

SECRET

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PRIME MINISTER

Coal Dispute

Mr. Walker and Mr. MacGregor are coming to see you tomorrow at 5 p.m. I have also invited Mr. Gregson.

You will want to establish:-

- (i) What are the understandings on which the talks have been re-launched?
- (ii) What are the prospects for an outcome which is acceptable to the Government?
- (iii) What will be Mr. MacGregor's negotiating tactics?

On (i) it has not emerged ^{clearly} whether the NUM have in fact changed their stance. On "The World at One", Mr. Maxwell declined to comment on Mr. Scargill's position - Flag A. While Mr. Walker sought to make clear that Scargill is now willing to discuss closure of uneconomic pits - Flag B - Mr. MacGregor's statement - Flag C - made no explicit reference to closure of uneconomic pits. What precisely has been agreed? What is to stop a repetition of the last meeting?

On (ii) it is not clear what further concessions could be made beyond those offered at the last talks, the text emerging from which is the last document in the main folder. The NCB offer last time was perilously close to going too far. Are there any limited concessions which the NUM are seeking which could be given without compromising the essential principles?

On (iii) how does Mr. MacGregor intend to play the negotiations? Does he propose to pick up the previous text, or start from scratch? The difficulty with the former approach is that it is difficult to add much to it without undermining the Government/NCB position.

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While Mr. MacGregor is in, you could ask for a direct report on:-

- (i) The state of the return to work.
- (ii) What measures could be taken to accelerate it.
- (iii) The position on threatened coal faces and on faces already lost. (When the NCB describes a face as lost, is this an absolute position or is it merely a statement that it could be re-opened only at great and possibly prohibitive expense?)
- (iv) Whether the threat by management to withdraw safety cover is effective in exerting pressure?
- (v) Whether there is any change in his assessment of the balance of advantage on closures and redundancies during the course of the strike?

AT

3 September, 1984.

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ROBERT MAXWELL - INTERVIEW ON NEW NUM/COAL BOARD MEETING

Transcript from: BBC Radio 4, World at One, 3 September 1983

INTERVIEWER : (Gordon Clough) and today's Daily Mirror not a newspaper backward in blowing its own trumpet now that the ebullient Robert Maxwell is at the helm, makes the immodest claim on its front page that it's been acting as the peacemaker between Coal Board and the miners union. I quote " through the good offices of the Daily Mirror leaders of the Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers will resume talks to end the 6 months strike." The paper goes on to say unequivocally that the meeting is scheduled to take place at an hotel near London towards the end of this week. Mr Macgregor confirmed a few minutes ago that Mr Maxwell had brought the two sides together, and we hope to be hearing from him shortly. So I asked Robert Maxwell how he got involved?

MAXWELL : A couple of days ago the chairman of the Coal Board, Mr Macgregor, indicated to us that he is willing to restart negotiations immediately. When Mr Walker came back he made a speech in Manchester yesterday indicating, amongst other things, that he would like to see negotiations restart immediately. I met Mr Scargill and his senior colleagues at Sheffield some weeks ago and understood that they would like to start negotiations immediately. And as there was some problem as to who was going to pick up the telephone first I performed the useful service for both parties, since they desired to engage in negotiations, to bring them together. And they have agreed to meet later this week in a hotel in London.

INTERVIEWER H: Do we know when?

MAXWELL: We do know when but that's a matter for the parties and not for me to disclose on the radio.

INTERVIEWER : How do you account for the optimistic view taken in your leader page this morning when you say that suddenly there seems to be a new spirit of goodwill, where is that evident?

MAXWELL : That's evident from all parties desire to resume negotiations and to do so on the basis of the Plan for Coal. The argument about beneficial and all kinds

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of words have now been withdrawn and kicked off the table. And the Coal Board and the Miners will resume negotiations for the first time both looking for a settlement on fair and honourable terms which will be good for the miners, good for the Coal Board and good for the taxpayers.

INTERVIEWER : In your talks with Mr Scargill did he ever indicate to you that he would be prepared to modify his stance on this question of the closure of uneconomic pits?

MAXWELL : Well, the Plan for Coal under the plan for coal pits have been closed under Mr Scargill. He has always fought closures but at the end of the day if it is uneconomic or dangerous or whatever reality is reality.

INTERVIEWER : So you are saying then that Mr Scargill, however reluctantly, has now come to the conclusion that uneconomic pits will have to be closed and the jobs will have to be sacrificed?

MAXWELL : No I'm not saying that. What I'm saying is that after a 6 months bitter strike I'm not negotiating for Mr Scargill nor can I claim to speak on his behalf. Speaking as the publisher of the Mirror Group newspaper I'm satisfied that there is goodwill and the National Union of Mineworkers after 6 months want to settle. I'm equally satisfied that the Coal Board accept that there will be no massive return of workers being starved out. There has to be an honourable end to this strike on mutually satisfactory terms.

INTERVIEWER : What is a newspaper publisher doing involving himself in negotiations of this kind?

MAXWELL : What a newspaper publisher, knowing all of the parties - and in particular the Coal Board and the Mineworkers wanted to get back to negotiations immediately, and as neither of them could get into touch direct with the other without being accused that they were seeking a meeting or suing for one someone had to bring the two parties together by mutual consent to enable them to meet

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C Noon: 3rd Sept 89

STATEMENT BY MR IAN MacGREGOR

During the weekend I was approached on behalf of the NUM.

