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S E C R E T

C.P.(50) 302

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5TH DECEMBER, 1950

CABINET

COAL EMERGENCY MEASURES

Memorandum by the Minister of Fuel and Power

My colleagues will no doubt wish to be kept in touch with the developments in the coal situation and we should, I think, take stock each week of the progress that is being made in dealing with the many problems that are arising.

THE WINTER PROBLEM

2. The winter problem is, as I have already stated, one of finding another 3 million tons of coal needed if our stocks this winter are not to fall below the minimum safety level of 9 million tons. The three main sources are:-

- (i) imports of coal, from which, in view of shipping difficulties, however, we cannot yet count on much more than 1 million tons in the crucial months January to March (and perhaps not even that much, unless arrangements can be made to bring in Polish coal);
- (ii) reduction of exports, which should yield $\frac{3}{4}$ million tons in the period January to March (1 million to the end of April);
- (iii) an improvement in output.

Measures to secure (i) and (ii) are now under way, and there is at present nothing further to say, except that I hope that everything possible will be done to secure the maximum number of ships that can be used for American coal, together with early supplies of Polish coal.

3. It remains to be seen whether output will increase sufficiently to cover the remainder of the 3 million ton gap (1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ million tons). If we could exceed last year's output by 50,000 tons a week for the rest of the winter we should, as I have already told the miners, be out of the wood. Indeed, if we get full value from our decisions on imports and exports (i. e. $1\frac{3}{4}$ million tons), I think it would be safe to say that we might avoid serious difficulties, if, on average, for the rest of the winter, output was as good as last year's.

4. What are our chances of doing this? When I last reported, deep-mined output had averaged for the previous four weeks 82,000 tons a week below last year's output. Last week, I am glad to say there was some improvement in deep-mined output, which came close to last year's figure; it increased by 140,000 tons over the previous week, largely owing

1. The first part of the document discusses the general principles of the project.

2. The second part of the document discusses the specific objectives of the project.

3. The third part of the document discusses the methodology of the project.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the results of the project.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the conclusions of the project.

6. The sixth part of the document discusses the recommendations of the project.

7. The seventh part of the document discusses the future work of the project.

8. The eighth part of the document discusses the impact of the project.

9. The ninth part of the document discusses the funding of the project.

10. The tenth part of the document discusses the dissemination of the project.

11. The eleventh part of the document discusses the evaluation of the project.

12. The twelfth part of the document discusses the monitoring of the project.

13. The thirteenth part of the document discusses the reporting of the project.

14. The fourteenth part of the document discusses the communication of the project.

15. The fifteenth part of the document discusses the dissemination of the project.

to an increase of 113,000 tons in Saturday working following the appeal by the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers. Saturday working gave us last week 37,000 tons more than it did in the corresponding week last year. Unhappily, however, owing to bad weather, the opencast output was low and total output (deep-mined and opencast) was still nearly 60,000 tons below last year's figure.

5. It must in present circumstances remain a very open question whether we shall achieve last year's level of output over the rest of the winter. If we do, we ought to be reasonably safe from critical shortages; but whether we do must depend very largely on three factors:-

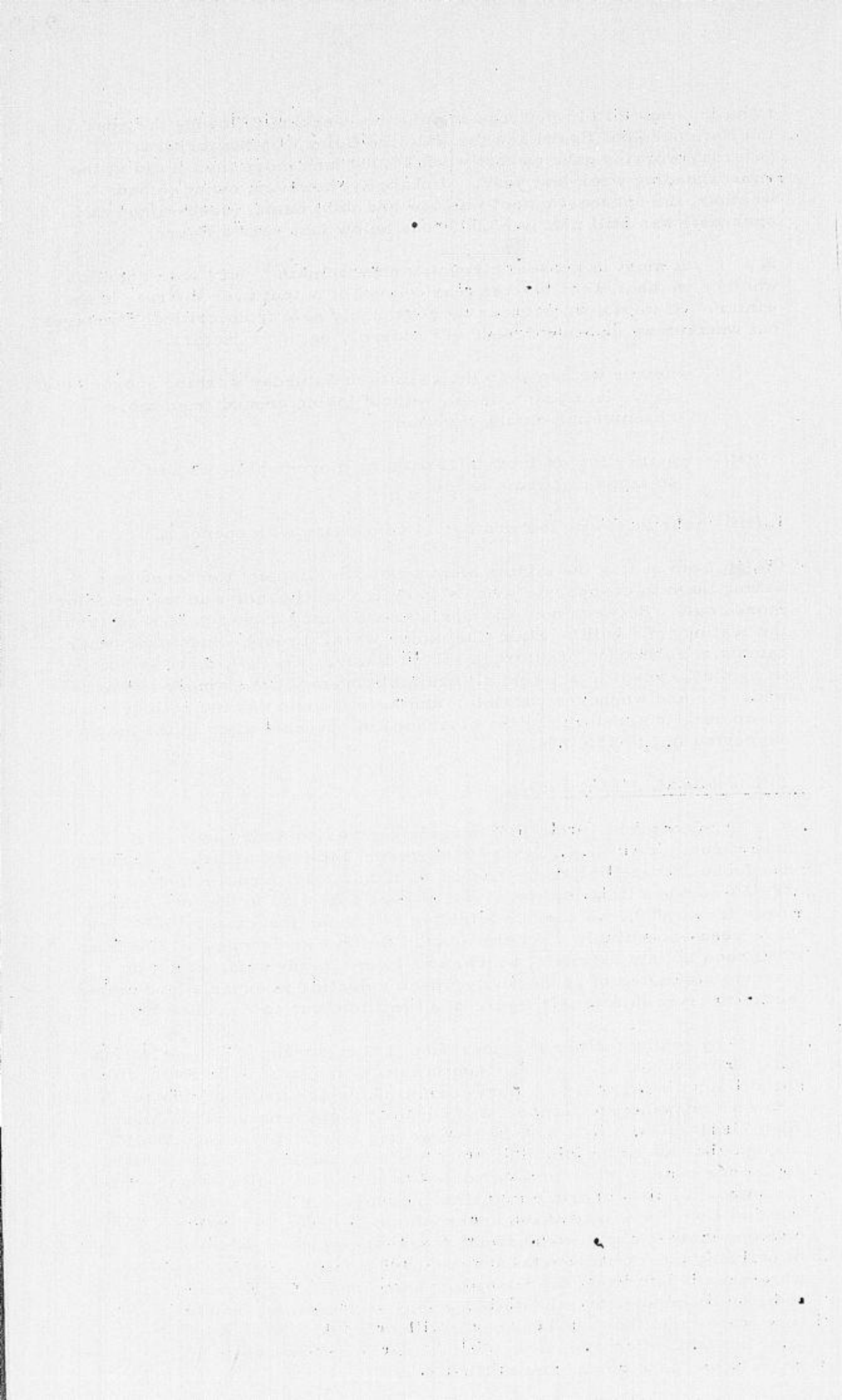
- (i) whether we can keep the results of Saturday working appreciably above last year's level, without losing ground from more absenteeism during the week;
- (ii) whether fog or snow interrupts the movement of wagons, and so stops pits from winding;
- (iii) our luck with the weather in connection with opencast.

