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PRIME MINISTER

Miner's' Industrial Action

Attached is the situation report promised by Department of Energy. Annex 4 sets out the state of play on contingency planning. I asked the Department of Energy whether there was a case for bringing forward the meeting with Mr. Walker and Mr. MacGregor scheduled for Wednesday. They consider Wednesday to be the optimal time for such a meeting as this would allow:

- (i) a chance to see how far the strike call had spread and was being adhered to;
- (ii) how extensive and effective picketing was proving to be;
- (iii) a chance for Mr. Gregson's MISC 57 to meet to refine the issues.

In addition, I have asked Sir Robert Armstrong to consider the composition of a Ministerial Group which would oversee work if we move to a situation of strike management.

Are you content?

Yes mt.

AS

9 March 1984

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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY

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Andrew Turnbull Esq  
Private Secretary to the  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
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9 March 1984

*Dear Andrew,*

**MINERS' INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

I attach briefing for the Prime Minister arising from the threatened industrial action in the coal industry.

This covers notes on:

1. Current Industrial Action
2. NUM Meetings and Proposed Action by NUM Area
3. Background Note and Map: NUM and NCB Area
4. Contingency Planning

*Yours ever,*

*John.*

J S NEILSON  
Private Secretary

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*CC DO 17  
cc Peter Gregson  
(Cabinet office)*



## CURRENT INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY NCB AREA

### Scotland

Seafield (Kirkcaldy) is on strike following the sending home of 24 men who turned up too late to be wound down with their shift. The strike affects production at the neighbouring Frances pit.

Men at Polmaise are on strike. Polmaise has been recommended for closure by the Board and an appeal meeting is due to be held next week. The pit was on development only.

### Doncaster

Goldthorpe (Barnsley East) and Yorkshire Main (Don Valley) have been on strike all week over local issues. Picketing is not now as heavy as at the beginning of the week, when violence broke out. Safety cover is being provided.

Askern (Doncaster North) has been on strike since Wednesday, following a demarcation dispute.

### Barnsley

South Kirkby, Ferrymoor Ridings, Kinsley (all in Hemsworth) went on strike on Thursday following a dispute over maintenance at the coal washery that serves the three pits.

The absence of a winder at Grimethorpe (Barnsley East) all this week has meant that some men from there and from Darfield have had to be sent home each day.

A dispute led to a strike at Denby Grange (Wakefield) last week. One face from the pit had been allocated to men from the adjoining pit, Bullcliffe Wood. Bullcliffe Wood is a short life pit and the extra face was meant to keep the men fully employed until they move to a new drift mine next summer. Denby Grange men objected. Both pits are now working normally but the disputed face is being left unworked.

/South Yorkshire



### South Yorkshire

A dispute at Manvers, Wath and Kilnhurst collieries (Wentworth) over a local issue (standardisation of break times) escalated on 6 March to a stoppage at all pits in the area. The previous weekend 8 of 15 pits voted not to strike, but by 7 March all pits and workshops were on strike or prevented from working by pickets.

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### NUM MEETINGS AND PROPOSED ACTION BY NUM AREA

The National Executive Committee of the NUM met on 8 March. The meeting agreed to sanction the proposed strikes in Yorkshire and Scotland and to support any other NUM area that took similar action. Area action needs only NEC sanction, whereas national action requires a national ballot and a 55% majority in favour.

Durham : Meetings being held at a number of pits this weekend to take soundings on strike action.

Kent : Mass meetings on Sunday morning.

North Western : Bickershaw/Parsonage (Leigh) being balloted today on the issue of support for men at Cronton (Knowsley South). Cronton has been closed but the men are refusing to undertake salvage work in protest.

Other pits will follow the decision of the area delegate conference being held tomorrow (Saturday).

Leicester : Meeting tomorrow. President Jack Jones will take the line that there should be no local action without a national ballot.

Northumberland : Pit meetings this weekend.

Nottingham : Branch officials to meet tomorrow. They will probably seek a ballot for next Friday.

Scotland : All out strike planned for Monday. Liaison Committee met today to discuss tactics. It appears that men at Monktonhall and Bilston Glen (Midlothian) may attempt to work on Monday. There are reports of a strong and favourable response to the new redundancy terms.

