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Pine Munks

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
Secretary of State
Department of Health and Social Security
Alexander Fleming House
Elephant & Castle
LONDON SE1 6BY

15/11

15 November 1984

Dear Mr Fowler,

DHSS NEWCASTLE : SHIFT-WORKING DISPUTE

I am responding on behalf of Nigel Lawson to your minute of 9 November.

I agree that matters should now be brought to a head. Apart from anything else, the costs involved are estimated to be approaching £80 million, and this is before the costs of recovery are taken into account.

Like you, I was at first attracted to the notion of employing casuals but on balance I agree that unilateral variation of contract seems best provided we are on reasonable legal ground. It would presumably be based on the latest management offer which has been commended to the strikers by their own national officers and has indeed been accepted by the leaders and the members of the two other unions involved in the dispute. It should isolate the CPSA militants and the strikers, while at the same time giving them a brief pause for thought. This course of action should also give less risk of jeopardising negotiations over the return to work agreements with the other two unions, assuming that an announcement has to be made before those agreements are finalised. I can see an argument for seeking to get them out of the way first, but not if this means more than a few days delay.

It will of course be important to ensure that when we take action the position is properly presented. We must stress the unreasonableness of the strikers' stand and the harm they are doing to social security beneficiaries. We must also think about the rest of the Civil Service, both generally and in order to try to defuse any efforts the CPSA may make to try to whip up action elsewhere in support. There are potential

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trouble spots around, and of course another part of the CPSA are already currently threatening trouble in GIRO. No doubt your officials will keep in close touch with mine.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, Willie Whitelaw, Tom King, Michael Havers and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely,

MHM

for BARNEY HAYHOE

*(Approved by the Minister
of State and signed in
his absence)*

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