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COAL BOARD TAKE ACTION ON INTIMIDATION

Mr. Ian MacGregor's Statement

National Coal Board Chairman Mr. Ian MacGregor stated today (Saturday):

The National Coal Board's management are carrying out their commitment to take resolute action to prevent intimidation against employees at work.

Throughout the NUM's strike I gave an assurance that we would safeguard the interests of working miners.

Our management will not tolerate any intimidation of individual workmen or groups of employees now that everyone is back at work.

Because of firm action already taken and the good sense of the overwhelming majority of miners, reported incidents of intimidation have been very few and they are getting less.

The fact is that in total they involve about one-tenth of one per cent of our workforce. Management's resolve to find the offenders and deal with them is absolute.



-2-

Strong disciplinary action will continue to be taken up to and including dismissal. For example:

- \* Five men have been dismissed at the Phurnacite Works in South Wales following incidents involving another workman.
- \* After an assault on a miner, four men were dismissed at Manvers Colliery, South Yorkshire, for gross industrial misconduct.
- \* For persistent verbal abuse of workmates, two men at South Kirkby Colliery, Barnsley, were at first warned and subsequently dismissed.
- \* The Board have a High Court injunction preventing 39 men dismissed in the Kent coalfield from entering the pit and "assaulting, molesting, abusing, intimidating or otherwise interfering with the Board's employees at or near their place of work."

There will be no hesitation to act against offenders but our local managers do need information to help trace the culprits.

One of the Kent working miners, who is leaving on voluntary redundancy, feels as strongly as I do about this distressing problem of intimidation, and also understands the difficulties in some cases.

3/Cont'd...



-3-

In a radio interview he said:

"It is not quite as easy as it sounds. You need hard evidence, facts... The difficulty is that people are reluctant to witness this sort of conduct towards fellow miners, so the management are obviously in a difficult position when it comes to disciplining people."

We want to act but we need facts.

In the Kent coalfield as soon as he heard the allegation that a miner had been hit on the head with a hammer while in the cage going down his pit, the colliery manager carried out a thorough investigation. Twenty people in the cage at the time were interviewed but in this case no-one identified the culprit.

Preventing or investigating assaults that take place outside the colliery must remain the responsibility of the police force and our managers work closely with them.

Free-phone services have been installed by us to help assure any working miners who may encounter problems outside working hours that local management are available to assist them. All they need do is leave a message and they will be contacted.

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-4-

The 'phone-in service has been helpful for miners in different coalfields - though few calls have so far been made to us.

Only in a few places have problems arisen. I am impressed by the ability of the vast majority of men in the industry to bury their differences.

Because of the commonsense of the people involved, good relations have been quickly restored at so many of our mines.

I urge anyone in the industry to tell his manager about any incident of physical or verbal abuse. It would also be helpful to have any positive information and evidence from reporters who are writing on this subject.

The National Coal Board are equally concerned to prevent any incidents of violence or intimidation to former working miners and striking miners.

Immediate action will be taken as soon as we get evidence that will enable us to deal with the offenders.

- end -

Press Office (2050)

April 13, 1985



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COAL INDUSTRY BILL AND MINeworkERS' PENSION SCHEME

Unfortunately, two wrong's don't make a right. It is iniquitous that of all the nationalised industries, the coal industry alone allows periods of strike to qualify for pension credit without the requirement for employees subsequently to make good their contributions.

Leaving aside the high principle of retrospection, it would seem tactically unwise to hand the Government's detractors the allegation of vindictiveness against miners at a time when the tide of events is running steadily in your favour. Attitudes are clearly ripe for change. The big prize is still a restructured coal industry established on sound commercial principles. The Luddites should be given no ammunition to hinder that process.

We would support Peter Walker in concluding that retrospective legislation is out, and that righting the wrong for the future is not an appropriate subject for a Bill to provide the finances needed by the NCB over the next two financial years. That is better left for inclusion in the general package of legislation relating to the restructuring of the coal industry. However, we suggest that the reply should make it clear that you will accept Peter Walker's proposal, provided that the NCB's EFL is tight.



JOHN WYBREW