts. What the Coal Board is primarily offering is for men in their 50's early retirement on generous terms. I am sure you would agree that at a time of unemployment, early retirement on generous terms is a strong assistance in that battle. As to your argument that the retention of a totally uneconomic pit is important to provide jobs for their children, it is a proposal that does not stand up to examination. Virtually all of the pits that we describe as uneconomic now, the 10 per cent of the pits that are losing £300 million a year and producing coal that costs way above the average costs of production, are virtually all pits that, even if you continued this waste of resources, would be exhausted of coal long before the children were able to obtain jobs at them. And even if they could last, you would be condemning tomorrow's teenagers to a working life deep in the ground in the most dangerous and uncomfortable of pits. I cannot believe that it is Christian charity to preserve these sort of jobs when, economically, there is no need.

How much better instead of wasting such resources to provide new resources to bring in new firms, new enterprises and new industry into the mining communities where pit closures are going to take place. Mr MacGregor is the first chairman of the National coal Board to take a decision to provide finance and services to see that that is done. This is a real long term method of aiding the communities. The retention of an uneconomic pit has no such advantage.

As a Christian bishop in a mining diocese your objectives must be identical to the policies that the government are willing to finance. A mining industry that can pay its miners well; a mining industry taking decisions that will give it an expanding and not a contracting future; and a mining industry meeting its responsibilities to see that when a pit can no longer produce coal on a sane and sensible basis that community is provided with generous provisions to encourage new enterprises. Guarantees that any person wishing to continue as a miner elsewhere is able to do so.

What as a Christian bishop you must not do is to encourage the belief that if miners are deprived of the right to ballot and, if mob rule and violence are imposed then demands devoid of logic and sanity will have to be fulfilled.

Daily I receive by letter appeals from those who are suffering from the violence and intimidation on a scale that neither you nor I have ever witnessed. Mr Len Murray spoke out against it. Mr Kinnoek on two occasions has spoken out against it, although he cannot distinguish between the defensive action the police have to take and the offensive measures that the attackers have used. He treats the fire brigade with the same contempt as he treats the fire. In your sermon you mentioned, as an aside, that violence should not be rewarded. I do suggest to you that you could well preach to the miners leaders, and to Mr Scargill if he listens to preachers of your faith, that Christians would judge the cause to be sound if it was freely supported, and suspect it to be very unsound if force and intimidation have to be used.

What also depressed me about your letter was those matters raised in my original letter to you that you decided to ignore. I asked you why it was that Mr Scargill had decided for the first time in your lifetime to call a national strike in his industry without giving his members the right of a ballot.

I asked how you could accuse a Government that invested £650 million more in the coal industry than had been agreed under the "Plan for Coal" which was endorsed by the Labour Government and the National Union of Mineworkers.

I asked you to express your appreciation of Mr MacGregor as the first chairman of the National Coal Board to demand that the National Coal Board themselves took on a responsibility for the future of the communities affected by closure.

I asked you as a Christian in your moments of meditation and prayer to ask why the 70,000 miners who were given a democratic vote, decided overwhelmingly not to strike and ponder why it is that these men have day after day been threatened by mobs outside their own communities.

I asked you if you did recognise that when in your sermon you stated "That there must be no victory for the miners on present terms because this would mean pits left open at all costs and the endorsement of civil violence for group ends", you were in fact explaining the reason why miners, their families and their communities have suffered so much for so long.

It would be very difficult for any Christian bishop to suggest that what is being offered by the Coal Board and the Government to the miners and their communities was other than understanding, compassionate and decent..

Yours faithfully
Peter Walker

PETER WALKER