

DEPARTMENT OF

# ENERGY

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## PRESS NOTICE

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Prime Minister (2)

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*24/9*

PETER WALKER WRITES TO THE BISHOP OF DURHAM

Attached is a copy of a letter which the Secretary of State for Energy, the Rt Hon Peter Walker, has today sent to the Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Durham.

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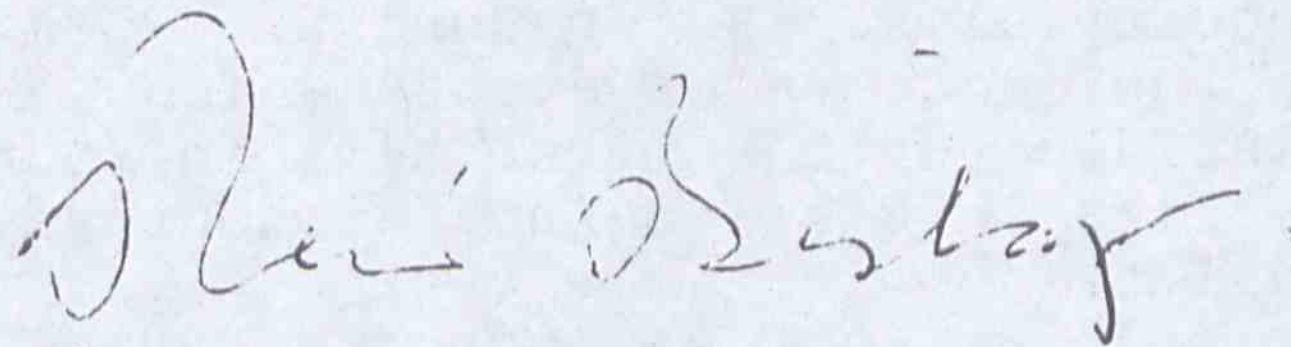
24 September 1984



01 211 6402

The Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Durham  
Auckland Castle  
Bishop Auckland  
County Durham  
DL14 7NR

September 1984



We have not met but I write because we must share many concerns and many hopes. As a member of the church of which you are a bishop, I certainly share your desire that the spirit of Christianity prevails and with you deplore the existence of poverty, misery, violence and despair.

My personal approach to politics has always reflected a definition of patriotism which desires that every person born a citizen of our country rejoices in that birthright. This therefore demands social and economic policies that eradicate poverty and despair and give all families reasons to rejoice.

You are the Bishop responsible for the diocese of Durham; I am the Minister responsible for energy. We both have responsibility for the miners, their families and their communities.

I was privileged in the early 1970s, when I was the first Secretary of State for the Environment, to have the power to improve the quality of life of the miners in your diocese. I was appalled at the depressing effect on mining communities of living in an environment dominated by slagheaps. I was equally appalled at the poor housing conditions in which many of them had to live - housing conditions devoid of many modern amenities. I launched a campaign which certainly had never previously been surpassed to remove and landscape the slagheaps and to modernise the housing. Hundreds of such schemes have been completed in the mining areas of the North East. A great majority of post-war council housing was modernised, as were many of the homes owned by miners or by the Coal Board. I recall this, not as a personal boast, but because I believe it illustrates the importance of using the resources of a democratically elected government to improve the life of families in the mining communities.



Now I have responsibility again, responsibility which I share with you, to give our miners and their families a future that will bring them and their communities an improved quality of life and greater happiness.

You have preached that the miners must not be "defeated". But you have not clarified who is trying to defeat them. You imply that it is Mr MacGregor and the Government. Such an implication has no justification whatsoever.

We have never tried to defeat the miners. We have tried to see that they were victorious to a degree unsurpassed in the history of the mining industry. We tried to give them the guarantee of a better life, devoid of any industrial strike or unrest. Please examine as a Christian bishop the sequence of events which occurred before Mr Scargill decided for the first time in your lifetime to call a national strike in his industry without giving his members the right of a ballot:

1. The Government, without pressure, invested £650 million more in the coal industry than had been agreed under the "Plan for Coal", which was endorsed by the Labour Government and the National Union of Mineworkers.
2. In spite of the insolvency of the National Coal Board, the Government agreed to provide a further £3,000 million to invest in new collieries, better coal faces and better machinery in the years immediately ahead. A policy in sharp contrast to the government of France, which has decided to halve its coal industry, and in Germany, where the coal industry is also planned to decline substantially.
3. Mr MacGregor, whose departure you request, became the first Chairman of the NCB to declare that every miner who wished to continue working in the industry would be able to do so. In the whole post-war period since nationalisation pits which have ceased to be able to produce coal on any tolerably economic basis have been closed. In recent years they have been closed under procedures agreed between the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers. Mr MacGregor has seen to it that these procedures have continued, but has added a vital new assurance, which is that every miner will be guaranteed a job in the industry if he wishes, or alternatively will be provided with an opportunity to take early retirement on terms more generous than any other industry in this country or in any coal industry in the world.



