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PRIME MINISTER

Coal & Docks: MISC 101(84)28th Meeting

COAL

You will wish to invite reports from:

- i. the Secretary of State for Energy
  - on the number of pits and miners working
  - on the outcome of the NCB/NUM talks
  - on the latest publicity efforts
  
- ii. the Home Secretary
  - on law and order
  
- iii. the Secretary of State for Transport
  - on movement of coal trains
  
- iv. the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
  - on any significant developments affecting BSC and coal burning industry

Delays in the courts

2. You will then wish to have a discussion on how to overcome delays in the courts, particularly in the handling of serious cases involving violence and intimidation. The Lord Chancellor will attend especially for this purpose.

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DOCKS

3. You will wish to invite reports from:
- i. the Secretary of State for Transport
    - on the extent of the strike
    - on contacts with port employers, especially in non-Scheme ports, about communicating to their workers the risks to jobs both in the docks and in industry
  - ii. the Secretary of State for Employment
    - on any progress made by ACAS
    - on the likelihood of civil action under the Employment Acts
  - iii. the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
    - on the effects on industry

Use of Emergency Powers Act 1920

4. The Attorney General was asked to advise on whether the Government would be able to justify invoking the Emergency Powers Act 1920, bearing in mind the present extent of self-sufficiency in food supplies. To assist him in making that judgement the Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mrs Fenner, has sent to the Attorney General the latest assessment of the food supply situation (copy attached to this brief). The Attorney General will be ready to report orally about the use of the Emergency Powers Act and either the Minister of Agriculture himself or Mrs Fenner will be present to answer any supplementary questions about food supplies.

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Service assistance

5. The Private Secretary of the Secretary of State for Defence has been told that you and other Ministers were not satisfied with the account of the assistance which would be available from the Services set out in Mr Evans's letter to Mr Turnbull of 16 July. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr Stanley) will be attending the meeting and you will wish to ask him about the prospects for expanding the amount of Service assistance which might be available.

NEXT MEETING

6. There will be an opportunity for further discussion under the Industrial Affairs item at Cabinet on 19 July. The next meeting of MISC 101 has been arranged for Monday 23 July at 4.00pm.

*PLG*  
P L GREGSON

17 July 1984

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CONFIDENTIAL

ASSESSMENT OF SUPPLY SITUATION FOR FOOD AND FEEDINGSTUFFS  
OVER NEXT TEN DAYS

FOOD

1. Compared with previous dock strikes, stocks of food-stuffs in the manufacturing and distribution chain are now at a low level. This is due partly to the fact that, as a result of the recession and other pressures, the industry has deliberately pursued a policy of maintaining much lower stock levels. It also reflects the lack of warning of a potential strike so that no stocking up was possible.
  
2. It now seems clear that there are likely to be fewer opportunities this time to circumvent the strike by bringing in imports through the smaller ports. The strike has already affected the container trade through Felixstowe and the roll-on roll-off trade through Dover.
  
3. There are also some signs that the Union is being more restrictive in allowing exceptional treatment for particular consignments in the pipeline, e.g. perishable foodstuffs, or to meet particular needs, although there is some limited indication that this may have been just a starting position from which some exceptions may later be made.
  
4. On the other hand, the United Kingdom is now more self-sufficient in temperate foodstuffs (which constitute 75% of our needs) and there is therefore much less need for imported supplies of these foods.
  
5. We are not likely, therefore, to run short of food supplies in the next ten days. Indeed, there could be adequate supplies of food in the country for some time beyond that.



6. Distributors have nevertheless expressed two important reservations. First, panic buying could drastically alter the situation - as it could even in a time of plenty.

7. Secondly, there are likely to be some shortages of those foods, supplies of which are wholly or largely imported, particularly if they are also perishable so that significant stocks are not held in the supply chain in this country. Examples are certain fresh fruit and vegetables (notably tomatoes, apples, citrus fruit), bacon (which will reduce in supply by about 50 per cent in about 10 days' time), oils and fats (which over the longer term could affect a wider range of manufactured foods) and hard wheat (which, however, is unlikely to affect bread supplies within the next ten days).

#### FEEDINGSTUFFS

8. Feed compounders depend on supplies of imported soya. There are some supplies of soya in the docks, but there is likely to be some shortage of compound feedingstuffs within another 10 days unless they can be got out. This could affect the fattening of pigs and poultry in particular. Although substitute feed can be found, the fattening process would be slowed down and there would then be some accumulation of animals in the intensive livestock units.

#### CONCLUSION

9. We are still assembling information from food manufacturers, but the present indication is that, while the range of foods available is likely to be reduced somewhat towards the end of the next 10 days, food supplies should still be adequate during that period and for some time afterward unless panic buying develops.

10. There could be some slowing down of throughput in intensive livestock units because of shortages of compound feedingstuffs but this should not cause major problems of congestion within the next 10 days.

Ministry of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Food

17 July 1984