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'TUC WILL DO ALL IT CAN TO END STRIKE'

THE TUC IS TO DO EVERYTHING IT CAN TO GET TALKS RE-OPENED BETWEEN THE MINERS' UNION AND THE COAL BOARD IN AN ATTEMPT TO SETTLE THE PITS STRIKE, TUC GENERAL SECRETARY NORMAN WILLIS SAID TODAY.

SPEAKING AFTER A MEETING OF THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL, HE SAID HE DID NOT ENVISAGE AN EARLY APPROACH TO THE NCB.

'WE ARE NOT PROPOSING AT THE MOMENT TO APPROACH THE NATIONAL COAL BOARD, BUT WE ARE SOUNDING OUT IN ALL DIRECTIONS,' SAID MR WILLIS.

'IT DOES NOT LOOK FROM STATEMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE IN PUBLIC THAT THE BOARD, AT THE MOMENT, WANTS TO GO INTO NEGOTIATIONS. I FIND THAT REGRETTABLE.'

HE SAID THE NCB'S TACTIC OF PINNING HOPES FOR AN END TO THE STRIKE ON A SURGE BACK TO WORK HAD NOT SUCCEEDED. THE BOARD APPEARED STUCK ON A PARTICULAR LINE AND THE TUC WOULD BE SEEKING TO RE-OPEN NEGOTIATIONS.

MR WILLIS SAID THE TUC WOULD ALSO BE TALKING AGAIN TO NUM LEADERS.

THE TUC APPEARS TO BE WORKING AROUND THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATING A NEW PLAN FOR COAL, WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THE NUM TO TAKE A MORE FLEXIBLE LINE.

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MR TURNBULL

28 November 1984

COAL DISPUTE

Despite initial mishandling both the NCB and Peter Walker are now clearly on the record stating that jobs cannot be guaranteed where pits or faces are lost. There has been little adverse reaction. Indeed it is telling that Scargill's response had not been to escalate the issue but to try and mute it: saying that no pits would be lost and hence no jobs either. Having weathered the storm we should now go for more publicity on this point.

Without new impetus the diminishing level of returns make it inevitable that the strike will not end by this current drift back to work. North Derbyshire is the only field with a percentage working near the 50/50 split, all other fields have either less than 15% or more than 90%.

Next March most of the strikers will have been out for a year. They will then be told (incorrectly) that coal stocks are exhausted and if they can hold out to the following winter then victory will be secure. Their spirit will be reinforced by surviving the winter and by reaching such a landmark. We could be facing a distorted but real 'Dunkirk spirit' in the mining communities.

During the winter more faces and perhaps pits will have deteriorated and some will have been lost - many of those may be uneconomic pits, some will have been profitable ones. The cost will have mounted by further billions and the violence, intimidation and lawlessness become ingrained. At the same time our battles with the GLC and Metropolitan Councils will be beginning in earnest, and one can see the forces of darkness joining in a cause celebre.

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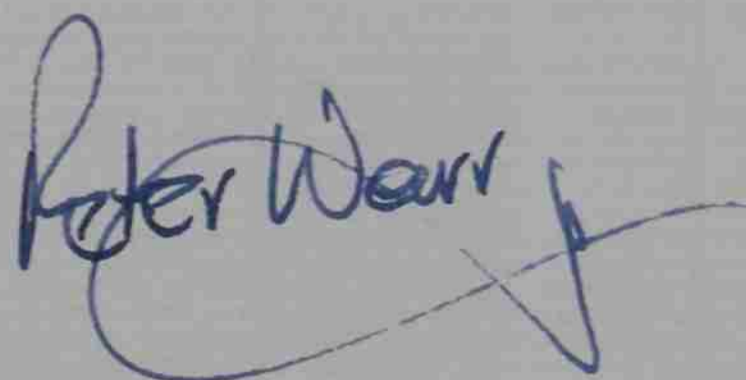
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No single factor is ever likely to persuade a striker to return. Money, despair of an end to the strike, fear of losing one's job if one does not return, and what one's workmates are doing or are expected to do must all be factors. The huge sums of redundancy pay did not prevent the strike starting and it is unlikely that far smaller sums will, on their own, get them back.

To get more miners back on this current wave we must warn that the stakes may have to rise. 21 faces have been lost, 84 are under threat, how many more yet to come? NACODS will complain, but unless they declare themselves against the Luddites thereby distancing themselves from Scargill, they have no case. The NCB must force Sampey out into the open. In any event ~~we~~^{they} cannot take strike action without a new ballot.

We must ask how any politician or the TUC can continue to support arson and near murder, and if they do, how can they expect their public to still support them? They can no longer pretend that this behaviour is merely an extension of an industrial dispute nor must they be allowed to support the dispute yet dissociate themselves from the violence. They are now one and the same.

The choice is between political trouble now or potentially much worse next year. —————



PETER WARRY

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