



CC MASTER SET

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

8 November 1984

Dear Michael,

MR. ROBERT MAXWELL

When Mr. Robert Maxwell called on the Prime Minister today to report on his visit to Ethiopia, he said that he would also like to say something about the coal strike. He re-asserted his support for the Government in resisting a settlement on Mr. Scargill's terms. He agreed that Mr. Scargill was an evil man who was doing damage to the trade unions, his members and his industry. Mr. Maxwell said that he was in close touch with the TUC leaders and had been in close touch with Mr. Scargill until a fortnight ago. Mr. Evans and Mr. Keys had been added to the TUC team advising on the strike. He said that, if the TUC were to ask for a meeting with Mr. Walker, he hoped that the Prime Minister would look favourably on this approach. The TUC were likely to be content with an assurance that the proposal for reducing capacity by 4 million tonnes had "faded away" and that the procedure involving the closure of uneconomic pits was in line with previous formulae. They would then be likely to put pressure on the NUM to reach a settlement by threatening to withdraw their support.

The Prime Minister said that these points had been dealt with in the NACODS agreement and the Coal Board could not go any further (Mr. Maxwell interrupted to say that he was thinking of an elucidation of the NACODS agreement and not a further negotiation). The Prime Minister said that she feared that, if the TUC had a meeting with the Government they would not be able to resist the temptation to negotiate. But, speaking frankly, she did not think that further negotiations of any sort were likely to be helpful at present. While negotiations were in process, miners hung back from returning to work. Since they had stopped, 2,000 had returned to work this week. It was better that the strike should end from a drift back to work because there would then be a less obvious distinction between those who had gone back to work against the instructions of their union and the rest.

Mr. Maxwell said that he had no doubt that if nothing was done the strike would crumble. But it would take two months. It would be a great prize to end it earlier. He was only asking that, if the TUC were to ask for a meeting

with Mr. Walker, it should be agreed to. He urged the Prime Minister to consider this carefully.

The Prime Minister said that of course she would consider what Mr. Maxwell had said but gave no indication that she was inclined to change her view.

Yours ever,

Robin Butler

Michael Reidy, Esq.,  
Department of Energy.