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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

2 May 1984

Dear Nigel.

SCHOOL TEACHERS' PAY (ENGLAND AND WALES) 1984

The Burnham (Primary and Secondary) Committee reached impasse yesterday.

This meeting was requisitioned by the employers without consultation with this Department. No doubt that action reflected disappointment that earlier overtures had failed to bring the teachers back to the negotiating table and the employers' wish to try again for a negotiated settlement. But it also created an expectation that the first move in resumed negotiations would be for them to make. In the event, the teachers refused to consider further negotiation unless the management panel was willing to make a quantified open offer. After careful consideration, the employers unanimously decided to offer 4.5%, which was rejected - again unanimously - by the teachers' panel. They then asked again for arbitration: that was refused, though with eight AMA members within the management panel voting for it against the ACC membership and my representatives' weighted vote, totalling 30.

It is not easy to see how this matter can be resolved. Much may depend on whether the teacher unions can sustain a campaign of action in schools against the background of a public offer of 4.5%. Piecemeal disruptive action must be expected immediately and the NUT have a one-day strike fixed for 9 May. I will take stock again at that stage if there are no developments in the interim. Meantime, I believe that our line should be that we regret very much the teachers' refusal of a 4.5% offer which stretches to the very limit their employers' capacity to pay and to deplore their willingness to take action designed to disrupt

/the education

The Rt Hon Nigel Lawson MP
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the education of their pupils. I shall certainly be saying that I hope that the individual teachers will reflect on the irresponsible and unprofessional course that their union leaders intend that they should embark upon and reconsider the 4.5% offer which remains on the table.

Copies of this letter go to the Prime Minister, members of E(PSP), the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

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Teachers' Pay

3.30 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North) (*by private notice*) asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the dispute on teachers' pay.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): I very much regret the teacher unions' refusal of a 4.5 per cent. offer which—as was made quite clear to them—would stretch to the very limit and for many beyond—their employers' capacity to pay. I am very sorry that the teacher unions should be willing to contemplate action designed to disrupt the education of their pupils. I hope that individual teachers will now reflect on the irresponsible and unprofessional course which union leaders are inviting them to embark, and that union leaders will reconsider the 4.5 per cent. offer which, I understand, remains explicitly on the table.

Mr. Radice: Does the Secretary of State realise that his own statement and actions have made a major contribution to the breakdown of negotiations and to the possible disruption of our children's education? Did he not write the unrealistic assumption of 3 per cent. into the education support grant, which has made it difficult for local education authorities? Did he not insult the teachers, 70 per cent. of whom earn less than £10,000 a year, by telling them that large numbers of candidates were coming forward for jobs at current rates of pay? Did he not influence the initial offer of 3 per cent. when Scottish teachers had already been offered 4.5 per cent.? Does he accept that the agreement with the further education lecturers shows that a settlement of 4.5 per cent. might have been possible a month ago if he had not so misjudged the position? Does he not understand that arbitration, which the teachers agree to accept, is the normal way out of teachers' disputes and would end this dispute before our children's education was seriously disrupted? Will he learn from his past mistakes, act before it is too late and put the weight of his office and the votes of his Department on the relevant Burnham committee behind arbitration?

Sir Keith Joseph: The short answer to all those questions is no, Sir. Once again the Labour party representative seeks to end a problem, which could be settled by realistic negotiation, by throwing taxpayers' money at it. It was not an insult to remind the teachers that large numbers of excellent candidates for the teaching profession are coming forward at present rates of pay. Moreover, union leaders had every reason to know that there were still prospects of negotiation and that they faced no wall at 3 per cent. My answer, therefore, is no, Sir.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): As resources are limited and as changes in the curriculum will require more specialist teachers, should not the present offer be accepted so that major salary structure talks can proceed in a reasonable atmosphere with no disruption in the schools?

Sir Keith Joseph: Emphatically, I answer yes to my hon. Friend. There are limited resources and only people in the Utopia occupied by Labour party representatives seem to think otherwise.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): How is it that the Secretary of State can be so remote from

the profession that he represents that the rejection of a humiliating and unacceptable offer should come as a surprise to him? Will he accept that it is the intransigence of the employers that is exacerbating the misery of school teachers?

