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the customers in need, and attempt to get them together. But there is a further need to guarantee that the available coal ends up safely at the point where it is to be burned. If help is needed, the states must know that the federal government is ready to assist in assuring safe delivery of the coal. The Administration already has the power to help the market work. The question is whether this Administration is ready to guarantee the safety of the supplies that are now available.

Second, a new avenue opened up just last weekend. We have just seen the union leadership welcome a separate agreement between one company and its employees. This type of settlement offers a new opportunity for the Administration. They could encourage local solutions instead of remaining deadlocked at the national level. The question now is whether the Administration can seize the opportunity and exert the influence what we expect of them.

There are still other options remaining. With proper influence, the Administration could convince the parties to accept an interim contract, one that could be opened again for negotiation after some period of time - like 6 months. This would allow the parties to defer their controversial problems until a later date, while firmly establishing the points on which they already agree. If, as some have said, the problem is one of leadership within the Union, then such a solution would relieve the pressure and provide the time for the Union to work out its internal problems.

Such solutions can work. But each of them depends on the Administration's ability to establish the strong role of leadership that has thus far seemed to be beyond their grasp.

#### The Next Step

We are on the verge of a crisis. The Administration has waited too long and that has contributed to the worsening situation. At this point, Congress may be asked to become heavily involved, although even now we wait for Administration leadership.

Congress can help. We can assist the Administration by pointing out the options and helping them to explore each and every one. I sincerely hope that the Administration will not come to the Congress merely to get our stamp of approval for a drastic measure. Such measures should never be taken when other possibilities are still available.

The next few weeks will be a critical time for the country and a critical test of the influence this Administration can expect to exert in its remaining three years. I know I reflect the sentiment of all my colleagues in saying that the Congress is willing to work in partnership with the Administration in getting the country through this difficult period.

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