On (i), I am seeing the mining Members of Parliament tomorrow and asking them to co-operate with us in their constituencies in the drive for more coal. Between now and Christmas we may expect good results, and the testing time will be after Christmas when, through illness and other causes, a relaxation of effort is all too likely. On (iii), there is nothing we can do, except to see that all available opencast machinery is worked wherever and whenever possible: and here I would ask my colleagues to co-operate in accelerating the clearance of opencast sites in the manner suggested in C.P.(50) 296.

THE PROBLEM FOR 1951

6. Our problem for 1951 largely centres on man-power. As I have already said (in C.P.(50) 297) a recent Ministry of Labour enquiry has found that in 1951 there may be a further loss to coalmining of 22,000 workers (that is, by the end of 1951 a decline in the total labour force to 663,000). Previous Ministry of Labour forecasts of this kind have been exceedingly accurate, and I am in consequence all the more disturbed by this estimate, which, as I have already said, would, on current estimates of productivity, mean a decline in exports (and ships' bunkers) from this year's figure of 17 million tons to 7 million tons.

7. Pending further consideration, I have arranged for the National Coal Board and the Overseas Negotiations Committee to be warned that, for the time being, cargo export commitments are not to be entered into that would depend on an export and bunker programme for 1951 higher than 7 million tons. It may be that we can take steps to secure a big enough addition to the mining labour force to enable us to give a higher figure for exports at some later date (or it may be that we shall continue the import of coal in order to maintain exports - a matter that the Official Coal Committee have under consideration); but until we can see our way more clearly we must not repeat the mistake we made last summer of entering into commitments that we cannot fulfil. I recommend that when we are informing the Economic Commission for Europe of our position on imports and the decision to cut exports, we should at the same time warn them that our 1951 exports will probably not exceed 7 million tons, but that, of course, if the position improves, we shall take immediate steps to increase our export availability.



8. The problem before us is whether we can find means of reversing the decline in man-power and securing a steady increase during the whole of next year, ending the year, I suggest, with an increase of 20,000 men, and a total labour force 40,000 higher than the 663,000 forecast by the Ministry of Labour. I would have liked to set the target higher (since this figure will give us only 12 million tons for exports and bunkers, compared with the 1950 figure of 17 million tons); but 40,000 is a very large number and drastic action will be needed to secure even that figure.

9. I have asked the National Coal Board to get ahead, in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour, with arrangements for a big recruiting campaign (following the Cabinet Conclusions of 4th December), and while the campaign may do some good, it is bound to be seriously, if not fatally, handicapped by the consideration that underground coalmining, in comparison with all the other work that is increasingly available, is not an attractive job.

10. We cannot, in my view, hope to restore the position, unless and until we find ways and means of making coalmining appreciably more attractive than other work. I see no alternative but to attach a number of special privileges to mining, and I would ask my colleagues now to approve the two that I have suggested in C.P.(50) 297:-

- (i) a Supplementary Pensions Scheme for miners;
- (ii) an option for service in the mines in place of service in the Forces.

11. I would be grateful if my colleagues would also let me have their advice on other forms of concession that could be granted, for I do not think these two by themselves will suffice.

12. Personally I think it may be found desirable to give miners further housing privileges, but I do not ask for this to be considered until I have a firm proposal to make to the Cabinet about what should be done to provide mobile labour to build houses for miners in specially difficult areas. I understand the Official Coal Committee is making some progress on this matter.

13. I therefore ask my colleagues to agree to my recommendations on:-

- (a) opencast coal (paragraph 5 above);
- (b) the intimation to be given to the Economic Commission for Europe (paragraph 7);
- (c) supplementary pensions (paragraph 10 (i));
- (d) opting for the mines (paragraph 10(ii)).

P.J.N.-B.

Ministry of Fuel and Power, S.W.1,

5TH DECEMBER, 1950.

