

CONFIDENTIAL

J.D. QADE

File



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

25 July, 1985.

Following my reminder of 18 July, the Chairman of the National Coal Board has now replied to the Prime Minister's letter of 13 June about intimidation of working miners, and I attach a copy of that reply. The reply is not entirely satisfactory, and in particular does not deal with the machinery which the NCB have established to deal with these cases. Nevertheless, unless your Secretary of State advises to the contrary, the Prime Minister is not inclined to take further action unless or until there is new evidence that the NCB are failing to deal adequately with this problem.

I should report that my written reminder to Mr. MacGregor produced a telephone message from his secretary to the effect that Mr. MacGregor thought that he had answered the Prime Minister's letter through his earlier telephone conversation with me: she asked whether it would be satisfactory if Mr. MacGregor simply wrote down what he had said in that conversation. I said that, on the contrary, Mr. MacGregor had assured me in the conversation that he would be replying in writing, and that, since the Prime Minister continued to attach great importance to this matter, it was essential that the contents of the reply should reassure the Prime Minister that the Coal Board were making adequate arrangements to deal with these cases.

F.E.R. Butler

Geoff Dart, Esq.,
Department of Energy.

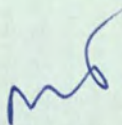
CONFIDENTIAL

SPW

PRIME MINISTER

You asked me last week to send a written reminder to Mr. MacGregor about a reply to your letter of 13 June. The reply has now arrived. It is pretty curt, and not very satisfactory and it does not deal with the arrangements which the NCB are making. But I doubt whether it is worth taking further action on it unless or until there is new evidence that the NCB are failing to deal with this problem adequately.

My written reminder to Mr. MacGregor (flag A) produced a further extraordinary exchange. His Secretary rang up and said that Mr. MacGregor thought he had answered the letter by his conversation with me when I had first reminded him of it. He asked whether it would be satisfactory if he simply wrote down the contents of that conversation. I reminded him that in that conversation he had assured me that he was going to reply in writing, and I said that, since you continued to attach great importance to this matter, the contents of the reply should be positive and constructive. Further evidence that Mr. MacGregor is not now an easy or consistent person to have dealings with!



F.R.B.

24 July 1985