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SCOTTISH OFFICE  
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Prime Minister (2)

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CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP  
Secretary of State for Social Services  
Department of Health and Social Security  
Alexander Fleming House  
Elephant and Castle  
LONDON SE1

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15 July 1982

Dear Norman,

I refer to your minute of 12 July to the Prime Minister about the NHS pay dispute.<sup>TPM</sup>

The effects of the industrial action in Scotland have been markedly more serious than in England even when compared with Northern Regional Health Authority Areas. Throughout the dispute there have been a considerable number of instances where the TUC's own guidelines have been ignored. Even early on in the dispute, hospitals in Edinburgh were very severely hit and at one stage it looked as if the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary might have to close its doors altogether. Patients in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, a major mental illness hospital have been without bedlinen and clean clothes. More recently, while the situation remains serious in the east and across Scotland's central belt, the main focus of action has switched to the west. Many hospitals in Scotland are now close to an accident and emergency service only, with the situation being worsened by sporadic but serious action occurring in different parts of the country. To take two examples, on Wednesday 7 July all ancillary staff at two major hospitals in Glasgow walked out on a lightning 24 hour strike with no emergency cover and, more emotively, the press is taking a real interest in the difficulties at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Glasgow. Laundries remain a prime target everywhere.

I agree with you that the pay offers which we have authorised are now fair and reasonable and that there should now be a determined effort by all Ministers to drive home to the public the damaging effects of the dispute. This is all the more necessary in Scotland since we find it more difficult than you to contemplate a dispute lasting for as long as you seem to envisage. Only through the weight of public opinion and loss of income will NHS workers be brought to see the essential futility of their position. We certainly intend to do all we can to publicise the problems faced by individual hospitals and the effects on patients; to demonstrate the reasonable

nature of the Government's position; and to emphasise our determination not to change that position. John MacKay, who has responsibility for health matters here, will be visiting affected hospitals on Friday and giving a press conference on what he finds.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, Cabinet colleagues and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours wes,

George.

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