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PRIME MINISTER

RECALL OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Steel has written urging a recall of Parliament. His letter makes no reference to the position of Mr. MacGregor or to his call for more help for communities affected by closures which he included in his speech to the Liberal Party Conference. Nor is he explicit about the nature of his proposal though this is a reference to the Alliance idea that a bill should be passed allowing 10% of miners to trigger a ballot. Since he has not spelt this out I have not taken it up in the draft reply, but have concentrated on the argument that the issues have not changed since the debate just before the House rose.

The answer on trigger ballots would be that this idea was canvassed in the January 1983 Green Paper on Democracy in Trade Unions. It found virtually no support and the Government adopted an approach which made it a general requirement on all unions to hold properly conducted ballots before strikes if they were to retain immunities, and not simply here a proportion of the membership get together to request a ballot.

I have cleared the draft with Mr. Walker though he would prefer the last part of paragraph 2 to read:

"... interest of the nation, and indeed of the miners themselves. For it benefits both taxpayers and miners if the Government is able to concentrate its substantial investment in modern pits and seams from which coal can be produced efficiently and safely, rather than on older capacity which is more difficult and more expensive to work."

It seems to me this labours the point rather.

Bernard advises releasing the reply tomorrow morning.

24 September 1984

VSCAAW

*I think it would be possible to agree to the Walker's reference*  
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