

PRIME MINISTER

Suggest - something near to
h). i.e. CPR.S. I believe it
Should include John Hoskyns.
NCB Is it possible to conduct depts without
the matter leaking? Please do it

At the meeting you held on 14 April, it was decided that extra coal stocks should be moved from NCB to CEGB premises. You also commissioned a study of other measures to help withstand an NUM strike.

The group working on this study under Robert Wade-Gery's chairmanship does not consider its terms of reference extend to the perhaps more important question of how to make a strike less likely in the first place.

spend too long on (Robert's a)
A half-day should be plenty!
mt.

The Chancellor raised this latter question in a minute to you last month (Flag A): he suggested a publicity campaign and referring the NCB to the MMC. Mr. Howell (Flag B) says he agrees in principle with a publicity campaign, though he wants to think further about the timing; he wants to think further, too, about the MMC reference idea. John Hoskyns also wrote a paper which you thought posed too many questions and offered too few answers; but at least it showed that much further work has to be done if we are even to stand a chance of preventing the NCB/NUM from further undermining the strategy.

The Chancellor, David Howell, Robert Armstrong (who has consulted Robin Ibbs) have all now written to say that they agree about the need for further work to be done urgently; and I would strongly support this myself. The Chancellor's minute at Flag C is particularly worth reading, and you should see Robert Armstrong's at Flag D.

Several suggestions have been made about how this work should be undertaken:

- (a) The Chancellor feels that Robin Ibbs should be put in charge of a small group - with overlapping membership with Robert Wade-Gery's group. This would include John Hoskyns.

/ (b)

SECRET

- 2 -

- (b) Robert Armstrong and Robin Ibbs think that CPRS should be given the responsibility, consulting others as necessary.
- (c) David Howell thinks that the work should begin with a meeting of a small mixed group of senior Ministers and officials.
- No (d) Alternatively, the Wade-Gery group could simply have its terms of reference expanded.

Assuming you accept that more work should be done, I would be against having a meeting involving Ministers: that would come later. Nor would I give this further work to Wade-Gery to oversee: he is an excellent chairman on the contingency work, but Robin Ibbs and his staff with their industrial experience are better equipped to take the lead from now on. Robin Ibbs has told me that he would strongly prefer option (b) because chairing a group will involve him in a heavier load (he is already very heavily loaded), and because a study by CPRS alone will give him a freer hand. On the other hand, the CPRS's conclusions would have to be looked at by Departments, which could involve delay. On those grounds, a group under Robin's chairmanship as proposed by the Chancellor might be preferable.

The CPRS or the CPRS-led group (whichever you would prefer) could take as their terms of reference the side-lined passage in Robert Armstrong's minute at Flag D, bearing in mind the issues raised in the Chancellor's minute. Security of course will have to be very tight.

Content to go ahead on this basis with CPRS study or CPRS-led group study?

5 June, 1981.

SECRET