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CABINET

MINISTERIAL GROUP ON COAL

LOCAL AUTHORITY ASSISTANCE TO
THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS

Note by the Secretaries

1. At the Misc 101 meeting on 20 November 1984 the Secretary of State for Energy was invited to arrange for his officials, in consultation with officials of the Scottish Office, Welsh Office and Department of the Environment, to assemble information about financial assistance given to the National Union of Mineworkers by local authorities.
2. Attached, for the information of members of Misc 101 is a note by officials of the Department of Energy which it is intended should be discussed at the meeting of the Group arranged for Monday 28 January at 4.15pm. The Secretaries of State for Wales and the Environment will be invited to attend this meeting.

Signed ROBERT ARMSTRONG
P L GREGGSON
J A J BUDD
J F STOKER

Cabinet Office

17 January 1985

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LOCAL AUTHORITY ASSISTANCE TO THE NUM

At the meeting of MISC 101 on 20 November, it was agreed that officials of the Department of Energy, in association with officials of the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office should seek to establish what financial assistance had been provided by local authorities to the NUM. This paper summarises the information gathered by the various Government Departments concerned, including the Department of Employment. The full information is attached at annex.

2 All the Departments concerned have been forced to rely extensively on newspaper reports, the accuracy of which cannot be guaranteed. The sensitivity of the subject has precluded any attempt at systematic verification with the local authorities themselves.

The Findings

3 No evidence is available that financial assistance has been provided by local authorities directly to the National Union of Mineworkers.

4 Payments have generally been made to striking miners and their families or to funds set up on their behalf. Almost 50 local authorities in England and Wales and 9 in Scotland have made financial contributions. By end-December these may have amounted to over £3.5m in England and Wales and by mid-November to about £1.5m in Scotland. Other forms of assistance have included free use of transport or leisure facilities and free school meals for children during the holidays.

5 The significance of this financial support is put in perspective by comparison with the social security benefits being paid to striking miners. Supplementary benefit in respect of miners' dependents is estimated by DMS to have amounted to £26M by 4 December.

The Legal Basis

6 Local authorities in England and Wales appear to be providing support under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and, in Scotland, under the equivalent powers in section 83 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. Authorities in Scotland have also been using sections 10 and

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of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The attached notes by DOE and Scottish Office set out the purposes covered by these provisions and the difficulty, on the basis of the material available, of questioning the legality of any of the payments. Any such challenge will be, in the first instance, for the Council's auditors, unless a particular payment were to be challenged in the courts. The whole question of the scope of discretionary powers available to local Government under the Local Government Act 1972 is under consideration by DOE Ministers.

Department of Energy
9 January 1985

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LOCAL AUTHORITY ASSISTANCE TO STRIKING MINERS

- A - England
- B - Wales
- C - Scotland
- D - Tabulation of Other Press Reports

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LOCAL AUTHORITY ASSISTANCE TO STRIKING MINERS: ENGLAND

1 The following table updates information about local authority payments to striking miners and their families. There is no evidence of such assistance being provided directly to the National Union of Mineworkers. It would appear that the payments are being made under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 which permits expenditure (up to the limit of a 2p rate product) on:

- a. activities for which no specific power already exists provided those activities are in the local authority's opinion benefitting their area (in whole or in part) or their inhabitants (in whole or in part);
- b. donations to UK charities, or charitable appeals connected with particular events.

2 The Departmental view is that payments to individual persons cannot lawfully be made within the terms of section 137. However, provision of assistance in kind may or may not be lawful, depending on the circumstances of any particular case.

3 There is no means of establishing whether the detailed information set out in the table is reliable (and hence there can be no basis for speculating as to whether particular contributions may be lawful or otherwise, though it seems that authorities generally do take legal advice on this issue).

4 The information is gathered mainly from Press reports, checked with - or in many cases originating from - the Department's Regional Directors. The accuracy of the reports cannot be vouched for, and the content may be incomplete (e.g. it is not always clear that the full council has endorsed a committee recommendation). Because of the sensitivity of the subject, verification of reports frequently cannot be pursued with authorities themselves.

