

SECRET

SUBJECT
cc Master

(SITZATIN)

007
32

CLOSED UNDER THE
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
ACT 2000



NBPM

AT

30/5

10 DOWNING STREET

29 May 1985

From the Private Secretary

Your Secretary of State saw the Prime Minister briefly today to discuss the current position in the coal industry. Amongst other matters which were raised, the Prime Minister referred to continuing reports of intimidation of working miners. She remained unconvinced that sufficient was being done to protect them from such intimidation and that the National Coal Board was sufficiently prepared to transfer those who requested it to other pits such as Selby. Mr. Walker said that he believed that the position was improving in this respect. While the initial policy of the Coal Board had been to punish the intimidators rather than to transfer the intimidated, they were now exercising much more flexibility. He himself had examined a considerable number of cases, many of which had resulted in transfers. He was not, however, convinced that a transfer was an appropriate remedy in each case. A blanket undertaking to transfer any working miner who sought it would give carte blanche to those bent on intimidation; wherever possible it was better to root out such behaviour rather than give in to it. Nevertheless, he proposed to continue to prompt the Coal Board to look sympathetically where a good case could be made out, and in this context had made it clear to many of the working miners' leaders that they could contact him personally with details. The Prime Minister said that she had been sent the names of 24 working miners who wished to be transferred, and Mr. Walker undertook to look into these urgently. A list is attached, and I should be grateful if you would arrange for such consideration to be given.

The Prime Minister also referred to the case of

The Prime Minister had heard that he was unable to work there now and had had to take another job in an area office at £4,000 a year less. Mrs. Thatcher would be grateful if your Secretary of State could look into this case also.

Perhaps you could arrange for the Prime Minister to be informed of the outcome of consideration of these cases.

Timothy Flesher

Geoff Dart, Esq.,
Department of Energy

File

MR. TURNBULL

MR. FLESHER

As you know, the Prime Minister is hoping to meet the Energy Secretary and Peter Gregson tomorrow afternoon.

Mr. Walker rang the Prime Minister from home this evening. He reported that Ian MacGregor had met the Area Executives in Edinburgh, and that they had unanimously pressed him to see NACODS. They stressed their view to him that a deal could be done on the modified procedure. They thought it absurd not to talk to NACODS on the grounds that they were operating an overtime ban. Ian MacGregor has agreed to meet the union at 4 p.m. tomorrow, with the Area Executives.

The Prime Minister stressed that it was important not merely to meet the union, but that Mr. MacGregor should know what he should say to them. The Energy Secretary believed that, in view of the representations from the Area Executives, Mr. MacGregor would be clear about that.

The Prime Minister made the point to Mr. Walker that there was widespread belief that the Government had let working miners down. She understood that Mr. MacGregor had written to colliery managers saying that working miners should not be transferred. This was completely unacceptable. Woodrow Wyatt had a list of working miners who were still being intimidated and something had to be done to help them. He was going to provide her with the names.

Mr. Walker noted that he had already taken up the cases of some 130 people. He agreed that Mr. MacGregor's instruction was quite unacceptable. He too was in touch with Woodrow Wyatt.

/ The

SECRET

- 2 -

The Prime Minister noted that she hoped to get away from Chequers at about 3.45 p.m., after the Sultan had left, for her meeting with Mr. Walker tomorrow afternoon.

MBA

(Mark Addison)

28 May 1985

SECRET