Sir Keith Joseph: If I represent anyone in the educational world, it is the pupils and their interests, which trade union leaders are threatening to damage.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Is not the paramount point, as we are so often told, the education of our children? Is that not generally assisted by the presence of a teacher in the classroom? Can my right hon. Friend encourage the reconsideration that he mentioned by stressing the need for talks on restructuring of teachers' pay and career prospects?

Sir Keith Joseph: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that most teachers, who are responsible and dedicated people, will take that point of view. As for the discussions on the new structure for teachers' pay, I am interested in the outcome, but I have always made it plain that I shall commend it to my colleagues only if it is professional and reliable. The conduct of teachers, if they follow their union leaders' advice to disrupt pupils' education, will not encourage that attitude.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does not the Secretary of State realise that it is an abuse to talk about a long line of people wanting jobs at current rates of pay when 4.5 million people are out of work and want jobs? Does he remember the Houghton report on comparability of teachers' pay of 1974, which admitted that teachers had fallen more than 30 per cent. behind their professional colleagues? The Labour Government of the day put that right, but unfortunately that 30 per cent. has now been eroded. When the right hon. Gentleman talks about the union leaders telling teachers to strike, he should be aware that I have just been to a conference where teachers voted to tell their union leaders to lead them in a strike. Does he not realise that this orderly and moderate section of the community, which never willingly goes on strike—

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Flannery: —is now in desperation being forced, as a result of Government policy, to go on strike and that he should let arbitration proceed and settle the matter?

Sir Keith Joseph: One of the problems might precisely be that the trade union leaders concerned have just returned from seaside conferences with their active members like the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) who has just spoken so misleadingly. I believe—I am sure that many teachers would agree—that the attitude which led to the Houghton report was one of the stages of decline from which the Government and its predecessor have had to rescue the economy.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend urge the teachers to think again about embarking on action that will damage the examination chances of pupils and their prospects for later life, damage children who are already deprived by kicking them out of school when they need to be there and damage the nation's future by disrupting education without having gone through every possible avenue on talks on this important matter?

normally in Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Cumbria and north Wales. Partial working took place at a further nine pits.

Mr. Wilson: The House will have greeted with great disappointment the Prime Minister's response to a request for an inquiry. If a failure by the security forces led to the death of a policewoman and causes concern to the people, if not to Government Members, will the Prime Minister promise that she will publish a report on her inquiry into the case and come before the House to tell us exactly what happened? Will she then tell us who was responsible for

any of the events which might have led to the unfortunate events and, in particular, to the death of the woman police constable?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. I answered that question, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman could not hear it because of the noise. I said that I had already given instructions for the circumstances leading up to the event of 17 April in St. James's square, including intelligence and other information available, to be thoroughly reviewed. I went on to say:

"If there are lessons to be learnt with regard to the arrangements for handling, disseminating and assessing intelligence, the necessary changes will be made."

I am afraid that it may be inappropriate for security reasons to make a public announcement of any such changes.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, indeed. Mr. Speaker. I hope that teachers will reflect on those facts and realise that they have now been offered a 4.5 per cent. pay increase, which already exceeds the amount of money available to pay teachers in local authority budgets.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): As the right hon. Gentleman professed concern for children, will he recognise that the thousands of people he claims are queueing up to join the teaching profession are scarcely capable of teaching young people who are taking O and A-levels in a few weeks' time? Is he not worried about those pupils? As he has committed himself to the cause of realism, would it not be realistic for him to agree to arbitration to avoid damaging the young people he is supposed to care for?

Sir Keith Joseph: I think the hon. Gentleman's question should be addressed to the trade union leaders concerned, as they are inviting their members to disrupt children's education. I do not think that arbitration is the answer — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because the arbitrator does not have to find the money and can, therefore, regard affordability as just one of several factors, instead of what it is — the one determining factor.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Would my right hon. Friend care to spell out the relationship between the number of teachers and the size of wage settlements? There must be a relationship between higher wage settlements and fewer teachers.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, indeed. If the trade union leaders have not already explained that to their followers, let me do so. The consequence of exceeding the amount of money that local authorities have available for the pay of teachers will be fewer teachers. The important money available for books, equipment and maintenance may be once again in danger of being raided.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Will the Secretary of State explain why teachers or their union leaders should put any faith in a Government promise of salary restructuring when they have the example of the nurses, who were persuaded by the Prime Minister to take the same course at this time last year and who are about to be stabbed in the back by the Prime Minister?

