

~~Prime Minister~~
to note all this.

PM has
wtd. CDP 5/5.

RADIOACTIVE MILK

1. I spoke to Mr Meakins, Chief Scientific Adviser in the Incident Room at MAFF. First results from British Nuclear Fuels at Sellafield show readings of 350 radiation units per litre (the action level is 2,000 radiation units per litre). Other samples taken from Cumbria where the tests are at the moment concentrated show results up to 10 radiation units per litre but not every test is showing this. The Ministry are concentrating on areas of high rainfall over the past few days. Even these areas only show results of up to 57 radiation units per litre. It could just be there is a localised hot spot around the Sellafield coastline. This is not to do with Sellafield. It is as a result of the Chernobyl incident. Vegetable samples tested in these areas show very low readings. The tests are for milk from yesterday evening. It is possible that in a few days time levels will have increased as the radiation takes time to pass through the system and into the milk. The Ministry are co-ordinating further tests throughout the country so that we can be sure that even low risk areas have been properly tested. At present there are no plans to withdraw any milk and no statement has been made. Although the Minister appeared on the earlier news this evening explaining the situation and saying there is no need for any worry. Tests will continue on a frequent basis over the next few days and results will be very closely monitored. On this basis the Ministry would only consider action if the radiation level per litre gets very much nearer to the action level.

But who
will
believe
this? →

2. Brigadier Budd who is the Cabinet Office co-ordinator told me that there is a meeting of officials in Brussels tomorrow (5 May) to discuss the pros and cons of an overall ban of all imports from Eastern Europe for the time being. The UK line agreed by MAFF, DHSS and NRPB is that we would prefer not to have a blanket ban but to check each individual cargo and accept or refuse each case on its own merits. If however the general consensus of opinion is for a blanket ban we would not oppose it.

5 May 1986

MESSAGE FROM AMANDA, DUTY CLERK AT NO. 10 DOWNING STREET ON
MONDAY EVENING

The Radio Four p.m. programme did an interview this evening with the Chief Scientific Adviser, Grant Meakins. The situation regarding the radio active outflow monitors in England as follows.

People in Scotland, North West and North Wales have been advised, purely as a precautionary measure only, not to drink rain water which they have collected directly. Wells and streams would be safe but actual rain water should not be drunk.

The situation regarding milk is as follows. MAFF have an agreed line to take. The Minister is appearing on TV AM tomorrow. The line will be that the Department is continuing intensive testing throughout the country, in particular, concentrating on those areas considered to be most at risk. That is, those areas with high rain fall levels. Even in these high risk areas where enhanced levels have been found, the radiation levels are still below the emergency reference levels which have been determined as levels at which action to limit the distribution of milk would start.

More generally, indications at present are that radiation levels in the milk should start to decline soon. The incident room has told No. 10 that this is encouraging. The results of the meeting of officials in Brussels so far are that there was no agreement on an overall blanket ban. However, if any imported goods

are found to contain more than certain agreed levels, consultations will begin to decide what action should be taken. As regards the UK, we are stopping and testing all imports from Poland and Russia. However, these imports are very very few. There will be a meeting in Cabinet tomorrow morning of various Government Departments to decide about any further public statements.

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~~The prison officers in the Gloucestershire prison, where the dispute began, have now returned to work following a settlement with the Governors.~~

~~Lord Shinwell is at the moment very seriously ill with bronchial pneumonia. He is at home but the press are reporting that he may be close to death.~~

5.5.86