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PRIME MINISTER

NOTTS MINERS

Mr Cowan paid a farewell call on Mr Walker yesterday. Mr Walker wanted you to be informed about one point from the conversation.

Cowan said that the Coal Board (or at least a part of the Board) felt they should recognise the Notts breakaway NUM members as a new union and start negotiations with them now. Cowan said that support for the breakaway union was ebbing away and some members of the Board thought it needed bolstering.

Mr Walker pointed to the risks. The breakaway members had not yet held a ballot or received their certification. A more famous member of the NUM had already come to grief in part through not having held a ballot. Mr Scargill might take the breakaway union to court and if they lost it would be a disaster.

Cowan in reply said that there was a school of thought that the July ballot on the rule changes was adequate to allow the new union to be set up.

Lawyers representing the Board and the Notts men are to meet on Monday. Lawyers from Department of Energy and Department of Employment will be working over the weekend to consider what advice they can give.

The Board have as yet taken no decisions.

COMMENT

The Secretary of State seems fully aware of the risks in the

course of action the Board are considering. Unless you have more specific comments, I would emphasise on Monday to Department of Energy your concern that the Board should not act precipitately.

Duty Clerk

PP David Norgrove
20 September 1985