

cc Mr James
Mr Walker

CONFIDENTIAL

ref 1



Prime Minister

Civil Service Department
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ

Strike action in prospect

01-273 4400

by government engineers etc.

We must clearly stand firm -

they are asking for more than

15 June 1979

PRU has recommended! To

concede would not only cost

money, but would also run clean

counter to the priority we award to

the private sector. PL 18/6

- Open we must stand firm.

Tim Lankester Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Dear Tim,

A one-day strike has been called for 22 June by the Institution of Professional Civil Servants (IPCS) which represents members of the 81,000 Professional and Technology (engineers, architects, surveyors etc) and Science grades. Selective industrial action in certain vulnerable areas will follow. The Association of Government Supervisors and Radio Officers (with a membership of over 10,000, mainly in the Ministry of Defence) will probably strike.

2. The main problem lies with the Professional and Technology (P&T) Group. Negotiations based on evidence from the Pay Research Unit have not resulted in a settlement. IPCS claim significantly more than the pay research evidence indicates. To concede the amounts beyond pay research would cost £68m for the Civil Service and nearly £120m counting all public service consequential settlements. There now seems little prospect of a negotiated settlement. And the IPCS will not agree to arbitration. Paul Channon will therefore call in Mr McCall the IPCS General Secretary early next week to make clear to him the Government's view that IPCS are quite wrong to ignore the established arbitration machinery which could resolve this dispute. We will brief the press on the Government's view.

this week

3. The level of P&T, and Scientists, pay has been subject to persistent, well directed, and justified criticism in the past as being too high relative to the pay of similar people outside the service. I am quite clear that it would be wrong to improve our offer for P&T grades to a level above that indicated by the pay research evidence in order to secure a negotiated settlement. Not only would that cost a lot of money but the P&T grades would be treated much more generously than the rest of the Civil Service.

There is more room for flexibility on scientists (a smaller group) who were not included in pay research this year. Paul Channon saw Mr McCall today and offered a link with the Administration Group, subject to certain conditions. Discussions are, however, adjourned until Monday.

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4. The effects of the one-day strike will vary from department to department and will greatly depend on the degree to which the IPCS pickets are successful in preventing staff of other unions from working. We have, however, taken steps to inform all staff of the consequences of industrial action. It is, however, IPCS policy not to take industrial action affecting public health and safety and IPCS members at British Nuclear Fuels Limited, including Windscale, are being advised not to participate in the action. A strike by scientists, who work in long-term research and development, is unlikely to have a significant effect. Major problems will arise in those departments employing P&T staff, who provide technical services such as the supply of power, heat, light and air conditioning to computers and to key establishments as diverse as the Houses of Parliament and Fylingdales. Air Traffic Controllers, who are Civil Aviation Authority staff, are not expected to be involved but PSA staff at the West Drayton Air Traffic Control Centre may take strike action which could affect air traffic. Longer-term selective action could affect nuclear submarine bases, dockyards, armament factories, Home Office laboratories and Government printing. We understand that the IPCS National Executive Committee will decide next week where and when to withdraw key personnel, but clearly the two main targets will be the major employers of IPCS grades - Ministry of Defence and Department of the Environment. Where IPCS grades supervise industrial civil servants in MOD, PSA, HMSO, and the Royal Mint one immediate consequence will be the lay-off of industrial staff who would be unable to work without the supervisor. I will report when the targets for the selective longer-term industrial action become clear.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of Cabinet Ministers, including the Minister of Transport, and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely,
Jim Buckley.*

J BUCKLEY
Private Secretary
15 June 1979