

Natby  
Coal

✓ Mr Dwyer  
Mr Walters  
→ Mr Verden

Prime Minister 4

01 211 6402

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14/7  
MS

Rt Hon James Prior MP  
Secretary of State for Employment  
Caxton House  
Tothill St  
London SW1

14 July 1981

Dear Sir

NUM CONFERENCE 1981

The National Union of Mineworkers held their annual conference from 6 to 9 July in Jersey. As he has done in the past, John Moore attended for part of the time. I attach a background note, based on his impressions and observations, in which you and copy recipients may be interested.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and the Environment, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Ibbs.

Howell  
Dwyer

DRA R HOWELL

CONFIDENTIAL

NUM CONFERENCE 1981

It was clear from the conference that:

- the left wing of the NUM dominates both the National Executive Committee and the delegate conference as a whole;
- the right wing and the 'moderates' lack influence on these two bodies;
- the 'moderates' tend to follow the left-wing lead on issues such as Belvoir and pit closures;
- Arthur Scargill is now almost certain to succeed Joe Gormley as President of the NUM;
- part of the left-wing is obsessed with the idea of 'taking on' the Government;
- there is a wide gap between the militancy of the NUM leadership and the moderation of the men in the many of the coalfields;
- although Sir Derek Ezra tried to avoid making this apparent, in the final analysis the Board's sympathies on issues such as Belvoir are closer to the miners' than they are to the Government's.

The main conclusion to be drawn is that it is important for the Government to separate this year's wage negotiations from discussions on Belvoir and pit closures. If these issues are allowed to come together, and the left wing will make every effort to achieve this, industrial action is very likely. If these issues are kept separate, the NUM as a whole, and the NCB, believe that a 'reasonable' settlement will emerge from a pit-head ballot on this year's pay negotiations. In the miners' terms, this means something related to the RPI.

The target of our propaganda campaign is the nation - not the miners. Our tactics should be to keep the debate on coal cool and analytical, insisting that each issue should be examined on its own merits.

Because of the high degree of organisation and ability among the left in the NUM, there is a danger that our concern to 'talk down' pay settlements will come to be seen as a formal pay policy, against which the left can wield their industrial muscle. We must guard against this risk in our future dealings with the industry.

While John Moore has long been able to talk privately with Joe Gormley, Michael McGahey and Lawrence Daly, this year was the first occasion on which Arthur Scargill sought him out. Scargill is certain of the Presidency. The only question remaining is whether Trever Bell will run against him, or simply not stand. Scargill told John Moore that if Bell did stand against him, he would prevent Bell from succeeding Daly as General Secretary.

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