

SUBJECT CC MASTER

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NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER
AND CONSERVATIVE MPs ON CORNISH TIN

At short notice, the Prime Minister agreed to receive Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome), David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne) and David Harris (St Ives) to discuss the problems of the Cornish tin industry. She saw them in her room in the House of Commons at 9.30pm on Thursday, 24th July. Robert Hicks (Cornwall SE) was also present.

The meeting was an informal one. The Members all spoke of the serious political repercussions, as they perceived them, of the Government failing to provide financial support for keeping RTZ and the Cornish tin industry going. David Mudd referred to the fact that the Malayan Government provided production subsidies of some 6% for the cost of extracting tin in Malaya. Bob Boscawen referred to the importance historically of tin extraction in Cornwall and also to the drop in the numbers employed in the three RTZ mines (South Crofty, Wheal Jane and Pendarres) from 1500 in January this year to 850 at the present time. But even with this diminished manpower, RTZ's mining activities still contributed £20 million a year to the Cornish economy.

Robert Hicks referred to the internationally-renowned School of Tin Mining in Camborne, and pointed out that the instruction given in the school in Cornish mining techniques was based on the use of British technology and equipment, and produced a useful after-flow of exports to countries whose nationals had been trained in the School. The closure of the tin mines under possible threat in Cornwall would make a mockery of the School, and probably lead to its demise.

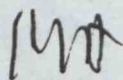
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David Mudd also raised the question of the RTZ aluminium smelter in Warrington. He understood that it required a minimum throughput of tin to keep it going profitably. If no tin was mined in Cornwall, the Warrington smelter might have to close down. This was yet further evidence of the need to sustain tin output in Cornwall.

All the Members at the meeting stressed that, whilst they were realistic in understanding the sharply diminished prospects for tin production and extraction in Cornwall, nevertheless they felt that politically it was essential to keep the Cornish tin extraction industry going for the future. Rationalisation might be unavoidable, but the elimination of the Cornish tin industry was unacceptable. They all expressed the hope that the Prime Minister might be able to support some sort of a compromise in providing for the future of the industry.

The Prime Minister listened carefully to the representations made, and undertook to give full weight to what had been represented to her. She pointed out that RTZ was an extremely rich, international company and could well afford, in her view, to contribute more to the long-term viability of the Cornish tin industry; she understood that the Cornish operations represented something like half of one percent of the RTZ turnover. Any money which went in support of the operations of this prosperous commercial corporation would be money unavailable for pressing improvements in, e.g., school books and building maintenance.



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