/South Derbyshire



South Derbyshire: Meeting tomorrow.  
South Wales : Delegate conference today.  
Yorkshire : All out strike covering 4 NCB areas planned  
for Monday. 56,000 men involved.  
Cokemen : Meeting today.

The other areas have not arranged meetings so far but will no  
doubt do so in the coming week.



## NUM AND NCB AREAS

The attached map shows the National Coal Board areas. NUM areas, which differ significantly for historical reasons, are:

<u>NUM Areas</u>	<u>Corresponding NCB areas (approximate)</u>
Cumberland	Western
Derbyshire	North Derbyshire
Durham	North East
Kent	South Midlands
North Western	Western
Leicester	South Midlands
Midlands	Western & South Midlands
Northumberland	North East
North Wales	Western
Nottingham	North & South Nottingham
Scotland	Scotland
South Derbyshire	N. Derbyshire & South Midlands
South Wales	South Wales
Yorkshire	North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Barnsley & Doncaster

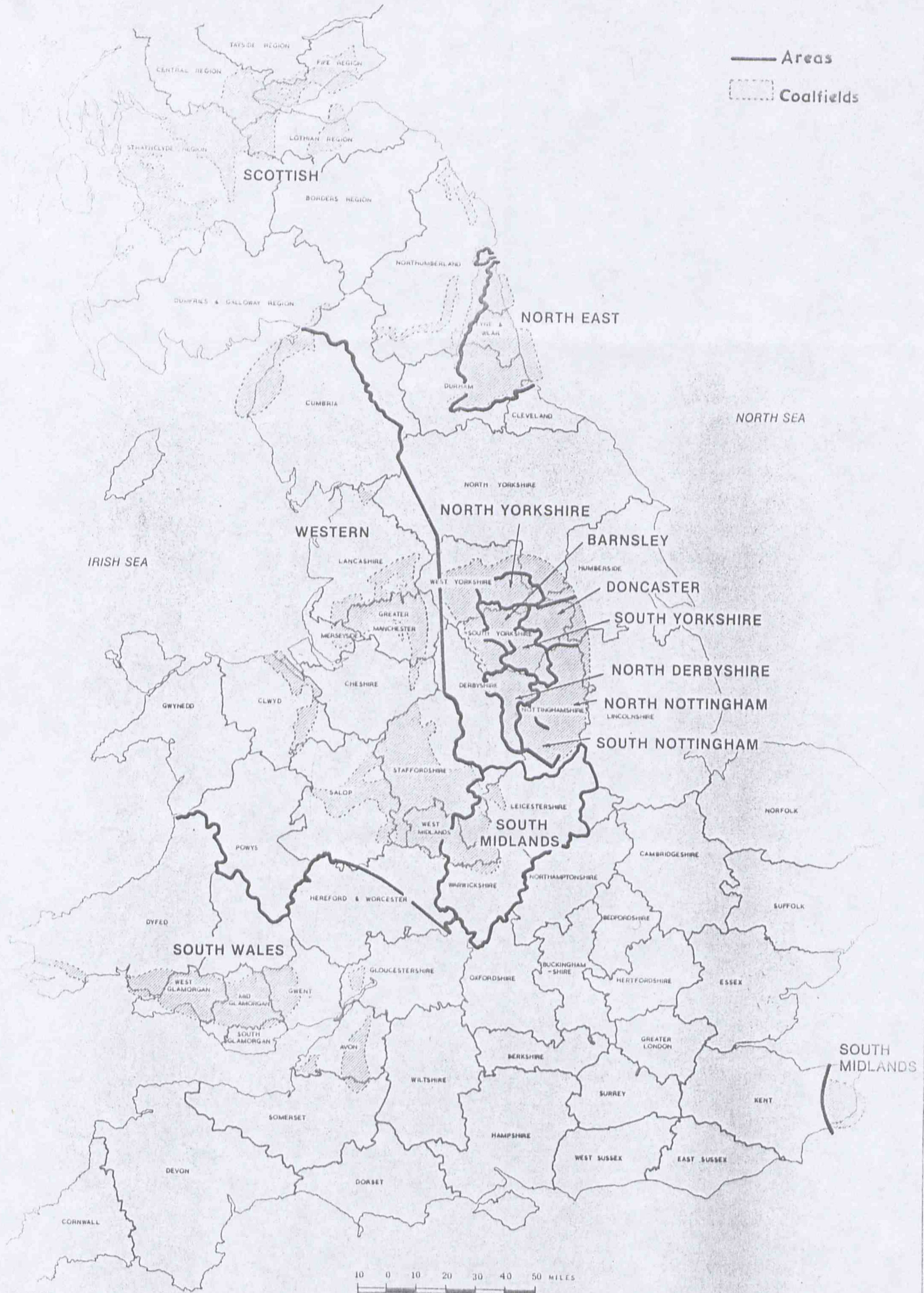
In addition there are 6 areas which are not based solely on geography:

