

PRIME MINISTER

JIMMY YOUNG SHOW: BRIEFING ON COAL

I attach your folder of source material but you may like to draw on the points below.

Where do we go from here?

Let us be clear about what the NCB has offered.

- On pay there is an increase which will keep miners substantially above average earnings.
- Every miner who wishes to remain a miner will be able to do so.
- The NCB, with Government help, is making available early retirement on terms which must be the envy of every other industry.
- There is a current and future investment programme in new capacity which dwarfs that in the rest of the coal industry in Europe put together.
- For the first time the NCB is establishing a new organisation to bring industry and jobs to the areas affected by pit closures.

This is an offer which other unions recognise is fair, even generous. There must be many people who find it incomprehensible that the NCB continue to refuse it.

What about a third party to bring the two sides together?

There has been no lack of negotiations.

12 days in all - and the Board has gone as far as is reasonable to secure a settlement with the NUM.

The outstanding issue is very simple. It is about whether loss-making pits can ever close. The NUM say "No Never". So long as there is coal to be mined no matter how much it costs to extract or whether there is a market for it they say that pit must remain open. In a country which has ample resources of coal which could be developed cheaply in modern, safe pits this demand is a nonsense.

This is a demand which is totally new. It has never been put forward before by the NUM or any of its leaders, nor has it been accepted by any previous government. The last Labour Government not only accepted the principle that uneconomic pits should close, they embodied the principle in legislation and saw such closures put into effect.

This demand is not like a pay claim, a difference about working practices or about redundancy terms where ^{a mediator} ~~an arbitrator~~ can try to find a package acceptable to the parties. It is a demand which is not arbitrable, which has no middle ground on which a mediator can operate. If conceded it would take away the Board's responsibility to manage the industry and give the NUM a direct line into the pockets of the taxpayer who are already contributing £1.3 billion a year.

How can it be settled then?

It can be settled if the NUM call a ballot and allow the men to express their view. They are the only third party who can be brought in. If the NUM leadership thought they had a good case they would call a ballot. One third of the miners have been allowed to ballot and voted two to one in favour of working; two-thirds have been prevented from expressing their view by manipulation and the union rule book and by violence and intimidation.

But what about mining communities?

- Firstly, nearly all those leaving the industry will be doing so on early retirement on favourable terms.

- Secondly, jobs cannot be preserved by keeping open uneconomic pits. Not only will this impede the development of new coal resources but will impose high energy costs and imperil jobs elsewhere in the economy.

- Thirdly, as we have seen in Wales, for example, it is possible to bring in new investment and new jobs if the right conditions for enterprise can be created. In addition, the existing regional incentives offered by the Government, the NCB has, for the first time, established an Enterprise Agency offering finance re-training and advice to help establish new businesses.

Support from other unions

I am delighted to see that good sense has prevailed in the docks and that workers there have declined to put their jobs and those of others in peril in support of the NUM's totally unreasonable demands.

But what about NACODs?

I understand that NACODs were worried about the procedures the NCB were asking them to observe when miners were going into work through heavy picket lines. The NCB have already met NACODs and it was thought that an agreement was reached. However, NACODs now appear to have had second thoughts and have called a ballot. In response to this the NCB has offered to hold a further meeting.

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'PITS WILL BE CLOSED' - THATCHER

UNECONOMIC PITS WILL HAVE TO BE CLOSED, NO MATTER HOW LONG THE MINERS STRIKE GOES ON, MRS THATCHER SAID TODAY.

AND THE PRIME MINISTER SAID SHE HOPED NO ONE WOULD "EVER GIVE IN TO MOB VIOLENCE."

IN AN INTERVIEW ON RADIO 2'S JIMMY YOUNG SHOW, MRS THATCHER REPEATEDLY ATTACKED THE MINERS' UNION FOR REFUSING TO ALLOW ITS MEMBERS TO BALLOT ON THE STRIKE.

THE STRIKE, SHE SAID, WAS BEING SUSTAINED BY MOB VIOLENCE, WHICH THE VAST MAJORITY OF MINERS FOUND REPUGNANT.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT IN DEMANDING THAT UNECONOMIC PITS SHOULD NOT CLOSE, THE NUM WAS MAKING A DEMAND MADE IN NO OTHER INDUSTRY.

AND SHE ADDED: "IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO YOU TALK TO, IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW LONG THE TALKS GO ON, IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW LONG THE STRIKE GOES ON, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO COMES IN TO TALK - UNECONOMIC PITS HAVE ALWAYS CLOSED, UNECONOMIC PITS WILL ALWAYS HAVE TO CLOSE."

MRS THATCHER ACCUSED THE STRIKERS OF SACRIFICING THEIR OWN AND OTHER PEOPLE'S JOBS.

BUT MANY STRIKING MINERS FOUND THE VIOLENCE OF THE DISPUTE "TOTALLY REPUGNANT" AND WERE UNABLE TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEW. "THEY ARE THE THIRD PARTY WHOSE VOICE SHOULD BE HEARD," SHE SAID.

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