

Prime Minister

TRANSFER OF WORKING MINERS TO THE SELBY COALFIELD

I had a word in the House of Commons on 4th June with a Mr Ron Catherall, an ex-miner and an active Conservative Trade Unionist, and another NUM working miner whom he brought to introduce to me. The latter is Mr T W Hudson, Training Officer at the Stillingfleet Mine, Selby and a member of NUM/COSA. It is about him that I wish to report to you. Mr Hudson happens also to be a Selby constituent of mine.

Mr Hudson was the individual principally involved in securing the return to work of 83% of miners in the Selby area before the strike ended. He is an intelligent man with a considerable grasp of detailed manpower and organisational matters in the coal industry. He expounded to me an imaginative plan for transferring to the Selby Coalfield a number of working miners - he estimated them at about 750 nationally - who are at present more or less subject to harrassment or intimidation in their existing pits and homes.

The strategy underlining his idea is based on the fact that the NUM militant leadership is doing its best, with some local NCB managerial collusion (he gave me examples) to build up militant NUM branches and leadership in the Selby coalfield, recognising this coalfield's potentially decisive role in future coal production and hence in future coal strikes and stoppages. Mr Hudson's vision is one of

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turning Selby into a predominantly moderate coalfield, by putting into it a large leaven of as many working miners from the 1984/85 dispute as possible.

The question arises: is it practicable systematically to transfer large numbers of working miners - as many as 750 - without a scandal or disruption? Mr Hudson believes that it is. The detailed plan is as follows:-

The Selby coalfield complex will ultimately employ 4,000 miners. At present some 2000 have been taken on. There is thus ample room for growth. There are six individual pits in the Selby complex, with separate colliery managers and separate NUM branches. One of these individual pits - North Selby - has only 12 men on its books (too few, incidentally, for an NUM branch to be constitutionally set up). But North Selby has a design capacity for 780 men.

Mr Hudson's proposal is that working miners subject to harrassment in Yorkshire and elsewhere should be transferred to the books of North Selby, and then seconded temporarily from there to other Yorkshire pits whilst North Selby builds up its own requirements. This is recognised practice, and already occurs with the dozen or so men already on North Selby books.

I attach separately some added practical questions and answers about this idea and possible objections to it, which Mr Hudson provided for me.

I have minuted you in this detail and at this length to strengthen your hand in pressure you may wish to bring to bear upon the NCB Chairman and the Secretary of State. Mr Hudson is

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already sent me a number of names of working miners who are being made compulsorily redundant in the Yorkshire coalfield. probably as a result of ^{managerial} collusion with local NUM militants. Such men could and should be transferred to the Selby coalfield.

We are at a critical juncture in relation to human perceptions and attitudes in the coal industry, following the historic dispute. There could well be born a new tradition amongst many miners of looking naturally to the Conservative Party for support and protection, as earlier generations looked to Labour. But this new tradition could prove to be stillborn. You are the catalyst - or the midwife - for change. The working miners are asking the questions "Can she deliver?". I believe that some sort of continued pressure by you to protect the working miners will make certain that the answer is "Yes"!



MICHAEL ALISON
10.6.85

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON TRANSFERRING WORKING MINERS
TO NORTH SELBY

Question: Would not the NUM and its branches notice if a mass transfer to North Selby took place?

Answer: Transfers would have to involve a few at a time with the worst hit cases of intimidation first. The selection procedure would have to involve very few people for security reasons: Mike Eaton and Mr Hudson and Mr Catherall could do all the work that was necessary.

Question: Would not the NUM branches at the collieries which working miners had been transferred from notice that those people had left, and pursue the vendetta to other branches?

Answer: There is no NUM branch at North Selby at present and working miners transferred there could establish their own branch there, with their own elections and hence prevent interference.

Question: The existing Industrial Relations Department of the North Yorkshire Area of the NCB would have to make all the transfer arrangements: would there not be a leak from Management to the NUM about the proposed arrangements?

Answer: There is a lot of collusion between NCB colliery management and local NUM officials, and it would be necessary to by-pass the normal Industrial Relations officers at NCB Headquarters in North Yorkshire. The by-passing could be done by the creation of a Special Manpower Officer

for the Selby project, with the direct responsibility to Mike Eaton or to his reliable Deputy, Mr Tuke.

It would be the responsibility of this Special Manpower Officer to guarantee the transfer of working miners to North Selby, and organise their temporary secondment from North Selby to other local mines as manpower requirements dictated.

Question: What would happen to the training records of those who were transferred? Normally these have to be sent to any new location where a transferred miner might be working.

Answer: The relevant training records should all be sent to Hobart House. The Selby Manpower Officer would collect them from there or they could be given to each transferred miner in a sealed envelopped for him to take with him.

Question: How would the housing needs of large numbers of working miners be met?

Answer: Rentable property would need to be made temporarily available to incoming miners but there is plenty of owner-occupied property to be purchased in the Selby area, if the Board could provide mortgage assistance (for which they in any case have existing arrangements and facilities, partly with European Community assistance).

Question: What about the cost of transfer as it might affect an individual working miner?

Answer:

Substantial and beneficial transfer arrangements already exist within the mining industry and are made available in any case when there is a colliery closure. This could be made available for these special transfers to North Selby.