4. In your sermon you correctly draw attention to the adverse effect on a community if a pit is closed. I am perhaps more aware of that than even you are. In 1970 we inherited a situation where in the previous six years hundreds of pits had been closed. Indeed, pits had been closed at many times the rate of anything contemplated at the present time.

It was for this reason that I directed a great deal of environmental and economic aid to the North East between 1970 and 1974 - new roads, new homes, and new factories helped to bring new hope to the region.

In 1984 however the man whose departure you request became the first chairman of the National Coal Board to demand that the NCB themselves take on responsibility for any community affected by closure.

He has created a new company, providing aid advisory services and accommodation to bring new firms and enterprises to the mining communities. The Government have undertaken to harness all the regional training and work experience programmes to support the activities of this new company. In reality, never previously has there been such a mobilisation of finance and advice to help any mining community affected by a pit closure.

This at a time when the industry is not going to be devoid of investment, but when a massive investment programme is going to take place in the industry.

An examination of these four factors will show that there has never been a plan to defeat the miners. It is a plan I would certainly argue that deserves the support of any Christian, and is a plan to give miners and their families a better future than they have enjoyed in the past.

As a Christian I hope that in your moments of meditation and prayer you will ask why the 70,000 miners who were given a democratic vote, decided overwhelmingly not to strike. At such moments you could also ponder why it is that these men have day after day been threatened by mobs from outside their own communities. Mobs which have used violence and intimidation in order to prevent men who follow the normal traditions of the NUM from acting in accordance with the position of the majority of their colleagues.

I believe the reason why those miners who had the opportunity of balloting voted so overwhelmingly not to strike, and the reason why the other two-thirds of miners have been prevented from having a ballot, is because prior to this dispute we genuinely strived to create a position where there was a good wage offer,



not a single compulsory redundancy, a massive investment programme and a positive programme for the mining communities.

In your sermon you stated "that there must be no victory for the miners on present terms because this would mean pits left open at all costs and the endorsement of civil violence for group ends". I do hope you recognise that this phrase explains the reason why miners have suffered so much for so long.

During this entire dispute Mr Scargill has not been interested in discussing the wages, the guarantee of no compulsory redundancies, the investment in the future or the offers prepared to assist mining communities. He has only made one demand and has only been willing to discuss one factor. This is the demand that any pit, no matter how uneconomic, should be kept open until the last tonne of coal is exhausted or until safety prevents the continuation of operations.

No miners leader has ever made such a demand. No government and no National Coal Board management has ever or could ever concede such a demand. Mr Scargill has never moved or negotiated upon it. Whilst social democrats, moderate socialists, and trade union leaders all recognise that such a demand is unreasonable and unjustified, Mr Scargill has insisted that the non-balloted strike action shall continue until this demand is met.

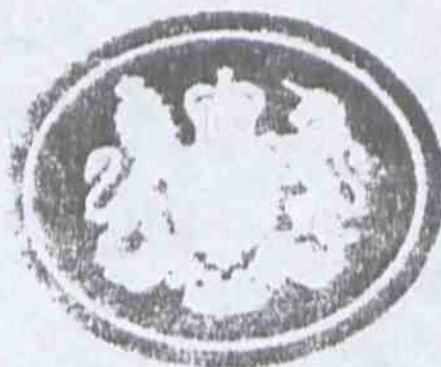
Perhaps neither you nor I can analyse accurately his motives. But if you have embarked upon a study of Mr Scargill's written and spoken words over many years you can only come to the conclusion that he has always favoured conflict as opposed to participation, because he believes it is by conflict with the existing system that his utopia will be achieved.

Having stated in your sermon that you feel the necessity for Mr Scargill and the miners to move from this demand, can I perhaps ask you as a Christian bishop what you believe the Governments or the nation should do if Mr Scargill continues, as he has for six months, to refuse to negotiate or to move from this demand?

You rightly stated in your sermon that anyone who rejects compromise as a policy, programme or convention is putting himself or herself in the place of God. I know that both the Government and the National Coal Board have been eager and willing to pay the miners well, to free them from any risk of compulsory redundancy, and to help their communities invest in their future. This is not a case of putting ourselves before God, but of endeavouring to act in a civilised and Christian way.

