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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
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Prime Minister ①

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
Parliament Street
LONDON SW1

The level of our intervention is
now quite high - but in, I believe, a
very helpful direction. I have just heard that
ASLEF Tube drivers (who drive 50% of tubes)
have decided to strike if their BR
colleagues are sacked next week.

13 July 1982

Dear Chancellor,

MISC 80(82)8TH MEETING

MIS 13/7

I do not think a further meeting this evening is necessary but it might be helpful to bring you and colleagues on MISC 80 up to date.

I managed to speak to Sir Peter Parker between the end of this morning's meeting and the start of his own Board's meeting. As a result of our talk he agreed that he would recommend to his Board that they should not canvass the sacking of ASLEF drivers as a possibility only. They should make it quite clear that this is their intention. He maintained his view, however, that the sackings should be brought into effect in a few days' time rather than immediately. The aim would be to put maximum pressure on ASLEF drivers in the coming days to return to work. Immediate sackings could harden attitudes irrevocably.

I told him that it was worth considering keeping open those parts of the network where successful efforts were being made to operate services. He took the point.

He added that in the light of my discussion with him last night that he would recommend to the Board that they should agree to continue paying NUR staff for the time being. He did say though that the Board might well, however, decide to test the 1919 Agreement in the courts at some point.

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He reported to me the outcome of his Board's meeting as soon as it finished at 3.30. They have decided to close the railways as from next Wednesday, 21 July. They will consider keeping open selected lines where predictable timetabled services are being provided on them. They will also be announcing now the sacking of men on strike on Tuesday, 20 July. They have maintained their view that they will only sack those actually on strike not those who have been on strike; possible legal problems notwithstanding. I doubt whether I can push them any further on this but if the opportunity arises I will take it. I have made our views very clear indeed to Sir Peter Parker.

There is just one last minute complication. ACAS entered the scene at 1.30 this afternoon right in the middle of the Board meeting. They have asked to be given 24 hours to try one last attempt at finding a solution to the dispute. Sir Peter Parker and the Board felt that to ignore this offer could provide ASLEF with an excuse to say that the Board were hellbent on strike regardless. The Board have therefore announced that, although they have taken their decisions on the way ahead, they will be postponing their announcement until the ACAS initiative has been given a chance but in any event not later than midday tomorrow.

I do not think there is anything further we can do for the moment but wait to see further developments. I will report anything substantive as soon as I hear it.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, other members of MISC 80, Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Sparrow.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Mayes

P.P. DAVID HOWELL

Seen and approved by the Secretary of State and signed in his absence.

3 JUL 1972

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