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PRIME MINISTER

COAL STRIKE: PICKETING

You might like to see the text of the statement which the Home Secretary made during the course of radio and television interviews today. He took the step of communicating the precise text to Chief Constables in areas where there are coal pits. It was made very clear to them that the Government expected them to act in accordance with the principles set out.

"Large numbers of pickets can themselves be intimidatory and can prevent people exercising their right to go to work. It is the duty of the Police to prevent such intimidation so that the law is upheld. I am sure they will make every effort to do so; and I shall support them. They have the necessary mutual aid and resources. They have the necessary powers to stop and disperse such excessive numbers of pickets and to stop vehicles."

With some minor improvements of drafting, I think this can serve as the basis for any statement you make during the course of Questions tomorrow.

*AT*

*Amend mb*

14 March 1984