

File

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The Rt Hon Stan Orme MP  
House of Commons  
LONDON  
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31 October 1984

Dear Stan

Thank you for your letter of today's date dealing with the document that Arthur Scargill has waved in front of the media in the last 24 hours.

I must say Arthur Scargill is like a bus driver to the Labour Party. He takes you for a ride almost every day.

It was only a short time ago he embarrassed you by persuading you that the document which expressed his views represented the views of ACAS. I am sure it was not just the general public but you who recognised that the only documents he agreed with were the ones which reported his views.

Now Mr Scargill has got hold of documents prepared by NCB Engineers in the North East at the request of the Board, which provide factual information as to what will happen to the existing pits between now and the end of the century. Surprise, surprise, this document shows that many of the existing pits will be running out of coal in the 1990s. It really should not surprise you because as you well know during the last 11 years of Labour Governments 330 pits ran out of coal in accordance with decisions taken by those Governments.

This document has not been considered by regional management, nor the National Coal Board.

This is not a hit list document, it is an investment document. I am pleased to inform you that the Coal Board believe coal production in the North East needs to be maintained at the type of levels that exist today. So if the report of these engineers shows that existing pits will be running down during the 1990s, it means that some radical investment decisions will need to be taken by the NCB to maintain production levels.

As to your suggestion that this all took place after the NACODS meeting really! This report was asked for months ago. It has been prepared over the last 6 months.



I hope your Scargill-like mention of NACODS does not mean you are critical of the agreement they reached with the National Coal Board. The Labour Party are backing the wrong horse when they oppose the third of the British miners who voted against a strike in a democratic ballot; oppose NACODS who patiently negotiated their agreement; oppose BACM, the third mining union, who are totally against the strike; but support Scargill who not only goes against TUC guidelines on picketing but even his own union's guidelines on picketing, who refuses his members a ballot and who seeks financial support from Libya, the Soviet Union and Hungary.

You can always rely on the fact that when Arthur Scargill runs into difficulties he will produce some document and pretend that it is totally different to what it is. My only surprise is that what is described as the "alternative Government" is always taken in by his tactics.

With best wishes.

PETER WALKER