

CE MASRR



CONFIDENTIAL

Minutes of a Meeting held at 10 Downing Street on  
Monday 20 May 1985 at 9:00am

PRESENT

Rt.Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP  
Prime Minister.

Rt.Hon.Nigel Lawson, MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt, MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
and Science.

Rt. Hon. George Younger, MP  
Secretary of State for Scotland

Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP  
Secretary of State for Wales

Rt. Hon. Patrick Jenkin, MP  
Secretary of State for the  
Environment.

Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP  
Secretary of State for Employment.

Rt.Hon.Sir Michael Havers, QC MP  
Attorney General.

Mr Nicholas Scott, MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of  
State, Northern Ireland Office.

SECRETARIAT

Mr A J Wiggins

SUBJECT

School Teachers

( Previous meeting held at 10 Downing Street on 1 May 1985 at 2:30pm)

The meeting considered minutes of 14 and 17 May to the Prime Minister from the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

2. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE said that the Government faced an extremely difficult situation in relation to school teachers. There was a wide measure of agreement about the facts of the current situation: school education was profoundly important; the standards of education provided in schools were inadequate; the performance of teachers varied widely, some being excellent, a few very bad and many rather mediocre; career prospects for teachers had been severely damaged by the contraction of education



CONFIDENTIAL

resulting from falling rolls; the Government's proposals for improving standards in schools had been generally welcomed, but in the present state of relations with the teachers, substantial progress was impossible. The current behaviour of teachers set a very poor example to the children, and was destructive of the educational process. There had been a sharp falling off of entrants into teacher training for the shortage subjects - maths, physics and crafts - and more of the better teachers were leaving a profession in which they saw no prospects. With the results of the County Council elections, the pay bargaining climate had become more difficult for the Government, and there was now a risk that the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) would concede a staged settlement substantially greater than could be afforded, without anything being secured in return from the teachers. The publication of the Review Body reports would intensify the pressure on the LEAs to offer a substantial increase to teachers. The result would in part be some further and thoroughly undesirable reduction in expenditure on educational books materials and equipment, and a further cut-back in necessary maintenance of school buildings; more fundamentally, the LEAs would be relying on the pressure of public opinion to force the Government to make additional financial resources available to them in order to get them out of an impossible situation. Against this background he proposed a Government initiative before the next round of pay talks, to force teachers to accept a reasonable definition of their duties outside the class-room and to induce the LEAs to negotiate more effectively. This would involve:

- a. continuing refusal by the Government to make any additional money available in 1985-86;
- b. the offer in 1986-87 and subsequent years of a limited amount of money (say £50 million a year) to finance lunch-time supervision. If the Government



CONFIDENTIAL

accepted that lunch-time supervision was not part of teachers' duties, the teachers would be deprived of their most effective weapon in terms of its disruptive effect on schools. There would then be much less risk of the Government losing the argument about all the other duties teachers should undertake outside the class-room;

c. a clear Government statement setting out teachers' duties outside the class-room, for whose general acceptance Ministers would campaign;

d. the Government would indicate to both the LEA employers and the teachers' representatives their willingness to make some funds available over, say, three years to finance a new pay structure for teachers which would substantially improve career opportunities, on condition that they would negotiate before October 1985 an agreement implementing the Government's objectives for the management and appraisal of the teaching force. The additional funds to be made available in 1986-87 would be of the order of £170 million, rising to £500 million a year after three years; but substantially lower figures would be mentioned at this stage in the negotiations.

3. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND said that he agreed generally with Sir Keith Joseph's diagnosis of the situation. The teaching profession in Scotland had lost its enthusiasm and self confidence, and the majority of teachers, who were essentially conservative in outlook, saw no way out of the impasse. The method of industrial action the teachers had discovered was extremely effective, and practically costless to themselves, so that it could be continued indefinitely; the result was that the excellent programme of curriculum reform, which depended entirely on teachers for its success, could make no



CONFIDENTIAL

progress. It would be well worth permitting teachers a substantial pay increase, if the Government could thereby ensure that curriculum reform went ahead successfully and at the same time secure acceptance from the teachers of a reasonable definition of their duties.

