

1. MR SCHOLAR

2. PRIME MINISTER

FINANCIAL TIMES

Alan Hare, Chairman of the Financial Times, telephoned me again today with the following up-date on his strike which is costing £1m a week (total so far £7-8m).

He said that the TUC, which had underwritten the procedure agreement, was now thoroughly involved and he believed that on Thursday the NGA would turn down the request from the TUC to end the strike. He was trying to persuade Len Murray to call a meeting of the TUC's Finance and General Purposes Committee (its so-called Inner Cabinet) on Friday with a view either to expelling or suspending the NGA. However he felt it more likely that the TUC would not meet until next Monday.

If the TUC did expel or suspend the NGA, he would then ask SOGAT if they would be prepared to produce the paper without the NGA.

Mr Hare said that if the TUC declined to expel or suspend the NGA or SOGAT refused to play if the NGA were thrown out of the TUC, he would be "in a pickle".

He would then close down printing at Bracken House and sack all involved in the printing process. In the meantime he was looking at the possibility of printing outside London - in the UK but not, if he could avoid it, by Robert Maxwell who had offered to do so.

Meanwhile, the Newspaper Publishers' Association, the Fleet Street employers, had decided not to spend a penny on the FT's support.

Mr Hare said that, notwithstanding all this, there was no question of the FT's turning back. And he hoped that the Government would not say anything disparaging about the TUC until it had proven its impotence.


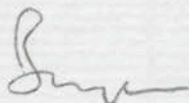
I questioned Mr Hare on whether in the NGA members had other income during the strike. He said that most of the hard core of 24 machine



managers who were at the root of the dispute were probably doing shifts on other newspapers but no more than half of the 240 had other jobs or sources of income. There was as a consequence now some division in the ranks.

I then pressed Mr Hare on a variety of indirect ways to test his resolve. He disclosed:

- some frustration at the pace at which the TUC carthorse was moving;
- he had prompted the CBI to write to Cecil Parkinson expressing their concern about the continued absence of the FT and asking what the Government was doing about it; he had, however, no wish to bring pressure to bear on the Government to intervene;
- he had discussed with Len Murray the idea of the TUC's underwriting procedure agreements more generally; Mr Murray had retorted that he did not see the TUC doing that for companies' benefit, but he might be interested in the idea if the Government - ie. Mr Tebbit - proposed it; and
- finally, Mr Hare said that if at any time the Prime Minister thought he was making a fool of himself I should not hesitate to pass on the message. I replied that I was sure that the Prime Minister would never accuse anyone trying to sort out Fleet Street of being a fool provided they won.



B. INGHAM

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