

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Walker and Mr. King, each accompanied by one official, had a two hour meeting with the TUC "Gang of Seven" this evening. Both sides agreed that the meeting should be kept secret. Mr. Walker will not refer to this meeting at Cabinet tomorrow but will be prepared to give you an account in the margins of Cabinet or E(A).

His general impression was that they did not know what to do to get the strike settled. They were talking about getting the miners to return to work on the basis of an agreement that a new Plan for Coal would be discussed over the next few months: the TUC would lend their influence to making a success of these talks. Mr. Walker pointed out that such a proposition would probably not be negotiable with Scargill: he had made one demand throughout the strike and, unless he were prepared to drop it, negotiations for a settlement with the NCB on the lines suggested would not be successful. The TUC acknowledged that this might well be the case.

The meeting provided Mr. Walker with an opportunity to take them through the history of the dispute. He felt that this made an impact. Willis performed better than previously, and the two left-wingers (presumably Buckton and Moss Evans) were out-argued and did not appear to cut much ice with their colleagues. The position at the end of the meeting was that the TUC are to meet the NUM tomorrow (whom they will not tell about the meeting with Mr. Walker) and may ask for a further meeting with Mr. Walker and Mr. King thereafter.

F.R.B.

5 December 1984