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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

1 August 1984

Dear Mr. Clarke,

At our recent meeting, I undertook to look into the point which you made about the charges levied by the Port of Tyne Authority. I have, as you know, replied separately on the question of the take-up of various Government schemes in South Shields.

The charges in any particular port are made up of two main elements - those levied by the port authority itself on the services it provides, and those covering pilotage and light dues. The port's charges are a matter for the commercial judgement of the port authority concerned and the very competitive nature of the industry means there is every incentive for all UK ports to price keenly. I have no evidence that the Port of Tyne Authority are any different in this respect. Indeed, they have made substantial progress in recent years to improve their position after the loss of the former staple trades of coal and iron ore.

Pilotage charges are the responsibility of the Tyne Pilotage Authority. The Government remains concerned about the efficiency and organisation of pilotage nationally and a great deal of work has been devoted towards reaching agreement, so far without success, on a scheme which would deal with the central problem, that of the surplus among pilots. But as far as the Tyne is concerned, I have to say again that we have no evidence that charges are out of line with those in other UK ports and it also has to be

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remembered that, except for passenger vessels (for which pilotage is compulsory in all UK pilotage districts), pilotage is non-compulsory in the Tyne district.

It is distressing that the coal dispute is proving a setback to the position of the Tyne and other ports, and for the job prospects for the many people who depend on them.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

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Dr. David Clark, MP.



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT  
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

01-212 3434

Timothy Flesher Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

25 July 1984

*Mr Flesher  
3/7*

*Dear Tim*

*GM  
A.M.*

Thank you for your letter of 5 July to Henry Derwent about the Prime Minister's meeting with David Clark MP and Don Dixon.

I enclose a contribution to the Prime Minister's reply to Dr Clark on the various points which she undertook to look into.

*Yours ever*

*Andrew*

ANDREW MELVILLE  
Private Secretary

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It is distressing that the coal dispute is proving a setback to the position of the Tyne and other ports, and for the job prospects for the many people who depend on them.

Pm: My with David Clark, M.L.

March 84