

Sent to Inlan
17/8.

PRIME MINISTER

HUNTERSTONE/RAVENSCRAIG

DESPITE THE WILLINGNESS OF LOCAL T AND G DOCKERS TO UNLOAD THE 'OSTIA' THE SCOTTISH DOCK SECRETARY OF THE UNION (MR GILLIGAN) HAS SUCCEEDED IN MAINTAINING A STALEMATE UNTIL THE NDLB REACH A DECISION. NEVERTHELESS, NEWS OF THE GRASS ROOTS SYMPATHY FOR THE RAVENSCRAIG STEELWORKERS IS LIKELY TO LEAK OUT OVER THE WEEKEND, AND THIS COULD BE HELPFUL.

THE NDLB WILL MEET ON MONDAY AT 1300. THEY WILL HAVE BEFORE THEM A LEGAL OPINION TO THE EFFECT THAT IT WOULD NOT BE A BREACH OF THE DOCK LABOUR SCHEME FOR ISTC MEMBERS TO UNLOAD THE 'OSTIA' PROVIDED THEY DID NOT GO SO FAR AS TO 'TRIM' THE CARGO. ALTHOUGH THIS IS ENCOURAGING, EMPLOYER ATTITUDES ON THE NDLB ARE LESS THAN ROBUST, AND THERE IS STILL A DANGER THAT THEY MAY ACCEPT SOME UNSATISFACTORY COMPROMISE IN THE FACE OF A THREATENED DOCK STRIKE. MR KING WILL BE TALKING TO ONE OR TWO OF THEM OVER THE WEEKEND, IN AN EFFORT TO STIFFEN THEIR RESOLVE.

SOMEWHAT RELUCTANTLY, BRITISH STEEL HAVE AGREED TO TAKE NO ACTION WHICH COULD RAISE THE TEMPERATURE OF THE DISPUTE UNTIL THE NDLB DECISION IS KNOWN. MR WALKER REPORTS THAT MR MACGREGOR BELIEVES THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COAL STRIKE ARE ENCOURAGING, AND THEREFORE WARNS AGAINST ANY ACTION THAT COULD GIVE THE NUM NEW AMMUNITION. MINISTERS WILL MEET EITHER LATE ON MONDAY OR ON TUESDAY TO CONSIDER WHAT GUIDANCE TO GIVE TO BSC IN THE LIGHT OF THE NDLB'S CONCLUSION AND MR MACGREGOR'S ADVICE.

FROM DAVID BARCLAY
17 AUGUST 1984