- 5 The broad conclusions to be drawn are that:
- a. over 40 authorities in England reportedly have provided, or intend to provide cash assistance to

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striking miners and their families (but not to the NUM);

- b. the total amount of cash involved is of the order of £3.5M;

the aggregate picture is built up from individual reports, mostly in the Press, whose reliability is questionable;

- d. it would be speculative to offer opinions about lawfulness, but authorities on this issue generally proceed with care.

DOE

December 1984

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Sum Involved/Allocated
(where appropriate or known)

KNOWSLEY

Contributions to miners' strike hardship fund

£1,000

GT. MANCHESTER C.C

Launching of hardship relief fund for colliery communities contribution to buy food and clothing (via War on Want)

TINE AND WEAR CC

(1) Agreed to underwrite a hardship fund set up for striking miners families - money distributed in form of £4 per week food vouchers via Salvation Army

(2) Considering another input to fund following exhaustion of £100,000. Salvation Army has pulled out of distribution role (cannot cope was the reason given) and Council has yet to decide how they proposed to distribute further money

*Total contributions to hardship funds (1) and (2)

£300,000

* (3) Considering further donation of £4 weekly food vouchers via social services departments and other charities

DORHAM CC

(1) Donation to Salvation Army to relieve hardship

(1) £25,000 plus further £75,000

(2) Provision of free school meals during summer holidays for striking miners children. Scheme to be run by voluntary organisations

* (2) £187,000

* (3) Use of School premises

(3) £11,000

(4) Extra travel and subsistence allowance from social services and free coal

£22,000

(5) A further donation proposed

£50,000

NORTHUMBERLAND CC

(1) Provision of free school meals to all children entitled to them during summer holidays (including miners children) Distribution to be by voluntary agencies

£30,000 - £50,000

* (2) Grants and loans through Social Services (now suspended)

£120,000

* (3) £20,000 cash help

£20,000

* (4) £5 cheque during Christmas holidays for families of children normally entitled to free school meals (approx 8500)

approx £42,500

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L.A

WANSBECK

Activity

Sum Involved/Allocated
(Where appropriate
or known)

DEBENTSIDE

Free school meals to all children entitled to them during summer holidays (including miners children). The scheme is being paid for from a hardship fund which was launched with money left from the Council's defunct lottery scheme.

£30,000

SOUTH THURSIDE

Hardship funds (set up by striking miners) are to receive money from the Council's lottery fund.

Max cash payout around £18,000

BLYTH VALLEY

Agreed to support striking miners children during the summer holidays. The scheme is to be administered by the Salvation Army and will involve a voucher system to replace free school meals.

£25,000

NEWCASTLE

Food vouchers provided for local miners families

£25,000?

- (1) Donation to children of striking miners
- (2) Christmas boxes '84 each
- (3) £4 + £10 fuel allowance backdated to November.

(1) £50,000

CHESTERFIELD

- (1) Major established appeal fund. Council paid in contribution Applications to fund invited for payments by trustees to miners' dependents.
- (2) Free use of leisure facilities for miners' families.

(1) £50,000

N E DERBYSHIRE

- (1) Money authorised for direct payment to individuals putting in form claiming serious hardship to eligible dependents
- (2) Free use of leisure facilities for miners' families

(1) £50,000

BOLSOVER

Chairman of Council established appeal fund for money with which to supply food parcels (value about £4 per head) to dependents of striking miners. Major contribution has come from Council.

£10,000

BASSETLAW

- (1) Payment of money to welfare organisation for setting up soup kitchens
- (2) Additional Housing benefit to miners' families plus street collections for miners

(1) £2,000

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CC

Continuance of school meals during summer holidays in those areas where miners are on strike. Miners children will not however be the only beneficiaries - other children eligible for free meals will also be able to use the service.

Estimated £130,000 (the Education Cmttee are reported as having already spent £70,000 on meals and £10,000 on clothing vouchers for miners children.

