

PRIME MINISTER

MR. RIDLEY'S STATEMENT

Attached is the statement made by Mr. Ridley this afternoon on the dock strike. This was a highly partisan occasion with Mr. Ridley making a number of effective points about automatic Opposition support for strikes. The Opposition, however, thought that they had scored a point when they demanded a Government commitment not to abolish the Dock Labour Scheme "during the life time of this Parliament". Mr. Ridley stuck to the formula that the Government had no plans to abolish or change the Scheme. At one point he quoted a Parliamentary Written Answer from John Gummer which said that we had no plans at present. This encouraged the Opposition to claim that if the Government gave the undertaking they sought the strike would soon be called off.

You will undoubtedly be pressed on this point tomorrow. In view of this the question arises as to whether the Government should call the Opposition's bluff and give that undertaking.

There was comparatively little interest in the question of states of emergency and troops other than accusations of provocation. Government Backbenchers were concerned to ensure that contingency plans were made but Mr. Ridley played this aspect well down.

16 July 1984

cc: Mr. Butler

Mr. Turnbull



## DRAFT STATEMENT

With permission, Mr Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the dock strike.

Registered dockers are on strike at all ports in the dock labour scheme. Dockers are also on strike at the non-scheme ports of Montrose and Shoreham and, as regards freight traffic, at Dover, Felixstowe and Portsmouth. Ferry services for passengers, cars and coaches are continuing to operate.

As I told the House last week the Transport and General Workers Union called the strike because of an alleged breach of the scheme by the British Steel Corporation at Immingham. Last Thursday the National Dock Labour Board, under the procedures in the dock labour scheme itself, decided that the scheme had been breached. By the following day the British Steel Corporation had remedied the matter for the future to the satisfaction of the Immingham dockers.

Despite that, the union has not called off the strike. Discussions between the union and the National Association of Port Employers in the National Joint Council for the ports industry broke up on Friday evening without any agreement being reached. I understand that the union is insisting that NAPE should guarantee that there will be no breaches of the scheme in future.

NAPE have reaffirmed their willingness to honour fully their obligations under the scheme and believe that alleged breaches of the scheme should continue to be determined by the dock labour boards under the statutory procedures.

It has been said that dockers fear that the Government intends to abolish the dock labour scheme. Let me make it absolutely clear that the Government has no plans to change or abolish the scheme.

There is therefore now no reason whatsoever for the strike.

I understand that both the union and NAPE have now accepted invitations from ACAS to discuss the dispute. I wish them all success. This strike can only damage many jobs, in the ports, and in other industries too. It is not in the interests of dockers, their families, their fellow workers in other industries, or of the country.





TF  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT  
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

01-212 3434

Andrew Turnbull Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

16 July 1984

*Dear Andrew*

STATEMENT ON THE DOCK STRIKE: MONDAY 16 JULY

/ I attach a copy of the text of the statement my Secretary of State will be making later this afternoon.

I am sending copies of the statement, with copies of this letter, to the Private Secretaries to the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, Northern Ireland, Energy, Scotland and Wales, the Environment, Lord Privy Seal, Trade and Industry, Employment, the Minister of Agriculture and the Chief Whip.

*yours sincerely,*

*Harry Derwent*

H C S DERWENT  
Private Secretary



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As I told the House last week ~~[in reply to a private notice question from the hon member for Kingston upon Hull East]~~ the Transport and General Workers Union called the strike because of an alleged breach of the scheme by the British Steel Corporation at Immingham. Last Thursday the National Dock Labour Board, under the procedures in the dock labour scheme itself, decided that the scheme had been breached. By the following day the British Steel Corporation had remedied the matter for the future to the satisfaction of the Immingham dockers.

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*I wish them all success*  
hope ~~that it can be brought to a speedy resolution.~~ This

strike can only damage <sup>any</sup> jobs, ~~not only~~ in the ports,

*and* ~~but~~ in other industries too. It is not in the interests

of dockers and their families, <sup>es</sup> of their fellow-workers <sup>in</sup>

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