PRIME MINISTER

OK - but prepare suitable reply, pse.
f.ce.1.

Alan Meale has a Ten Minute Rule Bill tomorrow on coal mining subsidence. It will be taken straight after Questions (or after any statement on Lithuania). The risk is therefore that it could still be in prime time TV coverage. The Government announced on Friday that it is to bring forward its own Bill to compensate those affected by coal mining subsidence. We need to ensure that this fact also gets media coverage. The Chief Whip would like your agreement on how he proposes to handle it.

It would be possible to get someone up to oppose the Meale Bill. But that would prolong the discussion and would delay the Gulf debate. The Speaker does not like this tactic and would be tetchy. The same consideration applies to a manufactured Point of Order.

The best course therefore would be to persuade The Speaker to call Andy Stewart MP during PM's Questions to ask you about it (we will let you have a form of words tomorrow). That would mean a Conservative MP gets the credit for being seen successfully to press for the Bill's introduction and sets the media coverage of Meale's Bill in context. Content with this approach?

If you are happy for us to proceed on that basis we will also speak to Brian Curtois who does the commentary for "Parliament Live" to ensure that he is properly briefed on what the Government has done.

DM

(DOMINIC MORRIS)

14 January 1991

c:\parly\meale (ecl)

TJS/aw

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

14 January 1991

Dear Dominic,

**COAL MINING SUBSIDENCE BILL**

As you know, we have been treating this Bill as "first reserve" for the current session's programme. Because of a Ten Minute Rule Bill put down by Andrew Meale MP put down for tomorrow, which ran the risk of our losing the presentational advantage on this issue, we have, with the Secretary of State for Energy's agreement, announced that there will be a Bill this session. I enclose a copy of our Press Release, issued last Friday and covering an exchange of letters between Andy Stewart MP and the Lord President.

This leaves us with the question of how to handle Andrew Meale's Ten Minute Rule Bill tomorrow. We have decided not to put someone up to speak against it on the grounds that we will be introducing our own Bill, since that will then lead to the Bill being divided on and hold up tomorrow's debate. Equally, we want to ensure that the Government's intention to bring forward its own Bill is picked up by the media tomorrow.

The best way of doing this would seem to be a planted question from Andy Stewart at Prime Minister's Questions tomorrow, drawing attention to the announcement of the plan to legislate.

If you are content that we proceed in this way, let me know and we can liaise with Department of Energy on forms of words for the question and the Prime Minister's response.

Copies of this letter go to John Neilson in Department of Energy and to Murdo Maclean.

Yours ever,

T. Sutton

**T J SUTTON**
Principal Private Secretary

Dominic Morris Esq
PS/Prime Minister

LPO 1/91
11 January 1991

**GOVERNMENT TO PUBLISH BILL ON MINING SUBSIDENCE, SAYS JOHN MACGREGOR**

The Government is to introduce a Bill in this Parliamentary session dealing with problems caused by coal-mining subsidence, John MacGregor, Lord President of the Council, announced today.

Responding to a letter from Andy Stewart, MP for Sherwood, who has been pressing for legislation on mining subsidence, Mr MacGregor said that the Energy Secretary John Wakeham proposes to publish a Bill in the near future.

Mr MacGregor said, "I am sure that people affected by subsidence will welcome the Bill as a fitting conclusion to the campaign you have mounted, with other Members in the Midlands with constituencies in coal-mining areas, over a number of years on their behalf."

**Note to Editors:**

Copies of the correspondence between Mr Stewart and the Lord President are attached.

Further details of the Coal-mining Subsidence Bill will be available from the Department of Energy when it is introduced to Parliament.

Issued by Cabinet Office Press Office on behalf of The Lord President's Office. For further information please contact Jonathan Lawson or John Hilton on 071 270 6370 or 6356.

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL. LONDON SW1A 2AT

11 January 1991

Thank you for your letter of 3 January.

You have, of course, repeatedly raised the matter of a Coal Mining Subsidence Bill both publicly and with my predecessors and now myself; and so I have become well aware of your concern.

As you say, we have got off to a good start with the current session's legislative programme. I have, therefore, discussed with John Wakeham, the Secretary of State for Energy, whether it might now be possible to accommodate such a Bill on coal-mining subsidence.

I am happy to be able to let you know now that it is the Government's intention to introduce legislation on this subject in this session. A Bill will be published in the very near future. I am sure that people affected by subsidence will welcome the Bill as a fitting conclusion to the campaign you have mounted, with other Members in the Midlands with constituencies in coal-mining areas, over a number of years on their behalf.

**JOHN MACGREGOR**

Andy Stewart Esq MP

FROM ANDY STEWART MP FOR SHERWOOD

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

3 January 1991

Since I became the Member of Parliament for Sherwood in 1983, the problem which has featured most frequently in my postbag is that of damage to property caused from mining activities. To date I have received pleas of help from over 2,500 constituents. The present procedures are unsatisfactory, and leave thousands of families frustrated and angry.

Commitments have been made during debates in the House by successive Ministers to bring forward legislation. In 1987 I drew the Number 6 slot for Private Members' Bills. I had intended to use this to introduce a Bill on mining subsidence, but did not do so since the Energy Department told me they were preparing a Government Bill on the subject.

After many meetings and consultations, including with former Secretaries of State for Energy, a framework for new legislation was agreed. This left only the timing of its introduction to be decided. I wrote to Geoffrey Howe in October pressing for a Bill on this subject as part of this session's legislative programme. Although no reference was made in the Queen's Speech, you indicated that this would not preclude a Government Bill coming forward in the present session if it could be fitted in.

The Government has made a good start with its programme in the current session. I am, therefore, writing to urge you to agree to the Bill now being brought forward, as it is of vital interest to so many of my constituents.

The Rt Hon John MacGregor OBE MP