

MR TURNBULL22 November 1984COAL DISPUTE

There are not enough men returning to work this week to sustain the momentum once the Christmas offer has expired. The new backpay offer will help but only marginally: money is only one element in the return to work decision. There is a real danger that we are already losing the initiative.

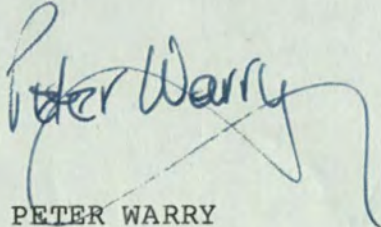
If the momentum is lost, then we could be locked into a new status quo for many months, albeit at a slightly higher level of working, until some conjunction of events creates sufficient stimulus for a new wave of returns. Once it is evident that the momentum has collapsed, it will be much harder to up the stakes by for example withdrawing capital investment plans. It will also have less effect.

We would suggest raising the stakes now. Eaton could question whether, if the strike continues, the NCB can justify its capital expenditure plans. He must also make banner headlines with the attached cutting from today's Daily Telegraph. This will give the NCB backpay offer a little more impetus and perhaps regain our initiative. It will be risky, but to do nothing could be more risky.

**FIRE THREATENS
500 PIT JOBS**

A coal face at the strike-bound Ackton Hall colliery, Featherstone, near Pontefract, has been sealed off because of a fire and 500 jobs are threatened, the Coal Board said yesterday.

"This is the main production face and there is no way we can find work for all 1,200 men," a spokesman said.


PETER WARRY