



10 DOWNING STREET

bc P. Warry
R. Hatfield

From the Private Secretary

6 June 1985

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LEGISLATION: NUM RULE BOOK

The Prime Minister held a meeting today to discuss the NUM rule book and its implications for future industrial relations legislation. Present were the Secretaries of State for Energy, Trade and Industry and Employment and the Attorney General. Also present was Mr Warry.

The Secretary of State for Employment said that if the rule book were passed it would contain a number of offensive provisions. He did not think Ministers could campaign against it nor could the Government introduce legislation pre-emptively but it should itself be in a position to react quickly if necessary. The Secretary of State for the Environment said it was unclear whether the rule book would be adopted. The NCB had initially expected it to be defeated but now felt that it might succeed but that this would produce a split in the union. If this did occur it would be desirable for other productive pits such as Selby to be allied to the moderates.

In discussion, it was noted that the draft rules would allow the NUM executive to call any strike short of a full national strike without a ballot. This would not be prevented by the 1984 legislation though such strikes would not attract immunity. Another worrying development was that men no longer working in the coal industry were allowed to be members and to vote in ballots, though to secure immunity a strike ballot had to be confined to those being called out. Other features of the rule book attempted to oust common law rights.

The Prime Minister thought that unions should enjoy immunities only if their rule book conformed to certain principles (it was noted that the 1984 Act made a start in this direction). The Government could set out model rules for unions, analagous to Table 'A' rules for companies. This would entrench rights for individual members and prevent them from being oppressed by the union. It was noted, however, that it would be impossible in such model rules to anticipate every abuse.

Summing up the discussion, the Prime Minister said it was not clear whether the new NUM rule book would be adopted but work should start now against that contingency. The Department of Employment, in consultation with the Solicitor General, should prepare a paper setting out model rules to which union rule books would have to conform if immunities were to be retained. Before discussion was widened to consider all the issues raised in the Secretary of State for Employment's paper of 5 June, the group should reconvene in about two weeks to consider the paper on model rules.

I am copying this letter to Geoff Dart (Department of Energy), John Mogg (Department of Trade and Industry) and Henry Steel (Law Officers' Department). I would be grateful if this letter and work stemming from it were confined to those who strictly need to be involved.

Your sincerely

Andrew Turnbull

Andrew Turnbull

David Normington Esq
Department of the Employment

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