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cc: Mr Wolfson  
Mr Ingham  
Mr Duguid

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PRIME MINISTER

CIVIL SERVICE INDUSTRIAL ACTION

*mf*

I said this morning that I would clarify the status of the Air Traffic Controllers employed by the Civil Aviation Authority who are taking industrial action today. I confirm that although they are members of one of the Civil Service unions (the IPCS), they have not been Civil Servants since the CAA was hived off from the Civil Service in 1972; but it was a condition of that hiving off that there should be a firm pay link with the Civil Servants. Late last week all the unions concerned in the CAA adopted a formal pay claim, which the CAA could not accept, so there is now a formal dispute. Although action before then probably could have been the subject of an injunction under the Employment Act, that would not be possible now. The CSD and the CAA have agreed to make it clearer in their public briefings that the air traffic controllers are not civil servants.

Civil Service industrial action today appears to have intensified slightly, according to reports received by Mr Heyhoe's monitoring group. The morning shift were on strike in five air traffic control centres, and although the backlog of aviation traffic should be clear by the end of the day the pattern for the whole week is expected to be substantial disruption in both morning and afternoon. Action in Customs and Excise has spread to the South Coast ports. Action continues at defence establishments and DHSS offices; and the Department of Employment Benefits Computer at Livingston is likely to be out of action for three days this week. But the Inland Revenue report that their revenue collecting arrangements at Bush House are still going well. The Treasury expect the backlog of revenue to be about £2½ billion by the end of this month, but are not alarmed at that prospect.

The threat of Temporary Relief from Duty (TRD) is increasingly, and successfully, being used - I hope some figures will be available in time for Questions tomorrow. Numbers are beginning to build up of those who are unable to work because of industrial action taken by

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others; there are perhaps now a few hundred, and they might reach 2 - 3 thousand over the next two weeks. If they do reach such a level, the question of legislating to lay them off without pay might become an issue again.

J.

(The CAA Chairman is Sir Nigel Foulkes)

27 April, 1981

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