4. In discussion the following main points were made:

a. The Government's power to achieve their objectives for the development of school education was severely constrained by the fact that the service is controlled by LEAs. Thus LEAs were responsible for the allocation of resources as between the employment of teachers, the provision of books and materials and the maintenance of buildings, and the Government could not, under present legislation, enforce a more rapid reduction in the size of the teaching force or accelerate the pace of school closures. New legislation providing for specific education grants to local authorities, on the lines advocated by the Education Secretary in the context of the E(LF) Review of Local Government Finance, could improve the position. There could be advantage in going still further and extending to Great Britain the power the Government already had in Northern Ireland to determine the number of teachers employed by each education authority. If there were to be new primary legislation, consideration should also be given to what other powers could contribute to the achievement of the Government's objectives.

b. The scale of the pay increases envisaged by the Education Ministers was too great, and there was a risk that the Government would be thought to be surrendering to militancy. The size of the restructuring pay increases recommended for nurses and the professions



CONFIDENTIAL

allied to medicine did not warrant an increase in the teachers' paybill - over and above the cost of 'normal' annual increases - sufficient to give half the teaching force increases of 20 per cent or more in their pay. No encouragement should be given to the LEAs to accept a staged award in 1985; it would be irresponsible of them to undertake a financial commitment without knowing how they would meet it in 1986-87 and subsequent years. If there were to be some more modest pay restructuring taking effect in 1986-87, the additional cost should not exceed £50 to £100 million.

c. It might be appropriate eventually, as part of an overall bargain, to provide separate funds to meet the costs of lunch-time supervision. But it would be undesirable for the Government to surrender the point now, in advance of the court cases, although it seemed likely that the courts would find such supervision to be the responsibility of LEAs but not of teachers. There were strong arguments for insisting that more of the responsibility for non-educational matters should be put on parents.

d. The Local Authority Conditions of Service Advisory Board (LACSAB) Secretariat did not expect serious bargaining about actual figures to take place until the composition of the employers' side in the Burnham Committee had been changed to reflect the results of the County Council elections; this would not happen until after 16 June. The National Union of Teachers, which dominated the trade union side were determined to wait until events had moved in their favour. It appeared that Alliance representatives had been talking in terms of a 7½ per cent increase, and this probably now represented the minimum of teachers' expectations. If substantive negotiations were not to take place during the next 2-3 weeks, the Government should take the



CONFIDENTIAL

opportunity to bring the issue of teachers' duties before the wider public, so staking out part of the ground for an eventual bargain. But for the Government to quantify now the additional resources it might make available might serve only to raise the baseline against which negotiations would eventually take place.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that Ministers viewed the situation with grave concern. While there was advantage in an early initiative to open up the debate about teachers' duties, Ministers were not ready to reach decisions on the proposals put forward by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and remained worried that it would not prove possible to secure an agreement between the teachers and the LEAs which would deliver the Government's objectives in terms of the management and appraisal of teachers in return for an acceptably priced pay restructuring. The Secretary of State for Education and Science, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Employment, should seek urgently to refine and amend his proposals in the light of the discussion, and should bring his revised proposals before the same Group of Ministers at a later meeting on 20 May.

The Group of Ministers -

Took note with approval of the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion, and invited the Secretary of State for Education and Science to be guided accordingly.

CONFIDENTIAL



FILE

RW

37

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

20 May, 1985

I attach a record, prepared by the Cabinet Office, of the meeting held by the Prime Minister today to discuss school teachers.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to Rachel Lomax (HM Treasury), John Graham (Scottish Office), Colin Williams (Welsh Office), John Ballard (Department of the Environment), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's Office), David Normington (Department of Employment), Jim Daniell (Northern Ireland Office), Henry Steel (Law Officers' Department) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'AT' or similar initials.

(Andrew Turnbull)

Miss C E Hodkinson,  
Department of Education and Science

CONFIDENTIAL

1. "Teachers duties". KJ argues it's impossible to get a negotiated agreement on contracts — tacit acceptance is his objective. "Managing teachers" = getting LEAs to move teachers between schools as a consequence of appraisal, to make better use of them.

Note by J. Wiggins

2000

143 (17) 9