Sir Keith Joseph: On teachers' salary restructuring, I have always made it plain that the Government would look kindly upon such proposals only if they are professional, watertight and based upon thorough and professional assessment.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the vast majority of teachers would be happy to pick up this award, and that the

disruption is caused by a dispute within various unions? The sooner those unions can get together and represent the whole of their membership, the better.

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with my hon. Friend. The burden of responsibility falls clearly upon the trade union leaders. I hope that their members will think very carefully before following their advice.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Will not the Secretary of State think again about what he has just said? Is it not a fact that the teachers' panels for Scotland and for the further education sector were prepared to accept 4.5 per cent., but that only 3 per cent. was offered to teachers in England and Wales? Was not that gross bungling by employers the cause of the approaching disruption? If the Secretary of State is genuinely concerned for pupils, he should want to attract the highest quality teachers possible into the profession. In order to do so, should he not restore the pay differentials with comparable professions that existed three or four years ago?

Sir Keith Joseph: I understand — this is on public record — that it was made clear to trade union leaders that negotiations for pay increases of more than 3 per cent. were available if the unions had persisted with them. There is no truth in the claim that teachers' trade union leaders faced a wall at 3 per cent.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): If the dispute can be settled at 4.5 per cent. or higher, will the percentage of the education budget devoted to wages and salaries increase? Will that increase mean that there will be a drop in the percentage of educational resources devoted to books, teaching equipment and the maintenance of our schools?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes — for many LEAs below 4.5 per cent., but certainly at 4.5 per cent.

Mr. James Tinn (Redcar): Will the Secretary of State expand on his statement that he rules out arbitration because the arbitrator would not have to find the money? Can the right hon. Gentleman think of any case in the history of industrial negotiation, public or private, in which an arbitrator has been expected to provide that money?

Sir Keith Joseph: No, but I am pointing out one of the fallacies in assuming that arbitration leads to a painless solution. I am explaining why I think that the employers were right to reject arbitration yesterday.

Several Hon. Members rose —

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that a private notice question is an extension of Question Time. Two very important statements are still to be made.

Libyan People's Bureau (Closure)

3.44 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a further statement about matters connected with the shooting incident in St. James's square on 17 April.

On 25 April, I reported to the House the facts of the initial incident, and subsequent events up to the time of that statement. Today I shall complete my report of the events. I shall also deal with the public order issues connected with demonstrations and state how I intend to use my powers for the immigration control of certain nationals in future. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will then give an account of our dealings with the Libyan people's bureau and the Libyan authorities in Tripoli. He will also deal with the steps that have been and will be taken in the diplomatic field in response to those events.

On the afternoon of Tuesday 24 April, Mr. Bagdadi, a member of the so-called revolutionary committee who had not been in the bureau at the time of the incident, was deported. On Friday 27 April, Mr. Matouk, another member of the revolutionary committee, was also deported.

On the evening of 25 April, a representative of the Libyan authorities, Colonel Shaibi, arrived in this country to discuss the arrangements for the departure from this country of those in the Libyan diplomatic buildings in London. The discussions relating to that were also attended by a Saudi diplomat as a representative of the power nominated to look after Libyan interests here after the breach of diplomatic relations. Colonel Shaibi pressed that the Libyan authorities should retain the use of one of their buildings after Sunday 29 April, but it was made clear to him that all the official premises were to be closed from Sunday night. The Libyans were also told that, after midnight on 29 April, when the buildings ceased to be diplomatic premises, the police would require to search them to satisfy themselves that no weapons or explosives were inside and that the buildings were safe. They were told that a representative of the protecting power—the Saudi Arabian Government—could be present if they wish. They were informed that, as a matter of safety, arrangements would have to be made to ensure that those leaving the people's bureau building were unarmed; and that they would be asked to answer questions to assist the police in investigating the murder of WPC Fletcher.

