

Ref: A01361

SECRET AND PERSONAL

MAR 1972

MR. ARMSTRONG

I am trying to get Subversion in Industry back on to its feet - if you see what I mean! But I think that what we must now ask Ministers to consider is something rather wider - i. e. the extent of organised subversion (if it exists) not merely in industry but also in other influential areas of society such as education, the communications media and so forth; and the means by which, if it does exist, the Government might best deal with it. As a first step I have asked the Security Service to produce a memorandum on this subject within the next week or so; and when I have received it I shall probably suggest that the Prime Minister should ask a few of his colleagues (e. g. the Home Secretary, the Foreign Secretary, the Lord President, the Secretary of State for Defence and, possibly, the Secretary of State for Employment) to meet and to discuss informally the very difficult, elusive and intractable problems involved.

BURKE TREND

29th February, 1972

SECRET

CABINET OFFICE

A 6506

1-MAR 1972

FILING INSTRUCTIONS

FILE No.

Sir Burke Trend
MR. NORBURY

At yesterday's Home Regional Meeting the Chairman raised informally and without prior warning the question of the functions of the Meetings in the light of the recent coal strike. He suggested that a study of subversive influences affecting the conduct of picketing might be a useful task for the Meetings to undertake.

I suggested that it would be as well to keep the functions of the HR meetings under consideration in the light of any general review of the lessons to be drawn from the coal strike and the developments which might emerge from such a view. Subject to this, the HR Meetings - which take place monthly, usually with the minutes circulated two or three weeks afterwards - should probably continue to be primarily of a stocktaking and ruminative nature. It might be valuable for the HR Meetings to sponsor a series of studies of longer term or continuing interest to the Emergencies Committees as well as the Subversion at Home Committee (to which the HR Meetings look as 'parent'). Picketing was certainly one subject which might repay study, and a continuing watch on union and left wing attitudes towards the industrial relations Act was another. These impromptu remarks were well received, but I think it would be useful for us to give the general question further consideration within the Cabinet Office, particularly as I sense some perplexity about the current mission of the HR Meetings.

Although the meetings theoretically report to the SH Committee, in practice it is a pretty loose relationship and I cannot recollect during my time here any formal communication between the two bodies. The SH Committee has not been active for some time; but when it has required advice on Home Regional matters, it has worked direct with IRD and not through the HR Meetings. Conversely, IRD have raised various matters direct with the SH Committee. A closer working relationship between the HR Meetings and the SH Committee might develop, if it is agreed, as I suggested yesterday, that the HR Meetings might sponsor some longer-term studies in particular aspects of subversion. The SH Committee might have some views on a possible programme of work.

The next point to consider is whether the HR Meetings can make any greater contribution to the work of the Emergencies Committees or any new organisation which may emerge from the current review of the handling of emergencies. The representation of Departments such as the Home Office and the Department of Employment on both the HR Meetings and the Emergencies Committees, together with the circulation (under separate arrangements) of SUBIND papers, may be sufficient, but the point might repay further examination.

I have not discussed any of this more widely within the Cabinet Office at this stage, but Sir Burke Trend may like to consider whether further consultations are desirable.

B. M. Day

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1st March 1972

SECRET