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PRIME MINISTER

INTERRUPTION TO ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

In David Howell's absence I am reporting on the breakdown in the electricity supply system yesterday.

2 There were three separate major failures on the national grid system which distributes electricity from power stations throughout the country. The first at 9.08 was on the link from Feckenham (West Midlands) to Bristol, the second at 9.10 on the Dungeness to Lydd line in Kent and the third at 9.35 on the Bromley to West Weybridge link in Surrey. Supply was lost to one fifth of the consumers in the affected area which was essentially southern and south-west England and South Wales. Total loss was 1000 MW which made this the biggest electricity failure since 1962.

3 The CEGB took immediate action; the system was progressively restored from about 10.40 onwards and all consumers were back on supply by about 11.30. While industry was affected, therefore, the effects were not serious.

4 The Secretary of State has asked the electricity supply industry, who have kept the Department informed of developments throughout, for a full report on the causes of the failures. The industry have set in hand an immediate inquiry and the results of this will be reported to the Secretary of State when they are available, probably in three weeks or so. At this stage there is no certainty of the causes of failure.

5 The Electricity Council are continuing to keep the Department informed. I will report any further significant developments.

J.F. Clark

Pr. NORMAN LAMONT
6 August 1981

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