



NBPM AT 24/1, CCAO
SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt Hon Nigel Lawson MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Treasury Chambers
Parliament Street
LONDON
SW1P 3AG

24 January 1985

Dear Nigel,

SCOTTISH TEACHERS' PAY

I last wrote to you about teachers' pay on 21 November 1984, when I indicated the line which I proposed to take in responding to the request by the Scottish teachers for an independent review of their salaries.

You will recall that, while I was entirely clear that there could be no question of acceding to that request, I was concerned to respond with a positive alternative proposal. With your agreement, therefore, I wrote on 11 December to the Teachers' Side of the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff in School Education (SJNC(SE)), making the point that it was the statutory responsibility of the SJNC(SE) itself to determine the salaries and conditions of service of school teachers in Scotland. My letter went on to indicate that "I should be prepared to consider on their merits, and in the framework of the Government's existing public expenditure plans for Scotland as a whole, any proposals relating to pay and conditions of service together which might result from detailed examination undertaken by the SJNC(SE)". I added that, to be convincing, such a review would have to deal with a number of specific areas where existing arrangements appeared not to be in keeping with present day requirements.

The response of the Teachers' Side was to reject entirely the idea of seeking to work out an acceptable package within the SJNC(SE). I wrote to them again, however, on 8 January indicating my disappointment at their initial attitude, making the point that in any form of employment the questions of pay and conditions of service are inevitably linked, and expressing the hope that they would give further thought to the possibility of making progress within the SJNC(SE) as being the best way of obviating disruption within the schools and of serving the real interests of all concerned - children, parents and the general public as well as the teachers themselves.

The matter was considered again by the full SJNC(SE) on 15 January, when the Teachers' Side invited the Management Side to make a joint approach to me for further discussion - partly to try to persuade me to change my mind about an independent review and partly to seek clarification about the availability of financial resources and about the list of conditions of service points which I had stipulated must form part of any acceptable package. After considerable debate and a division of view on broadly Party lines, the Management Side agreed to the idea of a joint approach. It is, however, abundantly clear that the position of the two Sides is very different, with the Teachers still hoping for an independent review of pay alone and Management seeking an independent review of pay and conditions of service. In the course of Oral Questions on 16 January I announced that I was prepared to meet the SJNC(SE), and this meeting has now been fixed for 28 January.

In the meantime disruption in the schools has been growing. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), with a membership of over 40,000 of the 54,000 teachers in Scotland, began a series of selective strikes in the closing weeks of last term. Following a membership ballot which by a substantial majority agreed to intensification of action, they are now mounting 3-day strikes in named schools from Tuesday to Thursday of each week. The main target at present is a hard core of schools in the constituencies of Allan Stewart and myself, as the responsible Ministers. It is intended that in the weeks ahead these schools will be joined on a cumulative basis by other schools in our constituencies, together with selected schools in the constituencies of 6 other Ministers. At the same time complementary local action is also taking place on a rolling basis for a week at a time only, in other areas throughout Scotland.

Information from education authorities suggests that well over 60 per cent of all teachers in the schools involved have been participating in strike action and that in all the areas where action has taken place the schools concerned have been seriously affected, although most of them have been able to remain open for some pupils. The position is made more serious by the fact that the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, with memberships of about 7,000 and 1,200 respectively, have now also decided to take strike action - on different days from the EIS. This will entail many moderate teachers who have never previously been on strike taking industrial action.

Already the EIS refusal to co-operate with new curricular developments has made it necessary for me to announce the postponement by one year of Phases 2 and 3 of the introduction of the new Standard grade of the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE). I have made clear my determination to do everything in my power to ensure that Phase 1, involving courses on which pupils are already embarked, goes ahead as planned; but, if the EIS continue to prove disruptive, even this will be inadequately taught and assessed, with serious consequences for the children involved. Moreover, the EIS have very recently announced that they will be withdrawing co-operation from all administrative arrangements normally undertaken by teachers in connection with the SCE Ordinary and Higher grade examinations due to be held in May. My officials are considering urgently with the Scottish Examination Board how best this threat can be countered, but if the EIS pursue their current line to the letter it will be impossible to avoid pupils suffering some serious consequences.

All this industrial action is of course designed to exert pressure on us by its effect on pupils and their parents. There is already real anxiety on the part of parents whose children are due to sit examinations which will determine their future career prospects. As many parents with ambitions for their children are our supporters, there are signs of restiveness on the part of some of our own Back-benchers. My mailbag shows little evidence of support for the Government's position. Against this background, Allan Stewart and I are making strenuous efforts to put across the Government's case. In essence, this is that on the one hand we for our part have pointed to a perfectly reasonable way of handling the teachers' claim, while on the other it is utterly reprehensible that any professional body of men and women should be acting in such an irresponsible manner at the expense of the pupils in the schools and strike action will not advance the teachers' cause in any way. But it remains to be seen which way public opinion will swing.

Against this depressing background it is my intention when I meet the SJNC(SE) on 28 January to reiterate very strongly that I have no intention of setting up an independent review and that I remain convinced that the only way forward lies in the SJNC(SE) itself undertaking a review, of the scope and within the financial parameters which I have already indicated. I shall of course continue to appeal to the teachers to refrain from action calculated to do lasting harm to their pupils and stress that this is in no circumstances justifiable. The room for manoeuvre, however, is very limited, particularly since at present the teachers are firmly opposed to any suggestion that they might "trade conditions of service for pay". The outlook is certainly not encouraging.

I shall report further after the meeting on the 28th, when I hope to be in a better position to judge the whole situation.

I am copying this letter, as previously, to the Prime Minister, Members of E(PSP), the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours
wv,
George.*

EDUCATION: Teachers' Pay, P43

24 JAN 1985

12 1 2 3
10 11 12
19 8 7 6 5 4