

**CONFIDENTIAL**

PRIME MINISTER

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PATTERN OF CIVIL SERVICE INDUSTRIAL ACTION, 15 JULY

As you know, growing numbers of Unemployment Benefit Offices (UBOs) are being affected by the industrial dispute. The position reported to Mr. Hayhoe's group this morning is that three offices are completely closed (Hackney, Keighley and Kinning Park); three are severely disrupted (Washington, Leyton and Wood Green); five more are threatened with TRD (Sheffield, Bootle, Easterham, Willesden and Barhead) of which at least three will probably close; and TRD notices for a further five are likely to be sent out today (Bodmin, Whitehaven, Hemel Hempstead, Kings Cross, Stilton).

The problem is not a shortage of giro cheques, as reported in some newspapers, but that staff in these UBOs are refusing to write them out manually. Where the cheques are not being prepared, the beneficiaries will be referred to the DHSS offices; but the unions are advising their staff in those offices not to help, and some of them have already also closed.

Nevertheless, the problem needs to be seen in perspective: there are some 960 UBO offices, of which 900 or so are operating normally, 50 or so are operating with manual <sup>cheque</sup> ~~jack~~ writing, and only about a dozen are taking action likely to hold up the payment of benefits.

You could be asked why arrangements are not made to pay benefits in cash, as the unions have suggested. That would involve large amounts of cash being held at insecure premises. A good line is that the unions may not care about the safety of their members, but we do care about the safety of our staff.

The rest of the industrial action is proceeding more or less unchanged, except that it seems that the air traffic controllers have almost given up disrupting flights.

*J.*

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