R New Item

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Activity

Sum involved/Allocated
(where appropriate or know)

LEEDS

- (1) Free school meals for miners children (1) £250,000?
 - (2) Premises let at Peppercorn rent to Leeds Labour Party Miners' Support Centre
 - (3) Promotion of benefit concert by Billy Connolly at Grand Theatre. Council meeting running expenses themselves and donating proceeds to a specially constituted hardship trust fund (3) £10,000?
 - (4) Fund set up to provide essential clothes and shoes for miners children (4) £70,000
- Donation to appeal fund launched by Chairman of S. Yorkshire CC £100,000

SHEFFIELD

- (1) Donation to already existing hardship fund in district (1) £5,000

KIRKLESS

- (2) £250 per week for food for 107 families not from rates but from £3,000 charity fund from sale of land bought in the past. with miners welfare fund

DONCASTER

- (1) Free school clothing plus foot wear plus free swimming vouchers (1) £135,000 ?
- (2) Provision of free school meals (2) £645,000 ?

***BARNSELY**

- (1) Free school meals (1) £350,000
- (2) Extra housing benefits (2) £214,000
- (3) Food vouchers (3) £103,000

***RUDDERSFIELD**

Donations to miners via Salvation Army £30,000

***W. YORKS CC**

Donation via Coalfield Trust to enable miners' families to buy multiple journey tickets £50,000

***S. YORKS CC**

£100,000 to TUC Hardship Fund £100,000

GENERALLY

Regional Office indicate that eventually all the LAs in mining districts are making contributions by way of free meals for children of families judged to be in need, through the normal school meals service up to the end of term and by special arrangement subsequently. Clothing allowances and grant, free use of leisure facilities also feature

Unknown but likely to be significant

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LA

Activity

Sum Involved/Allocated
(where appropriate or
known)

STAFFORDSHIRE CC

Considered BUT REJECTED request for donation (£250,000) to striking miners hardship fund

STOKE-ON-TRENT

- (1) Provision of accommodation on two occasions for picketing miners, (in June/July). Once at the Old British Restaurant and once in Longton Old Town Hall - refreshments of some sort may have been provided.
- (2) Street collections being allowed each week
- (3) Distribution of food and clothing vouchers
- (4) Concessionary rates for recreational facilities
- (5) Rent allowances and rate rebates REJECTED proposal to donate £100,000 to hardship fund.

£1200 p.v. (food)
£1000 (clothing)

• BIRMINGHAM

• COVENTRY

- Street collections
- (1) Permission to display posters and collect food free of charge
 - (2) Sale of 2 surplus huts at £70 each
 - (3) Street collections
- REJECTED a motion to give £100,000 donation

• WREKIN

- (1) Street collections
- (2) Grants to 20 striking miners in Telford (follow-up to grant of £15,000 in May)

At least £15,000

SOUTHWARK

- (1) Meeting purportedly for staff briefing but alleged to have been like a political rally for miners.
- (2) Letting of N Peckham Civic Centre for fund-raising event for miners.
- (3) Hire of coaches to transport Kent miners' families to Peckham for sport and fun week-end.
- (4) Free accommodation in Council offices for striking miners.

LANBETH

- (1) Twinning with pit villages in Kent (Aylesham & Eyethorne)
- (2) Accommodation at the Queens Hotel for 11 miners overnight

£700

GREENWICH

Twinning with Easington 02 (important Co.Durham mining area)

G L C

Ken Livingstone acted as auctioneer for a NUM Artists Support Group organised auction held at County Hall to raise money for striking miners.

• LEWISHAM

Use of a room and telephone in the civic suite for local miners' support groups for organisation of food/money collections.

TOTALS: 43 Authorities
£3.6m.

• NEW ITEM.

LOCAL AUTHORITY ASSISTANCE TO STRIKING MINERS - WALES

There is no evidence of assistance being provided directly to the National Union of Mineworkers but there have been reports of help being given, often by local authority donations to Support Groups, to striking miners and their families. As in England it would appear that payments are being made under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

No comprehensive information is available but the following has been obtained from press reports:

Blaenau Gwent Borough Council	
to buy food for miners and families	£60,800
Merthyr Borough Council	
ditto	£14,000
Dyfed County Council	
ditto	£10,000
Mid Glamorgan County Council	
free meals to children of strikers during school holidays	

The Chairman of South Glamorgan County Council has recently launched an appeal fund to support miners' families.

The likelihood is that most local authorities in the coalfield have given assistance in some form or other over the period of the strike, if not in cash then by allowing free use of leisure facilities or municipal transport etc.

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LOCAL AUTHORITY ASSISTANCE TO STRIKING MINERS - SCOTLAND .