Cokemen	
Group No.1 (Craftsmen)	(Comprising Durham Mechanics Durham Enginemen Northumberland Mechanics)
Group No.2 (Craftsmen)	(Scottish colliery enginemen, Boilermen, and Tradesmen's Association)
Colliery Officials and Staffs (COSA)	
Power Group	(Mainly winders)
Power Group No.2	(National Union of General and Municipal Workers - Colliery Membership)

Coal Division  
Department of Energy  
9 March 1984



# National Coal Board Areas



F2885-H.H.





## MINERS' INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Contingency Planning

How the situation arising from the miners' action will develop remains uncertain.

2 At one extreme, the intended strikes could falter, bringing an end even to the overtime ban. At the other, strike action could spread throughout the coalfields, attracting support from unions in other industries, e.g transport.

3 This note considers two illustrative scenarios:

- (i) a strike throughout the coalfields;
- (ii) prolonged extension of the overtime ban.

A Strike

4 Coal stocks at power stations are at record levels for the time of year - see attached graph.

5 CEGB advise that available fuel supplies at power stations provide in excess of six months' endurance, provided oil burn is phased up to the maximum over four weeks and oil supply then remains unconstrained.

6 With no extra oil burn, endurance would be four months.

7 CEGB are satisfied that stocks of ancillary materials at power stations will match these endurance periods.

8 The position in Scotland is stronger, reflecting lower dependence on coal burn.

9 The overtime ban has led to some draw-down of industrial consumers' coal stocks over the winter. Cement manufacturers are believed to hold some 14-18 weeks' stocks, other large customers some 7-8 weeks. Some individual works might hold very little stock as a result of commercial pressures.

10 Merchants hold about 6 weeks of domestic coal stocks - sufficient to last until the end of the main burning season. Pit head stocks are low. Imports have been running at twice the normal level.



Prolonged Overtime Ban

11 Were the unions able to sustain the overtime ban throughout the summer, coal deliveries to power stations could be expected progressively to worsen. CEGB stocks by the end of October could be in the range 14-20mt, representing 12-17 weeks endurance.

12 Alleviation could be sought through:

- (i) extra purchases of non-vested coal
- (ii) extra coal imports
- (iii) extra purchases of electricity from Scotland

Together these measures might increase October stocks by 2mt.

13 Maximum oil burn by the CEGB through the summer would be required to restore coal stocks to the October 1983 level of 30mt. A net cost of £20M <sup>per week</sup> would be incurred and the unusual level of burn would be highly visible.

14 The NCB could take various initiatives to frustrate the prolonging of the overtime ban. The options are best discussed orally.

*Contingency Action*  
15 Events on Monday will demonstrate the extent of miners' readiness to take strike action without universal ballot (the effects over the weekend will be concealed by the overtime ban). Early Government intervention could be expected only to unify the miners. Endurance in the event of a strike does not depend on action before mid-week.

16 The first occasion requiring a Government response could arise from mass or violent picketing. The Home Office is in touch with the President of the Association of Chief Police Officers. He is contacting the Chief Officers of colliery areas to ask them if they have information about prospective action and to remind them that, if necessary, the National Reporting Centre can be activated to determine the allocation of mutual aid resources.

17 The Secretary of State for Energy has asked Sir Walter Marshall to ensure a high state of preparedness.

S E C R E T



18 The Chairman of the NCB is meeting his Area Directors on Monday morning to co-ordinate policy. Resulting action will be handled at Area level.

