

MJDBEW



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 October 1985

EMLEY MOOR DRIFT MINE

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The Prime Minister has seen a report that the NCB have told miners from Emley Moor Drift Mine that they cannot buy their pit when it closes at the end of December. The Prime Minister has asked that this should be investigated and would welcome an urgent report. (The possibility of a buy out at Emley Moor was raised with the Prime Minister in the House in May - Hansard extract attached.)

David Norgrove

Geoff Dart Esq
Department of Energy

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Mr. Steel: In contemplating last month's rise in inflation and the steady rise in unemployment, do any of the right hon. Lady's advisers ever suggest that what needs changing is not her voice but her policies?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will note that the Government whom he supported through thick and thin, and whose existence he prolonged, never reached as low a level of inflation as 6.9 per cent.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to encourage the chairman of the National Coal Board to give permission to that group of miners that wishes to invest its own money to finance and work their own pit? Does she not agree that, as they will be producing mainly for the domestic market, there can be no logical reason for stopping that sensible extension of private enterprise?

The Prime Minister: I read the reports that a number of miners in Emley Moor colliery wanted to set up a miners' co-operative. I am sure that the NCB will consider carefully any proposals that the group may put forward. The Secretary of State for Energy and I recognise that some miners may want a more direct stake in their collieries, and that is a development that we would welcome in principle. We shall do everything to help.

Mr. Kinnock: As the Prime Minister said, the inflation rate is 6.9 per cent. Does she still think that it will go down to her promised target of 3 per cent?

The Prime Minister: As I said, the inflation rate is 6.9 per cent., which is below — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] It is below the lowest that the previous Labour Government ever managed to achieve. As the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already said, we expect it to be back at just over 5 per cent. by the end of the year, and then to continue its further route downwards.

Mr. Kinnock: May I ask the Prime Minister again: does she still think that the inflation rate will reach her promised target of 3 per cent., and if so, when will that occur? What changes in policy will the Prime Minister bring about to try to promote that, or is she really once again trying to con the country on inflation, as she tried to do on unemployment?

The Prime Minister: As I said, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already said that we expect the rate to reach around 5 per cent. by the end of the year, and to be lower still in 1986. [Interruption.] Yes, I do want it lower still. Yes, I do want it at 3 per cent., and below. It is the right hon. Gentleman whose policies would take it right up to 27 per cent., which was the record reached under Labour.

Mr. Kinnock: When is the rate going to reach 3 per cent., or is the right hon. Lady copping out on this one again?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is talking his customary nonsense. We have a target of getting inflation down. The right hon. Gentleman's target would take inflation beyond the 27 per cent. that the previous Labour Government reached.

Food Aid

Q4. Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister what progress has been made in implementing the plans agreed

at the Dublin Common Market summit on the transporting of food aid from Common Market stockpiles to Ethiopia and Sudan; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Ethiopia has received about 144,000 tonnes of cereals from the European Community and its member states since the beginning of this year, and Sudan about 93,000 tonnes. Sudan has also received about £8 million worth of other food from the Community.

Mr. Taylor: In view of the highly publicised pledge by the Dublin summit to deliver 1.2 million tonnes of food aid to the drought areas of Africa, including Ethiopia, before the autumn harvest of 1985, is it not disappointing and disturbing that the total amount actually delivered to Ethiopia so far, with only five months to go, is 144,000 tonnes, which is less than the amount that we send to the Soviet Union and east Europe every week? Will the Prime Minister do all in her power to ensure that the Common Market keeps its pledge to assist starving Africa, particularly when other countries such as the United States have responded magnificently and promptly?

The Prime Minister: Yes. As I told my hon. Friend in a previous reply, progress has been slower than we would have wished, but the matter has been taken up with the European Commission. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will take it up once again in Brussels at the meeting on 23 May. We are anxious that the process of food arriving there is speeded up. There are problems of distribution when it gets there, which also need attention.

Engagements

Q5. Mr. Flannery: asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Flannery: Will the Prime Minister, for once, emerge from her cast-iron casing and admit that she and she alone is preventing a solution to the teachers' industrial dispute? Will she admit that she ordered her Secretary of State to use the 15 votes on the Burnham committee and on the employers' panel to block two proposals which were reasonably acceptable and might have helped solve the teachers' strike? When will she realise that the teachers are desperate, their morale is low and that it is affecting the children? It is not the teachers, but the Prime Minister and her Secretary of State who are harming our children.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has always made it clear that the Government are not able to make available additional resources in 1985-86. However, for the longer term he has also made it clear that if employers and teachers come to him with an affordable package involving both pay and conditions of service he will be willing to put it to his colleagues. The proposition that teachers are prepared to discuss pay but not what they are being paid for is absurd.

Mr. Aitken: Has my right hon. Friend found time today to see press reports of a survey which show that 76 per cent. of the public wish to see the proceedings of this House televised? Can she — [HON. MEMBERS: "Declare your interest."]