

SECRET

12/12/84

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PRIME MINISTER

TUC MEETING WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Sir Kenneth Couzens saw Mr. Graham and Mr. Marks of the TUC this evening.

The points which the TUC will put to Mr. Walker are similar to those put at their private meeting with him - the intransigence of the Government and the NCB; the solidity of the hard core of the strike; and the "Willis proposition", that there should be a return to work and a time-limited discussion of a new Plan for Coal.

Sir Kenneth Couzens asked why a public meeting had been proposed since the TUC would not be saying anything more than they had said in the private meeting. Graham and Marks indicated that the proposal had been put against the advice of the TUC officials and appeared simply to be a device to get the TUC through the next thirty-six hours or so, because they did not know what else to do.

Further discussion with Graham and Marks elicited that the TUC were thinking of achieving a settlement simply by not driving any of the current points of difference to an issue - "by stopping banging heads against brick walls". Sir Kenneth Couzens pointed out that there were also some "brick walls" on the NCB side, i.e. they must not be asked to withdraw the 6 March closure programme. There should be a return to the procedures which applied before the strike, probably with the enhancement agreed with NACODS. The TUC officials said that this was precisely what they were envisaging.

Sir Kenneth Couzens pointed out that any talks on this sort of basis would have to be between the NCB and the NUM, not between the TUC and the Government. The TUC officials acknowledged this, and said that the most that the TUC would be asking for was an assurance that the Government would not prevent the ^{NCB}~~TUC~~ from undertaking talks on this sort of basis.

Mr. Walker thinks that the meeting with the TUC should take place on Friday, not tomorrow, so that he can have a full twenty-four hours to prepare tactics. We have arranged for him to come in and see you for half-an-hour before Cabinet. You will want to discuss with him:

- a. what the tactics with the TUC should be.
- b. what should be said to Cabinet.

RB

12 December, 1984