

CONFIDENTIAL

cc Mr. Wolfson

Mr. Ingham

✓ Mr. Lankester

Mr. Gaffin

MR. DUGUID

Industrial action by the firemen

There is a Ministerial meeting of the Civil Contingencies Unit this evening, and one point may arise on which the Policy Unit has previously shown some interest, namely the possible use of regular fire service appliances in the event of industrial action by firemen. You may want to glance at Annex C of CCU(80)21, attached.

Personally I find the arguments against risking confrontation between servicemen and striking firemen convincing, and I understand that they were strongly put at the official CCU meeting earlier this week; I think it is also true that servicemen would have difficulty in operating modern fire appliances.

This does all have to be seen in the context of the battle for public opinion. I think you and I are agreed that it would be wrong to encourage the employers to increase their 6% offer - and Mr. Ingham is strongly of the opinion that to do so would be wrong in presentational terms - but if the employers stand firm the likelihood of extensive industrial action, with the consequent risk to life and property, is increased. I do not think that the ability to use regular fire service appliances would markedly shift public opinion, which is probably rather in favour of the Green Goddesses anyway, but it is perhaps a consideration.

Mr. Gaffin will be attending the CCU meeting, because of the need to establish sufficient public information channels regarding the emergency arrangements; and I shall also attend to get a feel for how difficult the Services are going to find it to cope with industrial action, and for the likelihood of our winning the public relations battle. I must say that I do not at this moment see a way of making it easy for the FBU to climb down, short of an increase in the offer. Any ideas would be welcome.

13 November 1980

CONFIDENTIAL John Vereker

FIREMEN'S DISPUTE

14/12

Firemen's pay negotiations are with the local authorities, not the Government, and it would be best if Ministers did not go out of their way to comment on them, save obliquely through an explanation of the 6% pay element in the Rate Support Grant given in Economic Policy Presentation Note No 10. But Ministers may well find themselves exposed to questioning on what is likely to remain a topical issue for some time. This note is to provide factual guidance to be drawn upon as necessary.

1. Firemen's pay is settled between the local authority employers and fire service representatives in the National Joint Council for Local Authorities Fire Brigades on which the Government is not represented.
2. After the 1977/78 firemen's strike an agreement was reached under which firemen's pay would henceforward be equated annually with the upper quartile of adult male workers.
3. It was common ground between the two sides of the NJC that application of this formula for the November 1980 settlement would result in an increase of 18.8% in the pay of qualified firemen.
4. Since the Government is not a party to the 1978 agreement there is no question of its repudiation by the Government. It is for the local authority employers to decide whether to continue it.
5. The offer of 6% made to the FBU last week by the employers followed an indication of the overall cost of local authority wage settlements which is being assumed in fixing the rate support grant cash limit for 1981-82. Against that background it is for local authority employers to decide what offers to make to particular groups.

/ A similar ...

6. A similar offer of 6% has been made to fire officers by the Officers Committee of the NJC.

Industrial Action

7. The current actions consist of "working to rule" by answering emergency calls only and cutting out all other work such as cleaning, maintenance, fire prevention work, etc. The FBU have called a delegate conference to discuss further action which may take the form of one day "guerilla" strikes. Contingency plans naturally exist to cope with a withdrawal of normal fire cover, as with any other emergency presenting a hazard to life.

Manpower and Earnings

8. The whole-time strength of the Fire Service in England and Wales has risen from 21,056 in December 1959 to 35,916 in December 1979. At that time there were also 15,712 part-time firemen. There have been reductions in hours during that period, notably from 48 to 42 early in 1979. The Home Secretary has a statutory duty to consider all the proposals for establishment reduction, on the recommendation of the Inspector of Fire Services. Following the January 1978 pay agreement firemens' rates of pay were increased by 22.15% in November 1978, and by 20.45% in November 1979.

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12 November 1980

FIRE SERVICE RATES OF PAY EFFECTIVE FROM 7 NOVEMBER 1979

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Annual</u>
<u>Fireman (aged 18 years)</u>		
Less than 6 months' service	83.67	4365
More than 6 months' service	87.58	4569
<u>Fireman (aged over 18)</u>		
First 6 months' service	85.00	4434
After 6 months' service and during 2nd year	88.85	4635
During the 3rd year	93.05	4854
During 4th year	97.65	5094
During 5th year (subject to being fully qualified)	106.39	5550
<u>Long Service fireman (after 15 years' service)</u>		
Qualified	111.05	5793
Unqualified	102.25	5334
<u>Leading Fireman</u>	113.92	5943
<u>Sub-Officer</u>		
1st year	116.74	6090
2nd year	121.28	6327
<u>Station Officer</u>		
1st year		7977
2nd year		8136
3rd year		8307

Assistant Divisional Officer

1st year	7446
2nd year	7674
3rd year	7902

Divisional Officer (Grade III)

1st year	7977
2nd year	8136
3rd year	8307

Divisional Officer (Grade II)

1st year	8472
2nd year	8802
3rd year	9147

Divisional Officer (Grade I)

1st year	9357
2nd year	9576
3rd year	9786

Senior Divisional Officer

1st year	10,074
2nd year	10,350
3rd year	10,626