



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

16 May 1985

The Prime Minister was very grateful to you for your letter of 8 May about Mr. and Mrs. Fjaelberg, about which she had a word with you on Monday morning.

The Prime Minister has noted and warmly applauds the firm action which the Board has taken to prevent intimidation and to protect the miners who supported the NCB by working during the strike, often at great cost and risk to themselves. She thinks it essential that the Board should stand by these employees.

Mrs. Thatcher also accepts that the Board cannot give financial help with transfers to all miners who exercised their right to work during the strike. Nevertheless she takes the view that the policy must be sufficiently flexible to allow assistance to be given to people who were prominent in leading their colleagues back to work and therefore are particularly vulnerable to reprisals by militant colleagues. The Prime Minister was therefore particularly glad to hear that you had a source of advice on the names of people who required such special help and would be making the necessary arrangements to provide it.

(Robin Butler)

Ian MacGregor, Esq.

CST

NATIONAL COAL BOARD  
HOBART HOUSE  
GROSVENOR PLACE  
LONDON SW1X 7AE

1. Mr. ~~Turnbull~~ 2  
2. Prime Minister

This fills me  
with misgiving. It seems  
a very inflexible policy

CHAIRMAN  
Ian MacGregor

Mr. Robin Butler,  
Principal Private Secretary,  
10, Downing Street,  
London, SW1.

Dear Mr. Butler,

Thank you for your letter of 15th April about Mr. and Mrs. Fjaelberg.

The essential facts are that Mr. Fjaelberg returned to work last November and, at the end of the strike, was one of five working miners at Cwm colliery. Two of the five are still working. Mr. Fjaelberg went sick on the second day after the strike ended and has been off sick ever since; I understand that he has recently been admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Of the other two "working miners", one went off sick in the third week after the strike, and one went sick two weeks ago.

You may be assured that the Board's local management have been taking, are taking, and will continue to take every possible step to prevent intimidation of any men who worked during the strike, including Mr. Fjaelberg. Indeed, I know that the Fjaelbergs, in particular, have received extremely sympathetic treatment from the Board's South Wales management, and there have been several meetings with both Mr. and Mrs. Fjaelberg, together with a lengthy exchange of correspondence. The Board remain ready to help the Fjaelbergs.

The key problem appears to have been that Mr. Fjaelberg has insisted on a paid transfer to another coalfield. The Board's policy is not to pursue formal transfers under their Long-Distance Transfer Scheme for two main reasons. Firstly, to arrange transfers of men who feel they are being intimidated in any way would be an admission that such tactics by the hard-core militants were succeeding. The Board are determined that this will not happen. Secondly, you will appreciate, I am sure, that it would not be possible to transfer all these men who returned to work before the end of the strike and who may have since decided they wish to transfer (nearly 30,000 men, in all, returned to work before the end of the dispute in "striking" Areas). The number of normal vacancies arising is very small compared with the potential demand for transfer; and vacancies cannot be created at will. In the Board's view it would be quite inappropriate, and unfair to make exceptions to permit a few men to transfer with allowances and not others. In these circumstances, therefore, the Board regard formal transfers as neither desirable or practicable.

01-235 2020  
We had better put people particularly at risk because they had a high profile during the 8th May, 1985 strike.  
I have in any case asked the Secretary of State for Energy's office for a general report but, in view of the situation described in the note Mr. Walker gave you this morning, this is proving difficult to produce.

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9.5.

Nevertheless, despite this policy, the Board's South Wales management did ascertain for Mr. Fjaelberg that there was a suitable vacancy available at Rufford colliery in North Nottinghamshire for which Mr. Fjaelberg could, if he wished, be considered - if he was prepared to move voluntarily. (A number of other "striking" miners have applied for and obtained jobs in other coalfields in this way - including one from Cynheidre - without any Board involvement at all). Mr. Fjaelberg was offered this possibility on 2nd April. He said, at that time, that he did not want to move to Rufford because it was too near Doncaster Area. He asked for a job in Leicestershire but unfortunately, there are no vacancies there because of the contraction in mining activity in that locality. Mr. Fjaelberg then apparently changed his mind and, on 11th April, said he would go to Rufford if the Board paid for the transfer. South Wales Area management explained they could not pay transfer allowances, in line with the policy applying throughout the industry (which I have described above). Unfortunately, because of the delay, North Nottinghamshire have since advised South Wales that they have now absorbed as many men as they can take, and the vacancy no longer exists. Mr. Fjaelberg has been so advised.

As I have said earlier in this letter, the Board remain ready and willing to help the Fjaelbergs as far as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ian MacLennan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

3006/5/85/L/037/AJP

NAT. IND: Goal: A-17.

VAT



-9 MAY 1985

*file*  
STRICTLY PERSONAL

BM



*CF your pps  
re the meeting  
of wives at No. 10?*

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

15 April 1985

*Kay 22/4*

*Dear Mr. MacGregor,*

The Prime Minister has asked me to write to you about the attached report in the Daily Telegraph of difficulties being encountered by Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Fjaelberg.

The Prime Minister knows that you are doing your utmost to help in a number of cases of this sort in which miners who went to work during the strike now feel themselves under threat. As you know, the Prime Minister feels strongly that those miners who stood by the Coal Board during the strike should now be looked after. The reason why she has asked me to write to you personally about this case is that Mrs. Fjaelberg was one of the three working miners' wives whom the Prime Minister received at 10 Downing Street and the Prime Minister therefore feels a particular personal commitment in this case.

I am copying this letter to Michael Reidy in the Secretary of State for Energy's office.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Robin Butler*

Ian MacGregor, Esq.  
Flat D  
54 Eaton Square,  
London SW1

STRICTLY PERSONAL

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## **MINER WHO DEFIED PICKETS CLAIMS 'BETRAYAL' BY NCB**

By *COLIN RANDALL*

**T**HE Coal Board was accused yesterday of turning its back on some of the miners who returned to work during the strike.

Mr Gordon Fjaelberg, 36, an underground repairer, who has been on sick leave for five weeks since complaining of serious intimidation by groups of returning strikers, has been offered a transfer from South Wales to Nottinghamshire.

But he said yesterday that he had been told by management there would be no question of Coal Board help toward the cost of moving house, put by Mr Fjaelberg and his wife at up to £5,000.

"After all the promises from the highest levels during the strike that our interests would be protected, I and other working miners are being not only let down but betrayed," said Mr Fjaelberg, who returned to work at Cwm Colliery, Beddan, near Pontypridd, Mid-Glamorgan, in November.

"We have been inundated with calls from other working miners who are seeking early retirement or voluntary redundancy, but find themselves being pushed from pillar to post, not knowing where they stand," he went on.

### **'Death threats'**

"Whoever is responsible, the Coal Board should realise they risk a much bigger backlash of resentment than ever there was against the NUM during the strike."

Mr Fjaelberg worked two shifts at his colliery after the strike ended, but described the atmosphere as "murderous."

His wife Jane, 28, who was prominent in two anti-strike miners' wives' committees, said: "I think we are just seen as a bloody nuisance."

"We are effectively being forced out of our house under duress because there is no way my husband can go on working at his present colliery now the NCB says it has reverted to normal policy, which is not to make transfer allowances."

"They seem totally unaware that these are no longer normal times."

"They never will be until they sort out the problem of working miners although out of the 99,000 who went back we are only talking about a small handful of difficult cases."

A Coal Board spokesman in South Wales said: "Mr Fjaelberg's case is under active consideration."

"With regard to men seeking redundancy, this is being offered at collieries where manpower is being reduced. We are examining manpower requirements at all our collieries."