In those conversations I was told that the NUM, after talks with the TUC in Brighton, had accepted the need for negotiations on the NCB plans for the future of pits.

It was agreed that steps should now be put in hand so that a meeting would be arranged at a time convenient to both parties. The NCB welcomes this approach in view of the need to settle this dispute which has so divided the people working in the coal mining industry.

At a lunchtime Press Conference MacGregor admitted that the "approach" was a telephone call from Robert Maxwell in Brighton over last weekend.

He said Peter Heathfield had also contacted Ned Smith.

MacGregor said he was optimistic about further talks being arranged later this week. He thought Scargill was under some pressure from the TUC to be more realistic. B M

PETER WALKER - INTERVIEW ON GOVERNMENT OFFER TO EXTEND PLAN FOR COA.

Trnsript from: BBC Radio 4, World at One, 3 September 1984

INTERVIEWER : (Gordon Clough) Peter Walker said at the weekend that the National Coal Board is willing to offer, and the Government is willing to underwrite, an extension of the plan for Coal that will be good for the miner and good for the coal industry as a whole. He said the plan would man a further massive investment in the industry, investment in the new coal fields with high production potential and better machiner in coal faces in many; existing fields. Well that sounds a pretty tempting recipe for any miner anxious about the future of the industry. However, Mr Walker studiously avoided the essence of what worries Mr Scargill, namely the closure of uneconomic pits and the loss of jobs. I put it to Mr Walker that his assurances about the coal industry's future weren't likely to calm Mr Scargill's fears about pit closures and jobs losses?

WALKER: Well I think the fact is that from the very beginning of this dispute there should have been no dispute upon the problem of job losses. And here was an industry, a major industry, guaranteed that any miner who wished to continue to be a miner would be able to do so. ~~N~~ ~~w~~ ~~x~~ ~~x~~ there are many industries throughout the country that would ~~w~~ ~~x~~ love to have that assurance. But that's been on offer by the Coal Board to the miners from the very beginning of this dispute.

INTERVIEWER : Well why is it then that Mr Scargill keeps on talking about thousands of jobs being lost?

WALKER: You must ask Mr Scargill those questions. But indeed I'm hopeful - I gather that over this last weekend approaches have been made that talks should continue and that Mr Scargill is at last willing to discuss the, tackling the problems of uneconomic pits. And I welcome that and if he does that sensibly then there's no need for this dispute to continue much longer.

INTERVIEWER : Do I take it then, Secretary of State, that even with the closure of uneconomic pits you are actually saying that there will be no job losses involved?

WALKER: I'm saying that not one miner who wishes to continue to be a miner will be stopped from doing so. What there will be will be some early retirements on the most generous terms of a totally voluntary nature. And that has been what the Government decided before this dispute started. But of course there's always

the closure of uneconomic pits, there have been throughout every Labour Government, throughout every National Coal Board since the ~~war~~ war. And that must continue, ~~only~~ obviously it's sensible and sane, ~~and~~ and has always been the case. And this is the first time we've had a president of the NUM saying that his demand that any pit no matter how uneconomic should be kept going. Well that's ~~crazy~~ crazy. But I gather that he's now agreed, perhaps under TUC pressure, I don't know, to move from that position. And if he has I welcome it and there should soon be a settlement. And what is more, a plan for coal which will give that industry a very good future.

INTERVIEWER : Secretary of State, you said at the weekend you ~~talked~~ talked rather, about a massive new investment in the coal industry. Is that new investment over and above what has already been envisaged?

WALKER : No, I mean, good heavens ~~no~~ no. I mean, what I was saying over the weekend is that this Government has invested in the coal industry new capital investment £650 million more than was envisaged in Plan for Coal. What I'm now saying is that this Government is willing over the next few years to invest another £3,000 million in capital investment in coal. And we think it's a good and sound investment in producing what will be cheap coal, high productivity with the best machinery. And then we can start conquering markets at home and abroad. We can expand the industry.

INTERVIEWER : Do you believe that the TUC general council's general statement of support for the miners is going to damage this dispute even further?

WALKER : Well all I can say is that it was what 4 months ago that all of the transport unions made a similar statement. And of course in the period since the coal has been delivered in vast quantities and has been moved. The reality is that trade unionists, the rank and file trade unionists in this country has expressed in 3 ~~or~~ opinion polls over the weekend, has been expressed in the votes of dockers, has been expressed in the actions of lorry drivers, the fact is that they sympathise with the the one third of miners that had the opportunity of a ballot and decisively balloted against strike action. And they feel sorry for the two thirds that were deprived of a ballot and are kept out by mob picketing. But the idea that they want to support those and deprive the ~~of~~ of a ballot and support those that a

that are suing the mob picketting method I don't think is true. And every opinion poll and every action of trade unionists shows that..

INTERVIEWER : It seems to me then that you are saying that you would not expect as a result of the TUC conference congress at Brighton that the miners are going to get the sort of support that they're really looking for?

WALKER : Obviously what goes on at the TUC behind the scenes may well be as important as what goes on in front of the scenes. And there's seemingly behind the scenes that they have persuaded Mr Scargill to enter negotiations upon the problem of uneconomic pits. And if they've succeeded in doing that and there's a successful negotiation they will have made a positive contribution. But obviously only time will tell whether that is the case.