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Prime Minister (2)  
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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY  
THAMES HOUSE SOUTH  
MILLBANK LONDON SW1P 4QJ  
01 211 7214

Andrew Turnbull Esq  
Private Secretary to the  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

4 December 1984

Dear Andrew

Mr Walker has asked me to send you the attached note of the telephone conversation which he had this morning with Norman Willis of the TUC.

A copy goes to David Normington in Tom King's office.

*Yours sincerely  
M F Reidy*

M F REIDY  
Private Secretary

SECRET



NOTE OF THE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR ENERGY AND TUC GENERAL SECRETARY, MR NORMAN WILLIS, TUESDAY  
4 DECEMBER

Mr Willis phoned at 10.00 am. He said he was meeting six TUC general council colleagues at 6.30 pm, to discuss the coal dispute. On Thursday at 11.30 am they in turn were meeting the NUM. These meetings had been scheduled since last week.

He said that at the 6.30 meeting the TUC might decide to seek a discussion, tomorrow, with the Secretary of State.

Mr Willis said he sensed some general indication that the March 6 proposals and 'five pits' issue could be settled in the light of changes that had occurred since e.g. production losses since the strike began. But both parties had never moved at the same time.

More generally, however, there was the question of the industry's future as outlined in "Plan for Coal". He believed there were a number of misunderstandings in this area. On the union side many felt Government sources were pouring cold water on the idea of revising the Plan. He suspected that the Government might regard as premature any discussions about the Plan before there had been a general return to work. He suggested, however, that if there could be some discussion of capacity targets, and other matters relevant to the Plan, this might encourage a solution to the dispute. It might then be possible to agree a return to work on the basis that such discussions were to take place.

The Secretary of State replied that if Mr Willis and his colleagues wanted to talk formally or informally he would of course gladly see them.

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The Board's deal with NACODS showed what could be achieved between reasonable men. Indeed, he was confident that under the NUM's former leader, Joe Gormley, there could have been a constructive dialogue between the Board and the NUM leading to a solution acceptable to both sides. The Board made a good offer to miners and was doing everything possible to secure the future for the benefit of all employed in the industry. But Mr Scargill was determined not to recognise this.

The Secretary of State pointed out that, at the outset of the dispute, the Coal Board had offered wide ranging talks on the wider issues. These had not taken place because of Mr Scargill's repeated refusal to discuss pit closures or manpower reductions. His intransigence - which he had deliberately made the hallmark of his public campaign - precluded reasonable discussion and negotiation. There could be no point in both sides entering further talks which were doomed to failure.

A further factor was Mr Scargill's completely false claim that the Board had a hit list of 70 pits. Again he had repeated this falsehood many times in public, causing much unnecessary anguish in mining communities. There was no hit list. Moreover the Board were actively interested in expanding low cost production with a view to preserving jobs. No closure would be implemented unless and until the full review procedure had been completed. The procedure would in future provide for an independent review body to give advice as agreed between the Board and NACODS. There could not be a more reasonable or conciliatory way to conduct business.

Mr Willis said he could not discuss Mr Scargill's negotiating tactics. He was anxious to see the industry get back to work and he believed there were many other examples of settlements which had taken place after the union leaders concerned had made intransigent statements. Pressed by the Secretary of State he

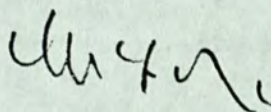


said he recognised the problem about Scargill's attitude. He would not attempt to defend it.

The Secretary of State said neither the Government nor the Board had sought the dispute. They were anxious that, in the industry's own interest, it should get back to work as quickly as possible. It was clear from the ballots that had taken place within the industry that mining communities wished to see an end to a strike for which they could see no industrial justification. He therefore deeply regretted that the NUM persisted in its determination to prolong an undemocratically called dispute.

The Secretary of State repeated that he would be glad to see the TUC, formally or informally, if they so requested.

Mr Willis said he was grateful for this.



M F REIDY  
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4 December 1984



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