



Prime Minister

10 DOWNING STREET

rus 12/1

The Right Honourable
Nigel Lawson, MP,
Department of Energy,
Thames House South,
Millbank,
London, SW1.

MS

12 January 1982

Dear Nigel,

Joe Egerton of Associated British Chambers of Commerce rang me.

(a Bow Group)

He says that many ABCC members use some mixture of supplies of gas and oil. Oil is often brought by rail tankers, and is therefore liable to interruption by ASLEF.

A number of his members are saying that their dependence on these oil deliveries is closely related to supplies of gas. Often they have interruptible contracts with British Gas. They are hoping that British Gas will do everything in its power not to exercise its right to interrupt supplies over the next few weeks. If British Gas is able to do this, it will reduce industry's vulnerability to the ASLEF action.

Massey Ferguson was one of the companies that had made this point. Apparently they, and the ABCC, are worried about the best way of putting this point to Government. Egerton seemed to think that if he simply rang the Department of Energy, officials might let the information slip into the hands of the press or direct to Ray Buckton. (I tried to disabuse him.)

He has therefore told John McGregor's office (apparently he trusts the officials there!) and now he has told me. He hopes you can encourage British Gas not to interrupt supplies over the next few weeks.

I imagine that British Gas in fact have a well-defined system for prioritising, within which interruptions only take place when they have to.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and to David Howell.

Yours etc,
John

JOHN HOSKYNS