1. The main powers under which Scottish local authorities are giving assistance to striking miners and their families are contained in section 83 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and sections 10 and 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. Section 83, which is equivalent to section 137 of the English Local Government Act 1972, empowers authorities to incur expenditure up to the limit of a 2p rate on activities for which no specific power already exists, and on contributions to charitable funds for UK work or charitable appeals connected with particular events affecting persons resident in the UK. Section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 empowers authorities to make grants to voluntary organisations; section 12 enables Councils to provide assistance in exceptional circumstances to "persons in need" as defined in the Act.
2. The Controller of Audit, the Chief Officer of the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland, has been investigating a number of cases in which payments have been made under the powers noted above. He will shortly be making two reports to the Accounts Commission concerning payments by Lothian Regional Council (under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968) and Edinburgh District Council (under section 83 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973). It is understood that these reports will conclude that both authorities were acting lawfully, although the Controller may express doubt in the Edinburgh case. This doubt arises because section 5 of the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982 forbids District Councils from invoking section 83 to empower expenditure when the Regional Council has power to carry out this type of expenditure. However, the District may lawfully contribute to the Region's expenditure at the Region's invitation. A number of contributions made by other Districts are subject to the same considerations as that of Edinburgh. The Controller is awaiting comments from Fife and Strathclyde on their use of section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to support large payments.
3. Comprehensive and reliable information on the scale of payments by authorities is not available but a survey conducted by and reported in the "Scotsman" in November suggested that expenditure incurred at that time was as follows:

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	<u>Donations to Relief Funds</u>	<u>Social Work payments</u>
Strathclyde	£50,000	£700,000
Lathian	£20,000	-
Fife	£40,000	£525,000
Central	-	£ 75,000*
Edinburgh	£20,000	-
Glasgow	£25,000	-
Aberdeen	£ 5,000	-
Kirkcaldy	£ 3,000	-
Dunfermline	£ 1,500	-

*For the relief of distress and including contributions by Falkirk and Clackmannan Districts.

4. The social work payments referred to in the table above relate to total expenditure made to "families in need" - not specifically those of miners, although it is likely that the major proportion of the expenditure has been for that purpose. These figures may well understate the present position; a more recent Press report regarding payments by Fife Regional Council, for example, suggested that the Council's expenditure had reached around £1 million.

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Other Press Reports of Local Authority Assistance to Miners

ORGANISATION	SOURCE AND DATE	TYPE AND SIZE OF SUPPORT	COMMENT
<u>Local Authorities</u>			
Glasgow Council	M. Star 22/10	£20,000	
Edinburgh Council	M. Star 1/11	£15,000 £ 5,000 to SOGAT '82 food fund	
Islington	M. Star 1/11	£57,000 (£ 3,000 p.m. levy on staff)	
Haringey	M. Star 12/11	£62,000 Support Reliefs	
Greater Manchester	M. Star 22/8 Telegraph 30/10	£5 for food parcels to families £50,000	
Welwyn Garden City	M. Star 12/11	£1,000 sponsored walk	
Boreham Wood	M. Star 12/11	£3,180	
Barrow-in-Furness Relief Committee	M. Star 29/5	£100	
Brent Support Campaign	M. Star 3/11	£80,000	
Kent (Women Support)	M. Star 12/11	£200 sponsored run	
Tyne & Wear	Telegraph 30/10 6/8	£4 for food vouchers to families £400,000 pledged	Ran for 5 months.
Mid-Glamorgan	" 6/8	£316,000 "	
Fife	" "	£266,000 "	
Derbyshire	" "	£250,000 "	
Notts	" "	£130,000 "	
Sheffield	" "	£100,000 "	

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ORGANISATION	SOURCE AND DATE	TYPE AND SIZE OF SUPPORT	COMMENT
Hampshire (Support Committee)	M. Star 25/5	£10,000 £500 food for S.Wales	
Chesterfield (Women)	M. Star 14/11	Support rallies	
Barnsley	Newsline 20/11	Free school meals	
Blaenau Gwent		£14,000 food vouchers	
Westminster (Support Group)	M. Star 16/11	Xmas toys appeal	
Lambeth (Joint Unions)	Newsline 17/11	£1,500 worth of food £300 childrens clothes and toys.	

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Information collected by D. Employment