During the course of Thursday 26 April, the Libyans removed their diplomatic bags from the bureau building. On the same day some 112 people consisting of the families of Libyan diplomats, as well as some diplomatic staff from the buildings other than that in St. James's Square, left the country on a Libyan-Arab Airlines flight. Late on the evening of Thursday 26 April, the detailed departure arrangements for those inside the bureau were finalised. Those arrangements were put into effect on the following day, Friday 27 April. The 30 people in the Libyan people's bureau left the building in groups of five, beginning at about 9.50 am. After they had left the building, the police made sure that they were not carrying explosives or weapons. The search was carried out by the

use of electronic devices. The whole operation was witnessed by representatives of the Saudi Arabian, Syrian and Turkish embassies.

The 30 people who came out of the building were then driven, accompanied by the diplomatic observers, to the Civil Service college at Sunningdale, where they arrived shortly before noon. After an initial explanation of the procedure to be adopted during the remainder of the day, the police then proceeded with their inquiries, witnessed by two of the diplomatic observers. The identity of each of the Libyans was established by reference to their passports and other documents. They were invited to provide a full set of fingerprints, but declined to do so. They were then invited by the police to answer a number of questions. Each Libyan was questioned by two police officers using interpreters where necessary. Throughout the whole of that process, the diplomatic observers were free to go wherever they wished in the building. With the questioning completed, and the aircraft at Heathrow ready to return them to Libya, the group were escorted by the police to Heathrow, immigration formalities having been completed at Sunningdale. The aircraft left Heathrow at 7.30 pm.

At 4.10 pm yesterday afternoon the police entered the former bureau building through the back door, which was opened in the presence of a representative of the Saudi Arabian embassy by means of a rifle shot. The building was first examined by Royal Engineers and anti-terrorist squad explosives experts who satisfied themselves that it was safe, and was subsequently searched by anti-terrorist squad police officers for evidential purposes. That search is continuing. So far, two hand guns and a quantity of ammunition have been discovered in the course of the search of the former bureau premises. Firearms residue has been found on the carpet below the window from which the weapon was believed to have been fired and a spent cartridge case of the same calibre as the weapon used on 17 April has been found in the same room. Elsewhere in the building, the police have found accessories for sub-machine guns of the same calibre.

As I made clear last Wednesday, the view of the police was that they would not be able to obtain evidence to sustain a prosecution for the murder of WPC Fletcher without the co-operation of those concerned in the bureau. None of the police inquiries since then, whether at Sunningdale, St. James's square or elsewhere, or these discoveries, have altered the position. The police remain of the view that there is not sufficient evidence to sustain a prosecution against any individual. None the less, they are of the view that it is likely that the murder was committed by one of two people who were in the bureau. Both of these possessed diplomatic immunity. They therefore could not have been prosecuted under English law even if the necessary evidence had been available. The questioning at Sunningdale and other evidence obtained may well, however, provide information relevant to the investigation of bombings in London and Manchester in respect of which some people have already been charged. The information obtained at Sunningdale continues to be assessed.

Since my last statement to the House, I have been considering whether the law on demonstrations and marches, as it applies to such events held by foreign nationals, or generally, can helpfully be amended. Neither the police nor I have power to ban a static demonstration in advance.

~~Mr. Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the matter and I shall not take any more points of order on it. I cannot make any judgment on a matter which I said that I will look into. How can I?~~

Teachers' Pay

5.42 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the breakdown in the teachers' pay negotiations."

I listened carefully to the private notice question earlier this afternoon. Had I gleaned from it the least vestige of hope of a settlement or even a glimmer of flexibility on the part of the Secretary of State for Education and Science I should have withdrawn my application, but there was none and I therefore proceed with it.

The matter is specific and important because in the next six weeks or so hundreds of thousands of pupils will sit their CSE and O and A-level examinations and the last few weeks before an examination might be said to be liable to be too crucial to the future of pupils. It is exactly the time when the co-operation of teaching staff is most required, and it is to be withheld. The matter is urgent because the longer the dispute is allowed to continue, the harder it will be to mend the relationships between local education authorities and teachers and between teachers and their pupils. The Government are getting good value from the teaching profession and I ask that, before any more harm is done to our children, you allow the House to debate the subject.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the breakdown in the teachers' pay negotiations."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said but regret that I do not consider the matter appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.