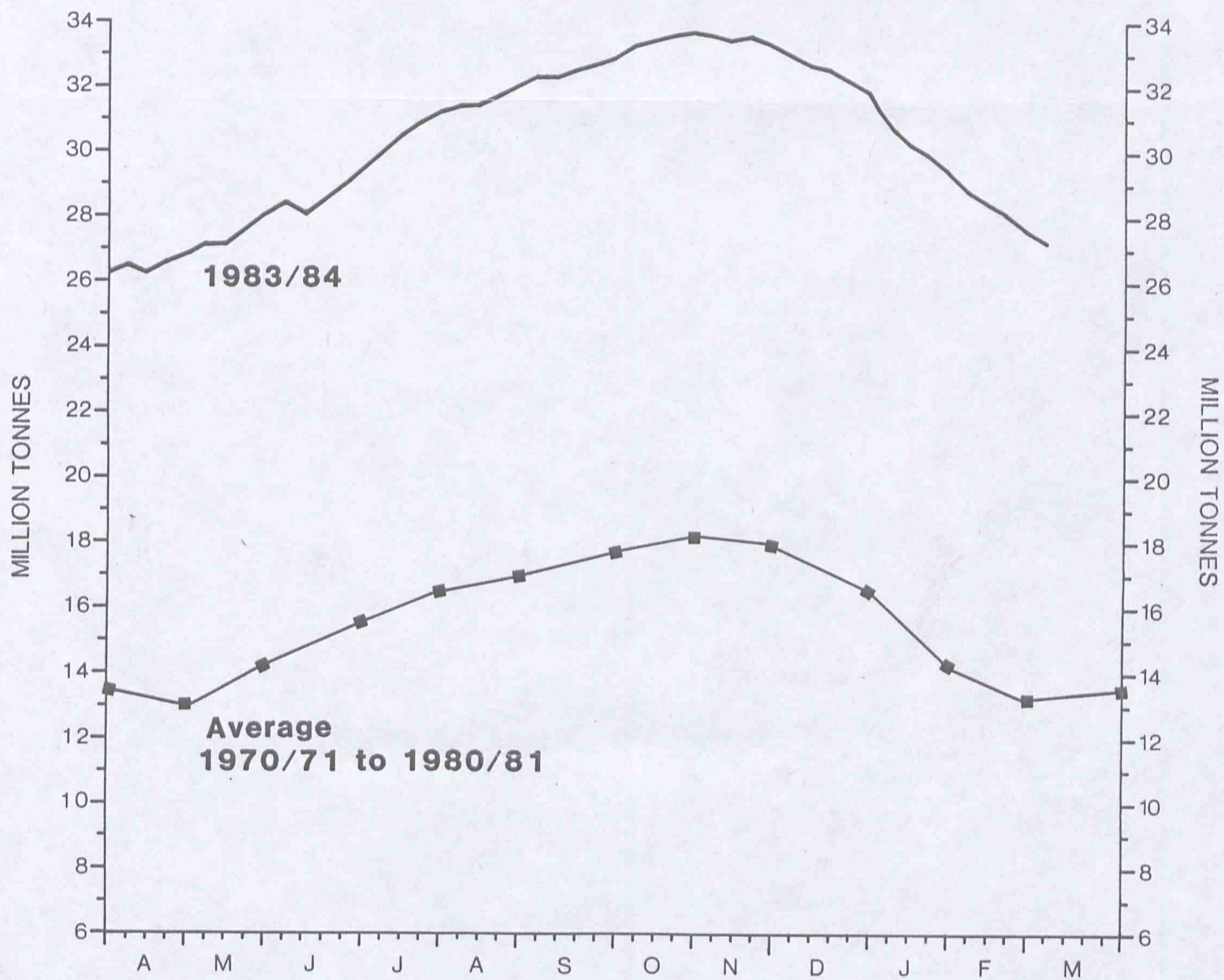
19 MISC 57 is meeting on Monday afternoon. (Mr Gregson's interdepartmental group)

20 The Prime Minister has a meeting planned for Wednesday next. (with Mr Walker and Mr MacGregor) ←

S E C R E T

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### COAL STOCKS AT PUBLIC SUPPLY POWER STATIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN



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