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PRIME MINISTER

Coal: MISC 101(84)22nd Meeting

As it has been nearly a week since you last had an updating (at last Thursday's Cabinet) you will probably want to receive all the reports on the situation on the ground (from the Secretary of State for Energy, the Home Secretary and the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and Transport) before allowing a discussion to develop on the main issues.

2. The main issues will probably be the following.

i. Civil action in the courts

It would appear that some but not all of the BSC's iron ore trains have been stopped, mainly because of NUM picketing but partly also because of a refusal to work by railwaymen. The BSC Chairman is thought to be keen now to seek an injunction. The timing and tactics will however have to be considered carefully. The NUR Annual Conference is taking place this week. Moreover careful thought will need to be given to whether any injunction should be sought against the NUM alone or against the rail unions as well. An important political consideration will be that, if the BSC Chairman is now strongly resolved to go to the courts, an attempt to dissuade him would be inconsistent with the Government's publicly declared position.

2 out of 5 got through yesterday, only 1 today.

ii. Getting the miners back to work

The NCB said this afternoon that 1,000 more miners were working than on the same day last week. The Group needs

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How well based is the claim that 50,000 miners are working. It is thought that 36,000 NUM members are working - the rest being white collar staff and managers

2 mines at Bilston Glen were setup by pickets.

an accurate and objective assessment of whether there are real signs of an increase in the drift back to work following Mr MacGregor's letter. If there is, how far is it influenced by special factors like the timing of holidays? It would also be useful to know the latest thinking about the proposed letters from NCB Area Managers.

iii. Picketing, violence and intimidation

There have been press reports in the last few days about violence and intimidation against miners trying to return to work. The Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland should be asked whether anything more can be done to assist them. There are also reports of increased picketing at power stations and it would be useful to know whether there are signs of any change in NUM tactics.

iv. Coal movements

Coal movements by rail have undoubtedly suffered as a result of the rail unions' latest efforts. The number of coal trains last week was only 193 compared with 243 the previous week and around 300 a week during several weeks in May. On the other hand there has been an offsetting increase in road deliveries so that total deliveries (650,000 tonnes last week) have not suffered significantly. Is there now a serious threat to rail deliveries, or will they recover again as they have done in the past? A new and unhelpful factor is the payments to railwaymen to offset loss of wages, introduced recently by ASLEF and now approved at this week's NUR Conference.

Next meeting

3. There will be an opportunity for a further discussion under the Industrial Affairs item at Thursday's Cabinet.

PLG

P L GREGSON

26 June 1984

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