PRIME MINISTER

Oil Supplies: Possible Statement

I passed on to Mr. Callaghan's office your decision about his request for a statement on oil supplies.

Subsequently his office have come back to say that, despite the fact that Mr. Howell will be answering Questions on Monday, he still thinks that there ought to be a comprehensive statement on the same day. I have consulted the Chancellor of the Duchy, who is very strongly of the view that backbench concern is sufficient to justify a statement. Ian Gow agrees. The Chief Whip is also worried about backbenchers' feelings on the matter.

In the light of this, are you prepared to agree that Mr. Howell should make a statement? If he does, then Monday is a much better day than Tuesday (Budget Day) or Wednesday (when there will be a social security statement). Although Mr. Callaghan is not pressing very hard on the matter, there would be every likelihood of an early PNQ if no statement was forthcoming.

Given all of this, shall we have a statement by Mr. Howell on Monday after all?

MS

7 June 1979

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7 JUNE 1979.