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Prime Minister

Relevant to tomorrow's meeting
MUS 11/1

PRIME MINISTER

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY RAILWAY WORKERS

The Civil Contingencies Unit have met twice, at official level, to consider matters arising from the industrial action currently being taken by ASLEF. One result of their most recent meeting on 6 January has been circulation to Ministers of an updated version of a paper first circulated on 7 August last year, when all three railway unions were threatening industrial action.

David Howell is I know keeping you informed on the background and progress of the current action by ASLEF.

The Unit believe that a number of measures, which are ready to be used to alleviate the effects on London commuters of the two day strike called by ASLEF for 13 and 14 January, will be adequate. They also believe that even if the situation deteriorates further in the wake of the strike these measures should prove adequate for a time, as not all of them will be required for the two day strike. The measures, none of which require Ministerial authority for implementation, mainly involve providing extra car parking spaces in London, ensuring minimum obstruction to road traffic movement and advising the public on certain actions they can take to help. Should the situation deteriorate still further a number of other measures - that will require Ministerial authority - can be considered. They are the use of a relatively small number of servicemen to provide additional car parking spaces in certain London parks (Operation PUFFER); increasing power station endurance by maximising oil burn and in the last resort a State of Emergency.

No major problems are foreseen at the moment in maintaining freight, mail and shipping services, although the effect of

industrial action by Sealink officers that began on 7 January will have a bearing on this. There should be no immediate threat to movement of essential supplies to industry or the general public.

The Civil Contingencies Unit will be keeping a close watch as the situation develops. I will keep you informed as necessary.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Industry, the Lord President of the Council, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretaries of State for Employment and Defence, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Trade, Energy and Transport, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

WIL

10 January 1982

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