

National Policy



West/End ✓

FROM: H C GOODMAN
Date: 17. December 1981

PARLIAMENTARY CLERK 128/2

cc. Mr. Locke,
Mr. R. Evans.

CPRS REPORT: CHANCELLOR'S MEETING WITH NI CHAIRMAN

The Chancellor met nationalised industry Chairmen on Wednesday afternoon to discuss the recommendations of the CPRS report.

2. No 10 may find it useful to have this press briefing:-

1. Scope of the CPRS report

The CPRS were invited to study the relationship between Government and the nationalised industries, with a view to establishing how this might be improved. It is strongly in the interest of both sides to secure a better mutual understanding and a greater unity of purpose.

2. Will the Report be published/shown to the Chairman?

The Report is an internal document, and it is not the practice to publish advice to Ministers. The Chairman have been sent, on a confidential basis, a summary of the conclusions as they affect the industries. [IF PRESSED: But we do not intend to show them the Report. The Chairman have been told of all the proposals that concern them.]

3. Why did the Chancellor see the Chairman?

The Chancellor agreed to discuss the Report's recommendations before the Government's decisions are announced. He is naturally concerned to secure the broadest possible base of agreement for implementing the various changes.

4. Will there be further meetings?

A sensible and constructive beginning was made today, and will continue. We are concerned that the process of consultation should be genuine, but there is much public interest in the Report, and we hope that an announcement will not be too long delayed.

5. What are the Report's main conclusions?

What are the Chairmen concerned about?

When final decisions have been taken, these will be announced in the usual way. It would not be appropriate in the meantime to pre-empt that announcement. The Chairmen naturally have an interest in the Report's main conclusions as these affect their industries, but we very much hope to reach voluntary agreement so far as possible. The Chairmen told us that there is much in the Report that they can endorse. We are seeking to build on that.

6. Why is the Government doing all this? To take over the running of the industries?

Not at all. One important general emphasis is the need to improve understanding of the industries as businesses, by developing expertise within Whitehall. This is essential if Departments are to do their job of monitoring and assessing the industries, as the public has a right to expect. But we do not intend to second-guess the industries' commercial judgement, which is and must remain a matter for the industries themselves.

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