You know and I know that Mr Scargill has been totally unwilling to move from his one unique and impossible demand.

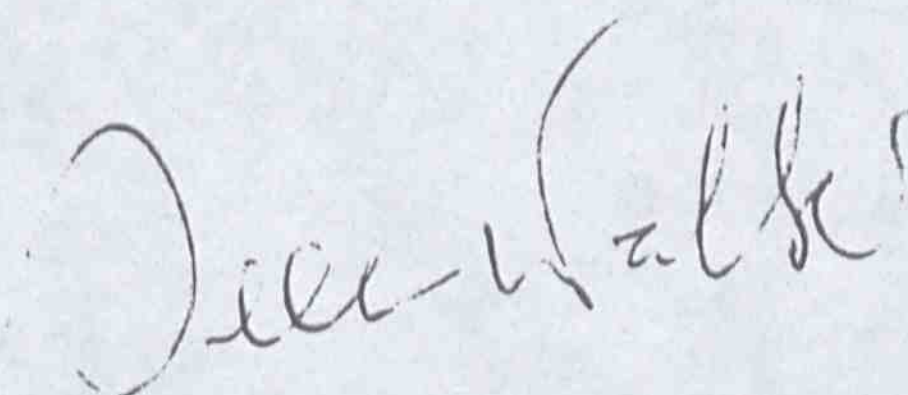




As a person who has devoted most of his life to politics and to the Conservative Party, I have always believed that the correct tradition of my party has been to get the correct balance between efficiency and compassion. The trouble with compassion devoid of efficiency is that one never has the means of exercising the compassion. The trouble with efficiency devoid of compassion is that one creates a society so divisive that the efficiency itself is destroyed by the divisiveness of society. I cannot judge the degree to which I have succeeded in getting the balance correct on this particular issue. I do know that in my moments of meditation and prayer I have genuinely attempted to the best of my ability to understand the hopes and aspirations of miners and their communities. I have persuaded my Cabinet colleagues to devote considerable economic resources to see that their reasonable aspirations can be satisfied.

If I had considered that Mr MacGregor was a man who had either been instructed or personally had the intention of destroying the mining industry, or that he was contemptuous of miners or their communities, I would of course have dismissed him immediately. Or if it had been insisted that he had continued, I would certainly have resigned. But I know that Mr MacGregor is a man who wants this industry to succeed, who wants it to expand and not contract, and who has been eager to provide miners and their communities with aid and assurances never previously given under his predecessors. Perhaps your observations on Mr MacGregor were based upon his image as portrayed in propaganda rather than upon the genuine aspirations or faults of the man himself.

You and I agree that the miners must not be defeated. But we must do our best to assess who is the true enemy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Walker".

PETER WALKER



EMBARGOED

FOR USE AFTER 20.00 HRS FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

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## PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Church House, Dean's Yard, London SW1P 3NZ. Telephone: 01-222 9011

TEXT OF SERMON BY THE BISHOP OF DURHAM, THE RT. REVD.  
DAVID JENKINS, AT HIS ENTHRONEMENT IN DURHAM CATHEDRAL  
ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1984

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace by your faith in Him, until by the power of the Holy Spirit, you overflow with hope. Romans 15.13.

We could do with some help from this "God of hope" here in the North East. Unemployment is at 35 to 50%. They propose to dump radioactive waste on us as if we were the scrap-yard of Britain. The Miners' Strike highlights how divided and distressed society is, to the point of violence. Christians seem absorbed in bad-tempered arguments about belief, or marriage, or politics. The organised churches find financial problems looming larger and larger. We all wonder if old men in the Kremlin or in the White House will over-reach themselves and actually use the nuclear weapons which are unthinkable but real. If you stop and think, hope does not come easily.

But we are stopped here in this great and moving building to enthrone a bishop of Durham. This is a questionable business too. Of the person involved, it can evidently be said that he is not everyone's cup of tea and that he has even been accused of being some people's cup of poison. Of the procedures, we are told that 'enthronement' is an ancient symbol of the Bishop's task and privilege to care for and "chair" the diocese. A 'throne' is just a chair. Nonetheless being installed in what is repeatedly claimed to be 'the highest throne in Christendom' leaves the representative relationship between a Lord Bishop of Durham and the Lord Jesus Christ inevitably ambiguous.



