

Prime Minister

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To note: Mr Jenkin
will bring proposals
on the consultants'
contract to colleagues.

PRIME MINISTER

DOCTORS' AND DENTISTS' REVIEW BODY NINTH REPORT

In my minute of 18 June I referred to recent developments in connection with the consultant contract and the Ninth Report from the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body.

Since then, the leaders of the consultants have again come to see me, in order to explore the possibility of my being able to give them an immediate decision in principle on their proposals for changes in the maximum part-time option, which for them is the heart of the matter. They explained that in their view this was necessary for the successful handling of the British Medical Association's Annual Representative Meeting at Liverpool next week, and that it would effectively ensure a period of peaceful co-operation between the Government and the consultants. We again traversed the substance of the matter, this time also exploring some of the more detailed practical aspects, and as a result I was confirmed in my view that, for the reasons indicated in my earlier minute, arrangements on the lines now sought by the profession would be to our advantage. Not the least of the attraction for us is that it is clear that the cost to public funds of the proposed arrangements will be significantly less than the full year cost that the new contract would have involved. I will not be asking for any new money if these changes can be agreed.

I told the leaders of the consultants that it was out of the question for me to give an immediate decision, and that it would first be essential for me to have consultations within Government and with NHS Management. This would take some few weeks. I went on to say that in the consultations I would make very clear my own belief that the profession's proposals had substantial merit and should if possible be adopted, though I could give no guarantee of what the outcome would be. I indicated that because of the importance of securing a satisfactory outcome at the Annual Representative Meeting - and there is a danger that without some help from me the leadership would be unable to control their rank and file - I would be prepared this week to send a letter to the BMA confirming

what I said to the leaders of the consultants for use at the Annual Representative Meeting. The profession's representatives closed with my suggestion which, though a good deal less than what they had hoped for, should in their view suffice to prevent trouble with the profession in advance of our being ready to come to a final conclusion on the proposals put to me.

I mention these developments because the Annual Representative Meeting is a public occasion and my letter may therefore be reported in the press. My next steps will be to consult NHS Management and then to bring formal proposals to colleagues.

I am sending copies of this minute to members of E Committee, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Scotland and Wales and to Sir John Hunt.

P.J.

22 June 1979

Department of Health and Social Security



I said to the Secretary of the Committee for the purpose of the hearing...
The Committee's representative stated that they had heard from the...
I think a good deal more than they had heard for, and in their view...
difficult to present evidence with the testimony in advance of our being ready...
to come to a final conclusion on the progress to be...

I mention these developments because the annual representative hearing is...
public occasion and my letter and testimony as reported in the news...
stage will be to conduct this hearing and to bring forward proposals in...
collaboration...

The hearing committee of this matter to members of the Committee, the Secretary of...
State for the hearing and will be held on the 22nd of June...



22 JUN 1979

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Department of Health and Social Security