

Mr Vercher

CONFIDENTIAL

27 July 1982

MR SCHOLAR

Mr Lawson's office

cc Mr Walters
Mr Mount

30/6/82 have sent me, sub rosa, the unpublished letter (attached). OK? Pl don't refer to it. I didn't feel up to asking mem for X.

NATIONAL COAL BOARD OBJECTIVES

MUS 28/7

In my note to you of 2 July, I warned that the Department of Energy were contemplating changes to the draft objectives letter for the NCB, following advice from Siddall and Cowan. Mr Lawson's note to the Prime Minister today reflects that position; but I really do not think that, after the detailed discussion of the draft letter, in which the Prime Minister will recall being closely engaged, what Mr Lawson proposes at the end of his note is satisfactory.

x/ Mr Lawson's three-tiered approach consists of conveying the most sensitive points - ie privatisation and, presumably, imports - orally, with an agreed record; putting the material which is less sensitive but unsuitable for publication into an unpublished letter; and putting non-controversial points into the published exposition of the objectives. I see no objection to that, provided that the unpublished letter really does contain all the points which need to be made apart from the very few which must be made orally; and provided that the draft follows in some detail the lines already agreed. But Mr Lawson suggests that the published letter be a "slightly modified version" of what we have already agreed; and that the other points be dealt with "in one or other of the ways I have proposed in the preceding paragraph", ie either orally or in the other letter. I fear that the only satisfactory way of dealing with this is to ask to see Mr Lawson's drafts: that will no doubt be an unwelcome request to him, but scarcely unreasonable, considering that the earlier drafts were discussed between him and the Prime Minister on 14 June. But you may be able to deal with this at Private Secretary level, without troubling Mr Lawson himself.

J.V.

JOHN VEREKER

As Scholar.

PA.
MUS 29/7

Thank you. I leave it to you to judge whether, in view of her previous close interest, the Prime Minister should see this. As you will see from my ms. comments on the attached - which is the published letter, not the unpublished one - it is considerably watered down, & now makes not even a glancing reference to imports.

CONFIDENTIAL

J.V.
28/7