

PRIME MINISTER

I have seen Michael Heseltine's minute of 11 May and I agree in principle with his suggestion of a message to local authorities about their manpower, but there are important questions of timing and policy to be discussed before we decide a course of action.

For example the level of employment of teachers, though it has substantial public expenditure implications, is first of all a central matter of educational policy, fundamental to standards. Until we have had time to develop a policy line on this, in the context of expenditure on education as a whole, it would be most unwise to issue a statement that prejudges the matter.

There is also an important timing factor. I would certainly not want to provoke needless further hostility from the teachers (nor from their employers) just when we are trying to reach a settlement in the present delicate situation in Burnham. To do so could turn the present industrial action into strikes instead of bringing it to an end.

I am copying this minute to Cabinet colleagues, the Minister of Transport and Sir John Hunt.

*Mark Carlisle.*

MARK CARLISLE

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