Further, the very title "Bishop of Durham" has its problems. My welcome at Darlington yesterday, and the representative nature of the gathering here tonight makes it clear that the Bishop of Durham is still regarded as just that, i.e. the Bishop who will stand for and serve the whole of the County of Durham, indeed, the whole North East. Here I see no ambiguity. If such opportunities for service and representation are open to me, then I am wholly committed to them. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is the God who is concerned for all and at one with all. It is the hope and task of His Church to long for, and to work for, His acknowledgment as God by all. But we do not wait for that acknowledgment before we seek to serve all, any more than God waited to send His son to die for all. The ambiguity is elsewhere. What part does the Church of England diocese of Durham now actually play in the ordinary life of the area? Further, the Church of England by no means contains all of the Christians there are in the area. So, being called 'Bishop of Durham' and acquiring a territorial signature verges on the pretentious and the anachronistic. Is this great building itself a magnificent symbol of past history or a sign of power for the future?

I face you, therefore, as an ambiguous, compromised and questioning person entering upon an ambiguous office in an uncertain church in the midst of a threatened and threatening world. I dare to do this and I, even, with fear and trembling, rejoice to do this because this is where God is to be found. In the midst, that is, of the ambiguities, the compromises, the uncertainties, the questions and the threats of our daily and ordinary worlds. For the Church exists, despite all its failings and all its historically acquired clutter, because the disturbing, provocative, impracticable, loving and utterly God-centred Jesus got himself crucified. Then God vindicated this God-centred way of life, love and being by raising Jesus up. So the disillusioned disciples were turned into spirit-filled apostles and the Church has ever since been learning and re-learning that in the flesh



and blood of this man is God's way of being with us, and of giving us a share in the bringing in of His Kingdom. If we long for hope, then we must not fall back on hoping against hope and refusing to face ordinary realities, within us and around us, both in society and in the Church. Nor must we indulge in cheap hope, expecting miracle solutions either from God or from politicians. For we know that keeping hope alive in this sort of a world cost God the Cross.

The cost of hope for us therefore is to get rid of all triumphalism and false expectations and to stay with our problems in the power of God and in search of God who is waiting for us and looking for us. If we who are Christians can work this out in the Church and in our religious practices, then we shall also be ready to help to work this out also in society at large and in our community practices. Let me try and explain.

Because the God who gives Himself for us in Jesus Christ and also gives Himself to us in the Spirit is so glorious, so gracious and so promising, we Christians are always liable to expect things of Him which are contrary to His revealed character and ways of working. God has committed Himself to the risk of creation, the identification of incarnation and the perseverance of indwelling. His principal and unique declaration of Himself to us is in Jesus, whom we Christians recognise as Christ. There was a glimpse of glory in the Transfiguration, but the fulfilling of the transfiguring glory was the disfiguring of the Cross. The Resurrection did not avoid rejection, desolation and death. It was brought about through them and out of them. If God goes that way, we can expect no short cuts. We have no right to expect a Church which will guarantee us infallible comfort, a Bible which will assure us of certain truth, charismatic experiences which settle our knowledge of God for good and all, miracles which prove God's presence beyond a peradventure, questions which we are quite sure



must always be put, or insights into the Kingdom of God which assuredly promise social utopias. We forget again and again that in discovering the Resurrection some doubted (Matt. 28.17), at the first Pentecost some asked 'What can this mean?' but others said contemptuously, 'They have been drinking!' (Acts 2.13), while at the Transfiguration Peter was both frightened and confused. God does not impose Himself, He gives Himself, and our faith, interpretation and obedience are always required to discern Him and respond to Him.

Of course we do have the Church to support us, the Bible to judge and renew us, experiences of the Spirit which kindle in us transformation, assurance and joy, miracles which encourage and direct people of faith, questions which we must ask as long as we acknowledge the limitations of the intellect, and a call to relate the Kingdom of God to what is going on in our society. But God must never be identified with His gifts or the occasions of His giving. Above all He does not give us these gifts, of Catholicity, of Bible, of Charismata, of Miracle, of Intellect and of Social Concern for us variously and differently to make party labels of them and to set Catholic against Protestant, against Evangelical, against Charismatic, against Liberal, against Activist. We must be making a mistake about God if we insist that the chief ways in which we personally experience God's gifts and His giving are His only ways or the definitive ways. The greatness, the glory and the freedom of God relativises all our disputes.

Christian conflicts, therefore, are not about the Who, but about the How. Whom we serve is the one and only God known to us through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. How we serve is a necessary but secondary matter and whatever the answers in practice and in theory, they are always subordinate to Him, and inadequate for Him. So none of our ways of understanding God and serving God are, strictly speaking, God's ways. All are our ways



which He allows us responsibly and humbly to develop and then submit to His blessing, His Judgment, His renewal and, sometimes, His reversal. The cost of hope in renewing the Church, spreading Christian discipleship and growing in Christian unity is the relativising of us all by the greatness of His glory and by the greatness of the risks which He takes in His love, so that we are set free for new forms of obedience, fresh discoveries of His grace and new ways of working together despite our differences.

