

From: The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

13th December, 1976

I have seen your note of 9th December about the miners' dispute and draw attention to one further point (incidentally not touched on in the Financial Times' piece on Friday) namely the question of who is to pay for any favourable settlement of the miners' early retirement claim.

The answer must be either the government through (probably concealed) subsidy or miners (through closure of pits which thus become uneconomic) or customers - pensioners and the rest. Is this not a point to which we should be drawing attention, whatever the sympathy that it may be possible to feel for the particular claim?

Howe
raise
put productively

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cc The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher M.P. ✓
The Rt. Hon. James Prior M.P.
David Howell MP

Sir Geoffrey Howe

CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

From Robbie Gilbert

To Rt. Hon. Mrs. Thatcher

9th December, 1976

Miners' Dispute

This note suggests that the miners claim for early retirement need not involve a major confrontation over the pay policy.

In the absence of permission to negotiate about basic pay and conditions greater attention has focused on the NUM's long-standing claim for early retirement. A number of points concerning the dispute may be worth noting

(1) when the result of the ballot of miners is announced next Tuesday (14th December) it will show overwhelming support for industrial action

(2) negotiations between the NCB and the NUM had not broken down before the ballot was taken - indicating that there was further room for manoeuvre

(3) there are a number of alternative formulae which could be further investigated, some of which would be entirely acceptable to the NUM (See attached article from Tuesday's Times by Paul Routledge which was probably flying a kite for the NUM)

(4) the NUM executive is in danger of being forced into a 'confrontationist' pose on the issue, but is trying hard to avoid this; the National Conference of the union required the executive to seek membership approval for a particular form of action, but the wording of the ballot leaves the executive with considerable discretion about what form its response should take

(5) public support for the miners claim may well be considerable there seems to be a strong feeling that those who have been underground now for 40 years or more really do deserve special treatment

(6) the TUC has already indicated that it regards the miners claim as being outside the current pay limit. This seems to be a rather hasty judgement, and need not represent their final position.

There is no reason why the TUC cannot recommend

- (i) that the NUM's demands be met from July (See Routledge's article) and,
- (ii) that they should state that the special circumstances of

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the miners mean that no other union should be entitled to follow their claim in current circumstances.

These considerations mean that there is no reason why the miners dispute should lead to a major confrontation between the Government and the NUM, leading to the sort of disruption which occurred in the winter 1973/4, at present.

RHG

RHG/BLV
9/12/76