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CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

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Sir John Herbecq K.C.B

Second Permanent Secretary

MBAM

14 May 1981

W Rickett Esq
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Dear Mr Rickett,

Mr Lamberton
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INDUSTRIAL ACTION PROGRESS REPORT

The overall level of industrial action, measured in numbers of staff involved in selective strike action, remains broadly the same as the last report (4490 compared with the previous 4552), with a small increase in the numbers on TRD (465:451). By departments, the numbers on strike in MOD have increased, with the other major departments remaining stable or showing in some places a reduction in numbers. Similarly the pattern of action in major departments is substantially the same as reported on 8 May. The Ministry of Defence, Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise, DHSS, Departments of Trade and Industry, Passport Offices and Scottish Courts are still bearing the brunt of the disruption. However, the IR mail sorting centre at Kew have returned to work, and unofficial action at DHSS local offices in Scotland has ceased.

New developments are summarised below:

- Home Office: Support for the POA's call for the operation of 'Sunday working' on May 11 was patchy. In some cases Governors handled the transfer of prisoners on remand to police custody and the discharge of prisoners due for release personally.
- MOD: There have been several reports of 'blacking' at Devonport.
- DVLC: A notice was issued yesterday to all DVLC staff explaining to them the consequences of industrial action and of action which is tantamount to a breach of discipline; flexitime will be suspended; and other appropriate contingency arrangements introduced. There are signs that the Unions may not want a major confrontation and will agree to let the mail in and work on it.

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IBAP: 14 staff in the Beef Imports/Exports section have voted to continue their strike. An agreement has been reached with the Unions to ensure the delivery of mail and the processing of urgent licence applications. It is likely that these licences will be 'blacked' by Customs staff, however.

General Registers of Scotland: Picketing by Scottish Office staff is interfering with the receipt of 1981 census documents. Contingency arrangements have been made to take mail to another building.

On the prospect of escalation by the Unions, Union conferences held so far have voted in favour of escalation and have given a mandate for a one-week strike if thought to be necessary. A week's strike is unlikely to take place, if at all, before early June. The proposal will be discussed by the CCSU on 26 May.

Hilary Tyrrell

Ms H M Tyrrell
Private Secretary