

PRIME MINISTER

cc Mr Catford

BISHOP OF DURHAM

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I understand from the Department of Energy that the Bishop of Durham came to see Mr. Walker this afternoon. They tell me that there was an extremely unsatisfactory meeting. Although the Bishop of Durham said that he wished he had appreciated many of the points made by Mr. Walker at the meeting and in his letter before he delivered his sermon and that he regretted if his remarks about Mr. MacGregor had been construed as being hurtful he was generally unrepentant. Indeed it was clear from the meeting that the Bishop is a man of the left, which bears out the impression given from his letter, which employs many of the standard Labour Party criticisms of the Government, eg uncaring, cuts in services, reductions in benefits etc. Mr. Walker's conclusion was that as far as convincing him was concerned, the Bishop was a "dead loss".

I understand from Andrew that you discussed whether or not a reply should go to the Bishop's letter to Mr. Walker. I understand Mr. Walker's view is that it should not do so and I must say I agree with him. We will never sway the Bishop himself and to engage in further public debate with him will only increase his status as a minor folk hero of the left.

3 October 1984

VSCABT