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*Dear David*

EMLEY MOOR

Ministers have suggested that I write bringing you up to date on the proposal by a group of miners at Emley Moor colliery to run the mine as licensees when it closes at the end of the year.

Mr Hunt has twice recently seen the Chairman on this subject and has had a useful meeting with John Whitfield MP. Mr Hunt assured Mr Whitfield of the Chairman's continuing personal interest in the proposal, and that, far from having any predisposition against the approach put forward, the Chairman is anxious that the Board look constructively at all available options and seek a positive outcome if at all possible. The Board is genuinely concerned, however, that the Emley Moor mine layout and infrastructure are on a scale substantially larger than the proposed 33-man operation, and that the associated operating and capital costs would be a good deal greater than the men bargained for. John Whitfield did not think that the men had looked into their proposal in any technical detail when they first put the idea forward. The Mines and Quarries Inspectorate would obviously need to approve any arrangements which were agreed, but the Board has assured us that practicability and viability rather than health and safety considerations, though important, are their main concern about the proposal.

Communications problems in the past have not helped relations between the group and the Board. Mr MacGregor was understandably irritated by accusations of a negative approach on his part when the group had not shown the Board the feasibility study of the options for which NCB(E) had provided the funds, and when the group seemed to be talking to the press rather than to the Board.



I am glad to say that the Board now has the business plan prepared by the independent consultants and have asked their engineers and management in the Yorkshire Area to examine it. The information provided to the Board is still incomplete, but John Whitfield has undertaken to try to remedy this. Mr MacGregor has written to John Whitfield (letter of 24 October, of which I enclose a copy) undertaking to be in touch again when local management had reviewed the business plan.

It is essential that the Board demonstrates it had looked at the proposal and the options thoroughly and sympathetically. Mr Whitfield and Mr Hunt envisaged that the next step, once the Board has examined the business plan and given its comments, should be for the Board and the group with their respective engineers to meet again and discuss any differences on questions of reserves, practicability, costs, safety, on the basis of the information available.

Mr Hunt is reporting to the Chairman the outcome of this meeting with John Whitfield, and has asked to be kept closely in touch with developments.

*Yours sincerely*

*Roger Levett*

R LEVETT  
Private Secretary

Net. Incl: Coal. Pt 18.

