

1 (week-end)

Thank you very

much. We must

take this, while

there is still time

no

PRIME MINISTERSECOND REPORT ON LESSONS OF THE MINERS' STRIKE

Sir Robert Armstrong has now sent you the Second Report on Lessons of the Miners' Strike. He invites comments from other Ministers, but believes it may not be necessary for you to have a meeting on it, other than the meeting about physical endurance which is already in prospect (fixed for 19 December).

The report is interesting, but it has an air of complacency. It lacks urgency. You have referred to the risk that the miners may strike again in 1986-87. Ministers and officials ought to be working actively now to ensure that if this happens it will be defeated more quickly and at lower cost.

This should also be a central concern of the NCB. But there is a risk that over the coming nine months Ian MacGregor will not have the interest, and Sir Robert Haslam will not have the power. (The Department of Energy itself will have the Gas Bill to take through 'the House.)

Immediate questions might include:-

(a) The report argues (top of page 4) that the perception of the way working miners have been treated may have the effect in any future dispute of discouraging men outside the traditionally moderate areas from crossing picket lines. What can and should the NCB be doing to counter this perception?

(b) It also argues that in the medium term the greatest influence on militancy will be the outcome of the various moves towards break-away unions. The NCB have rightly made the running on handling the UDM. What are the prospects? What should the Government (Departments of Energy and Employment) be doing, if anything?

✓ (c) The report points to the promise offered by the restructuring of performance incentives (page 5). Are the NCB moving quickly enough?

✓ (d) The report describes (page 5) the action being taken to weaken NACODS. Are the timing and tactics of this being handled with proper attention to the need to avoid forcing NACODS into the NUM camp in any confrontation next winter? The NCB are taking some measures. What more might be done before 1988, unprovocatively?

✓ (e) It refers to the problems caused by multi-issue ballots and quotes NACODS' of September 1984, but argues that this has been the only such case. But why shouldn't it be done again deliberately, and should action be taken to stop it?

✓ (f) Paragraph 13 says that the Widdicombe Inquiry is expected to report in late Spring 1986 on matters relevant to local authorities' scope for providing financial assistance to strikers and their families. Should the Government anyway be looking towards legislation on this early in the 1986-87 session?

The last two points can be picked up in a wrap-up minute to RTA once other Ministers have commented. Agree to write to Mr Walker about the other four points? *Yes*

The Chancellor's ideas on the coal industry in the medium to longer term are also still outstanding. These could be picked up again in the context of the NCB corporate plan (expected before Christmas). That will also be the time to consider what objectives to set for Sir Robert Haslam.

DLG
David Norgrove
28 November 1985