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Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

12 December 1985

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The Rt Hon Peter Walker MP
Secretary of State for Energy
Department of Energy
Thames House South
Millbank
LONDON
SW1

Peter

LESSONS OF THE MINERS STRIKE : INTIMIDATION

My office has already indicated to No 10 that I am generally content with the conclusions of the Second Report on Lessons of the Miners Strike, circulated with Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 25 November. There is however one point which I wanted to follow up with you, arising in part out of non-Departmental correspondence which you have seen. This concerns the problem of intimidation of working or early-returning miners.

2 You have already written to me saying that you have asked Ian MacGregor for his comments on letters sent to me by one of our past candidates in South Wales concerning the treatment received by working miners in South Wales from the area NCB. I am content that the details of the particular case should be followed up between us in the normal way. But unless the claims are shown to be unfounded, or a completely isolated instance - neither of which seem to me likely, knowing my correspondent - I remain very concerned about the implications of what seems to be continuing victimisation of working miners, allegedly with at least the acquiescence of the National Coal Board at local level.

3 There are undoubtedly difficult questions. The report by officials noted (at paragraph 5b) the difficulties that would have attended wholesale transfer of working miners away from militant areas. But the tone of the report, suggests that, after a perhaps inevitable initial period of attrition the incidence of intimidation had quite quickly fallen away, and that transfers had been arranged for remaining hard cases. I obviously do not want to build too much upon one report, however well attested. But if significant problems do remain, there are two powerful reasons why we need to be sure that they can be resolved.

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4 The first is the simple humanitarian point that the Government and the nation benefitted considerably by these individuals' action, which we obviously encouraged at the time. They presumably did what they did in the knowledge that there would be at least considerable social pressures on them as a result, and probably worse. The Government could not have sought to guarantee them against future difficulties - any more than we could step in with financial help to business affected by the miners' strike action. But we and the NCB must have some continuing responsibility for alleviating the worst cases.

5 The second point is clearly identified in the officials' report : the readiness of individuals in any future dispute to act as many did last time, and as we should want them to, could well be affected by others' experience after this dispute. This could in turn affect the seriousness of any future industrial difficulties. And short of that eventuality, unresolved problems could perhaps harden moderate opinion within the more militant areas.

6 I should be glad to know how you see this, and in particular whether you and Douglas Hurd feel that all has been done that needs to be regarding the transfer of remaining difficult cases and action against those responsible for criminal acts against those staying in their communities.

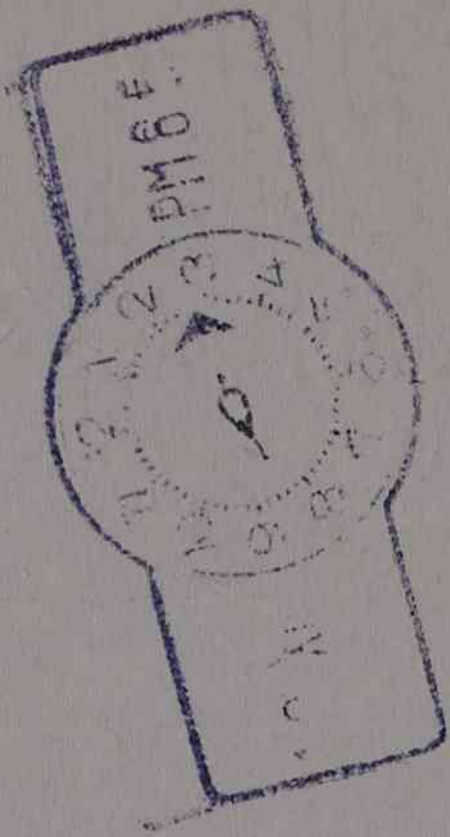
7 I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Scotland, Wales, Employment and Transport, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Attorney General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

LEON BRITTAN

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QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

2 January 1986

Prime Minister 2

DRS
2/1 mb

Dear Leon.

LESSONS OF THE MINERS' STRIKE: INTIMIDATION

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 12 December to Peter Walker. You asked if I felt that all had been done that needed to be done regarding criminal acts against working and early-returning miners who have stayed in their communities.

I have had enquiries made of a number of Chief Constables whose force areas were most affected by the dispute. Generally speaking, conditions seem on the surface to have returned to normality, and in the last two or three months very few incidents of intimidation have come to the notice of the police. There have been isolated cases of damage to cars and of window-breaking, but evidence on which to base prosecutions is hard to come by, and no doubt there are incidents which are not reported to the police. I am assured that the police do continue to take reports of intimidation very seriously indeed.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Energy, Defence, Scotland, Wales, Transport and Employment, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Attorney General, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours,
Douglas.

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan, QC., MP.

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