

CONFIDENTIAL



Department of Transport

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Colonel G B Fawcus
Cabinet Office
Whitehall
London SW1

Our Ref: GLT 2/15/019

7th July 1981

Dear Colonel Fawcus,

LONDON UNDERGROUND STRIKE THREAT : 20th JULY

Mr Jamieson tells me you have raised with him whether the Civil Contingencies Unit should meet to discuss the threat of an LT underground strike on 20th July. I thought it would therefore be helpful if I summarised how things stand at present.

2. London Transport has offered tube workers an 8% settlement in line with that agreed with LT busmen in May plus a further increase in return for improved productivity. The rail unions, however, led by the NUR, are seeking a double figure settlement in line with the Retail Price Index. On 25th June, the General Secretary of the NUR ordered its 15,000 members on the Underground to stop work indefinitely from Monday 20th July. Since almost 90% of LT's underground staff are NUR members, such action would bring the entire underground network to a halt. The long notice of strike action is no doubt intended to put sustained pressure on the new Labour GLC - you will have seen Press reports of the rail unions' expectations on that front. (At present the GLC is standing firm. If, however, they do concede a larger increase, it is likely that LT busmen who have already settled for 8%, will seek to re-open their settlement.) It also allows the outcome of the BR Railway Staff National Tribunal decision to be known and the Annual Conference discussion of it. The RSNT is likely to announce its findings around 10th July. It will not therefore be until about the middle of the following week that we can judge how likely a major stoppage actually is.

3. There is at present no indication that NUR members on BR will take any action in support of the underground strike.

4. Naturally I shall be happy to come along to a CCU meeting if you decide to arrange one, but my own feeling is that there is really not anything firm to discuss at this stage. We are setting up here, on the usual basis, our contingency plans for a strike. I enclose a brief aide memoire of these. Although this strike could have a substantial impact on many London travellers, alternative forms of public transport are available and there should be no question of any threat to essential supplies and services.

5. I am copying this letter and enclosure to No 10 (Mr Roberts), MOD (Captain Jackson), Home Office (Mr J A Howard), Employment (Mr Wake), Environment (Mr Elders), Energy (Mr Pryke), Industry (Mr Leeming), CSD (Mr James), Paymaster General's Office (Mr Prescott) and A.D.C. Barker at Scotland Yard.

Yours sincerely,
Jane Bridgeman
Mrs J Bridgeman

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L T UNDERGROUND STRIKE

1. ACTION PLAN

Arrangements

1. The usual contingency arrangements have been made. The Metropolitan Police is ready to bring into effect a series of measures aimed at relieving traffic congestion and providing extra car parking facilities. These are:
 - a. declaring emergency clearways on radial routes;
 - b. relaxation of parking restrictions near certain BR stations;
 - c. extra police on traffic duties;
 - d. the provision of extra car-parking spaces in the Royal and other parks.
2. The British Airports Authority and British Rail will take measures to compensate for the loss of the LT Piccadilly Line service to Heathrow.
3. The Department of Transport will set up an operations room to liaise with the Metropolitan Police, London Transport, the Greater London Council, BR, BAA and other organisations to provide daily situation reports to Ministers and the Prime Minister. It will also handle liaison between the Government generally and outside bodies on the effects of the strike.

Programme of Action

4. It is envisaged that events will probably progress on the following lines:

10 July: BR Railway Staff National Tribunal (RSNT) reports on BR pay.

16 July: NUR reaction to the RSNT report.
Possible statement to Parliament by Secretary of State for Transport describing contingency arrangements, deploring possible inconvenience to public etc.

17 July: Issue of guidance by Metropolitan Police on emergency clearways, car parks, deliveries etc.

Weekend
18-19
July AA and FHA advice to avoid unnecessary journeys to London. Police erection of signs etc.

20 July: Operation of emergency room.

L T UNDERGROUND STRIKE

2. BACKGROUND & EFFECTS

Background

1. LT Underground services handle a major part of London's commuter traffic. The latest available annual figures for passenger arrivals in Central London are as follows:

| <u>Mode</u> | <u>Number of Passengers arriving in Central London between 07.00 and 10.00 hours</u> | |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| LT Buses | 103,000 | |
| Underground | 435,000) including 111,000 | |
| British Rail | 411,000) using both LT & BR | |
| | | during their journey |
| Total (excluding double counting) | <hr/> 838,000 | |
| Private Transport | 211,000 | |

Likely Effects of Strike

2. There has not been a total strike on the Underground for many years. Past experience is absent for assessing the likely effects. It is estimated that there would be few problems in South London which is well served by BR and where the Underground has a modest role. North of the River, the Underground brings just under half the commuters in from within London. There is reasonable coverage geographically by BR with the Finchley area being the only major gap. The restraint, however, is the capacity of BR services which are scheduled on the assumption of low carryings within London. There is spare capacity before and after the peak and a very broad estimate is that they could carry only around half the underground traffic. This would be reduced if BR suffer disruption from staff being unable to get to work and if BR services using LT stations, e.g. Aylesbury to Marylebone, cannot run. North of the River, therefore, there would be severe overcrowding on other public transport services and road congestion. Movement in Central London, particularly between major traffic generators such as BR termini, would be severely affected, particularly in view of the likely effect of increased road congestion on central area bus services.

3. Previous experience of other types of London strike is that for a week or two people will happily make alternative travel arrangements, stay at home etc. A number of regular commuters may also have begun their holidays by 20th July. This will reduce overall ^{peak hour} travel levels, in spite of high tourism levels.