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(2)

Prime Minister

MS.

PRIME MINISTER

Relevant to the meeting we have  
arranged at 1715 on Tuesday; McLachlan  
is now expected to report on Tuesday  
morning.

Ms 12/2

NCB ROAD DELIVERIES TO POWER STATIONS

At yesterday's meeting I undertook to let you have a note about the meeting of the NUM National Executive Committee that same day to discuss what support the NUM should give to ASLEF, in particular by preventing the delivery of coal to the power stations by road.

The outcome was reasonably satisfactory. Joe Gormley stressed that the NUM were concerned lest the ASLEF action led to the closure of pits, as pithead coal stocks reach capacity levels. Having voted against a strike, the miners clearly do not want to lose substantial sums of pay because of the ASLEF disruption. It is helpful that the NUM will be meeting all three rail unions next week, as this will ensure that the NUR continue to urge the NUM not to take any drastic action in support of ASLEF. Joe Gormley will use the occasion to play the NUR off against ASLEF.

The Coal Board's preliminary assessment of yesterday's NUM meeting is that they would expect to be able to maintain existing levels of deliveries by road to the CEEB and SSEB in the coming week, ie some 250,000 tonnes to the CEEB and 28,000 tonnes to SSEB. They would hope to be able to improve on this level during the week after next. Deliveries of coal by other modes of transport are unlikely to be affected.

The Board have promised to keep me informed of their assessment as the position develops and notably after next week's meeting between the NUM and the three rail unions. They emphasise that the situation can change in pits from day to day, and even from shift to shift. They therefore suggest that too much attention should not be paid to press reports on developments at individual pits.

I would add that the Board have assured me there is no possibility of their agreeing to the suggestion of a Welsh NUM official, recorded on the tapes, that coal would be moved to temporary stock piles and then returned to collieries after

the dispute had ended. When facilities for stocking coal at the pits are full the men will be transferred to other work, eg maintenance and new drivages. If necessary the Board are prepared to close down pits, although this seems unlikely to happen in the near future.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Scotland, Industry, Transport and Employment and to Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Ibbs.

*Anthony Chadwick*

Secretary of State for Energy  
(Approved by the Secretary of State  
and signed in his absence)

12 February 1982