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Daily Coal Report - Monday 22 October 1984

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>plus on holiday</u> |
|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| (i) Working normally | 45 | - |
| (ii) Turning some coal | 10 | - |
| (iii) Some men present | 23 | - |
| (iv) On strike/picketed out | 96 | - |

Negligible change in attendances since last week.

Coal Movements

911,000 tonnes were moved last week, of which 669,000 went to the CEGB.

38 coal trains ran on Friday, making a total for the week of 192.

Law and Order

Picketing was generally light this morning. There were no reports of serious incidents.

Since the dispute began 951 police have been injured. A total of 7,401 arrests have been made.

Industrial Relations

The NUM are to meet NACODS at ACAS tomorrow for further talks. Meanwhile the indications from weekend meetings in Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire are that many NACODS members will support the strike which is due to begin on Thursday.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

7,000 opencast coal workers, who are members of the TGWU, have voted to ban the movement of coal stocks. The opencast sites in question are leased by the Coal Board to private firms. This ban, if effective, might have a limited impact on coal movements, though there are few movements from stock at present.

Appointment of Michael Eaton

The appointment of Michael Eaton to handle the Board's public relations in the dispute was a decision by Mr MacGregor. It is not clear whether Eaton will be involved in future negotiations. That, too, is a matter for Mr MacGregor.

Commons Statement

The full text of Mr Walker's statement is attached.

Line to Take

As usual stress key elements of Coal Board offer.

Also, stress there was only one "ACAS Proposal" - the one which the NCB accepted and the NUM rejected.

Distribution: Members of MISC 101, Paymaster General, Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr Gregson (Cabinet Office).

Enquiries: Michael Reidy, PS/SOS for Energy, Tel: 211 6070

SECRET AND PERSONAL

cc 1103
Question
AT

THE COAL DISPUTE

With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement about developments in the coal dispute during the Recess.

Between September 9 and September 14 the NCB held negotiations with the NUM in an attempt to reach agreement that would settle this dispute.

During these negotiations the National Union of Mineworkers refused any formula which would have permitted any pit closures on any economic grounds.

In September, the pit deputies' union, NACODS, decided to ballot their members on three questions. But their members were not asked to give their approval or disapproval on these questions separately but were asked to give their approval or disapproval on all three together with a single 'yes' or 'no'.

Since the ballot, the Coal Board have resolved with NACODS two of the issues which had led the union to hold a strike ballot of its members. The third issue, dealing with the reduction in the industry's capacity, resulted in NACODS requesting the National Coal Board to hold meetings with the National Union of Mineworkers under the auspices of the Advisory and Conciliation Service. These talks took place between 11 and 15 October.

At the start of these talks it was agreed that ACAS would distil the NUM's position and circulate it to the other parties. After the NCB had commented, ACAS, having heard the views of all the parties, undertook to put forward its own text. As the chairman of ACAS, Mr Lowry, has confirmed, this was the only paper carrying the title of "ACAS Proposal". The NCB accepted this ACAS compromise proposal, but the NUM rejected it - circulating instead a further text of their own.

Subsequent to the talks, Mr Scargill confirmed publicly that on the key question of pit closures he had not moved his position since the dispute started in March.

The Government regrets the failure to accept the ACAS compromise proposal, which would have enabled the damage being done to the coal industry to cease and the widespread violence that has occurred throughout this dispute to come to an end.

Over 70,000 men were at work in the mining industry last week, a third of the industry. Most of these men had the chance of a ballot as required by normal NUM procedures. They had decided to work.

There are substantial stocks of coal at the power stations and I am pleased to inform the House that power station stocks at the end of last week were higher than they were at the end of August. The Government will continue to take all actions which are necessary to see that the power stations continue to provide the energy necessary to protect the life of the nation and to preserve jobs.

Following the negotiations that have taken place throughout the summer I wish to remind the House of the package that is now on offer to the miners. A wage increase from last November providing earnings way above average industrial earnings and greater than that gained by many groups of workers. An undertaking that any miner who wishes to continue working in the industry will be able to do so. Exceptionally generous provisions for those who choose a course of early retirement when a pit needs to close. A capital investment programme more than double that of the rest of the European community put together, a programme to secure an industry capable of obtaining expanding markets in the future. An amended colliery review procedure

which includes all the provisions that have operated under Labour and Conservative Governments for many years past but adds to it provision for an independent review body, whose advice will be given full weight before any decision is made. The creation of the new enterprise company whereby for the first time the Coal Board will be active in financing, advising and providing accommodation to new enterprises and businesses to benefit the mining communities.

In order that there should be no doubt on the benches opposite, I repeat that the Board not only remains committed to the operation of the colliery review procedure but is prepared to enhance that procedure. Furthermore, any pit proposed for closure by the Board can be examined through the amended procedure.

This is a package of proposals which is good for the miner, good for the mining industry and I am confident would be accepted by miners had they the opportunity of a ballot on these issues.

Strife and industrial action can only intensify the damage being done to pits and to markets for coal and therefore to the future of the miner and his family. I hope therefore that the miners union can be persuaded of the good sense of accepting the proposals made by ACAS earlier this month.

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