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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 May 1984

Dear Hugh,

Cost of Policing Miners' Dispute

Mr. Andrew Stewart (Sherwood) and Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe) came to see the Prime Minister last night. They reported that, following the Home Secretary's announcement that the Government would provide extra assistance to meet the cost of policing the miners' dispute, there was a strong feeling of disappointment in Nottinghamshire, and in particular amongst Nottinghamshire miners. The latter felt that they were in the forefront of the fight for democracy both in the country and in their union but that they were having to pay a disproportionate share of the cost of this fight. There was a strong feeling that pickets from Yorkshire were getting away with bearing much less of the cost. The two MPs suggested that, to equalise the burden between local authorities, there ought to be a threshold of say a 1p rate, above which all the costs would be borne by the Government. This would also serve to eliminate fears about an open-ended commitment. This could be done without undermining the autonomy of local police forces.

The Prime Minister pointed out that while Nottinghamshire had the largest bill, other police authorities were incurring substantial costs in overtime to cover for those police sent to the areas of the dispute. She agreed, however, to pass on these representations to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The discussion then turned to how the dispute might be brought to an end. While both MPs thought that Nottinghamshire miners were solidly supporting a continuation of work, and attendance was as good as normal, they could not see a way through. Mr. Lester thought the solidarity of Notts miners was in defence of the principle of a ballot; acceding to the strike call would have undermined this important safeguard. Their aim was to defend the NUM as they wished to see it rather than to break away from it. One

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possibility would be an initiative to seek agreement to an update of Plan for Coal, though it was doubtful whether this could be achieved by negotiation.

I am copying this letter to John Ballard (Department of the Environment), John Gieve (Chief Secretary's Office) and Michael Reidy (Department of Energy).

*Your sincerely
Andrew Turnbull*

Andrew Turnbull

Hugh Taylor, Esq.,
Home Office.

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