This offer of freedom for newness and hope under the Almighty-ness of God and through the down-to-earth presence of God is, however, not by any means confined to Christian Churches and religious affairs. There is a power and a possibility here about hope in our present social discontents. Here, again, triumphalism, absolutism and illusions have to be got rid of if we are to find hopeful and human ways forward. The cost of hope in our society and our politics is a responsible readiness for compromise. Once we are clear that nobody has God's view of things or does God's will in God's way, then it also becomes clear that to insist on one's own view and nothing but one's own view and the whole of one's own view, is outrageously self-righteous, deeply inhuman and damnably dangerous. It is to set our inevitable conflicts on course for destructive fights which no one can win, through which all will lose and which could end by destroying us all. Until we reach the Kingdom of God, responsible mutually worked-out compromise will again and again be of the essence both of true godliness and true humanity. Anyone who rejects compromise as a matter of policy, programme or conviction is putting himself or herself in the place of God, and Christians and Atheists can surely be agreed that, whether there is a God or not, no person or set of persons from our human race is suitable for divine appointment. Consider the bearing of this on our most pressing current social tragedy, the Miners' Strike.



It suggests that there must be no victory in the Miners' Strike. There must be no victory, but a speedy settlement which is a compromise pointing to community and the future.

There must be no victory, because the miners must not be defeated. They are desperate for their communities and this desperation forces them to action. No one concerned in this strike, and we are all concerned, must forget for one moment what it is like to be part of a community centred on a Mine or a Works when that Mine or Works closes. It is death, depression and desolation. A society which seeks economic progress for material ends must not indifferently exact such human suffering from some for the sake of the affluence of others. The miners then must not be defeated, and this must be the first priority.

But there must be no victory for them on present terms because these include negotiations on their terms alone, pits left open at all costs and the endorsement of civil violence for group ends. Yet, equally, there must be no victory for the Government. This Government, whatever it says, seems in action to be determined to defeat the miners and thus treat workers as not part of "us". They also seem to be indifferent to poverty and powerlessness. Their financial measures consistently improve the lot of the already better off while worsening that of the badly off. Their answer to civil unrest seems to be to make the means of suppression more efficient while ignoring or playing down the causes. Such a government cannot promote community or give hope in the very difficult days we are faced with. It cannot even effectively promote the genuine insights it has about the need for realism in what is economically possible. To win a victory over the miners is simply to store up trouble not to reduce it.

And there must be no victory for "us", that is to say society at large in our various groupings, who by our trends, tendencies and voting set up the sort of



materialistic and consumer society we have. There will be no new hope for the future if all we get is the end of the strike and therefore, apparently, a quiet life again and the assurances that 'they' are dealing with things. Our problems will not go away. We shall find hope only if more and more of us are prepared to face up to what is going on, what is wrong in it, and what might be brought out of it.

Therefore, a negotiated settlement which is a compromise and demands, of us all, further work on the problems both of the Miners and of society at large is the only hopeful thing. But how might this come about? Might it be by Mr. Macgregor withdrawing from his Chairmanship and Mr. Scargill climbing down from his absolute demands? The withdrawal of an imported elderly American to leave a reconciling opportunity for some local product is surely neither dishonourable nor improper. It would show that the interpretation of his appointment as the provocation of the Miners to fight in order that they might be defeated was false, and it would indicate that the Government values the cost of hope as much as or more than the fruit of victory. After all, victory leaves hurt and more trouble. Hope has a future. But this would have to be matched by evidence that Mr. Scargill too was not an absolutist but a compassionate and realistic negotiator who cares more for people and for the future than for an ideology. Without withdrawal and without climbing down it looks as if we are faced with several people determined to play God. And this gives us all hell.

However this may be, and whatever may happen in the immediate future, the direction of the life of any branch or section of the Christian Church is clear. The direction is God. This is the God who has already paid the cost of hope in this confusing, risky but potentially glorious and often enjoyable world. He it is who is as He is in Jesus, identified with our flesh and blood, ready to meet us through His Spirit wherever there is human need or despair,



human creativity or joy. What we have to do is to face up to what is going on, get involved in what is going on and discern Him in what is going on. His gift will be Himself, His promise will be the growth of all that is human and His power will be hope. And in the midst of it all our anchor and assurance will be to worship Him, to wait for Him and to rest in Him. So 'may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace by your faith in Him until, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you overflow with hope.'

AMEN.