

PRIME MINISTER

Nigel Wicks.

You may wish to be aware
of the state of play as at
yesterday. MEA 23/8

RAIL INDUSTRIAL ACTION

You will wish to note the latest position on industrial action on the railways. Attached are notes by:

Flag A - the Cabinet Office about the contingency plans which are being made.

Flag B - by Dept of Transport summarising the current state of play.

Flag C - by Department of Energy on the implications for power supplies.

At this stage there is little we can do other than note the position with the NUR vote taking place on Friday. The result will be announced on Tuesday when the NUR will also decide what to do with their vote. Transport are suggesting a stock-taking meeting on Wednesday. If you are at Scotney then I suggest that this might slip to Thursday. Caroline will raise this at the diary meeting you are holding tomorrow.

D.

22 August, 1985

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

23 August 1985

INDUSTRIAL ACTION ON THE RAILWAYS

The Prime Minister is aware of the efforts of the British Rail Board to publicise their case in the dispute with the guards and she quite appreciates that today, ballot day, may not be the time for maximum publicity effort. But she does wonder whether the Board are deploying successfully their strong case. She considers this very important, especially if the ballot goes the wrong way.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

NW

Andrew Melville, Esq.,
Department of Transport.

JB

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M E ADDISON ESQ
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister

Possible Industrial Action on the Railways

1. I understand that you will be receiving notes from the Department of Transport and Energy either by close of play today or early tomorrow to bring the Prime Minister up to date on the present situation, the prospect of industrial action by railway guards next week and on the effects of recent unofficial disruption by the guards on coal supplies to power stations. I also understand that the Secretary of State for Transport is likely to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the present position and future prospects early next week.

2. You will already be aware that the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) has requested Departments to provide early warning of the possible effect of a railway strike on the supply of essential goods and services (CCU(85)6). A meeting of the CCU at official level is being arranged on a contingency basis for the afternoon of Thursday 29 August, to take stock of the position once the outcome of the railways guards ballot is known (on either 27 or 28 August) and the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) Executive Committee has announced what, if any, action is to follow.

3. The need for a meeting of the Official Group on Coal (Misc 57) will be assessed once the likely effect of any industrial action by guards next week is clearer.

4. Enquiries made by telephone to a number of Departments yesterday and today reveal that:

- a. the disruption so far has had little impact, except for inconvenience to passengers in a number of places;
- b. some rail fed oil distribution terminals in the Thames Valley are out of stock but supplies to users are being maintained by road tankers, drawing product from alternative depots;
- c. it is considered unlikely that food or animal feed supplies will be affected in any way by a rail stoppage;
- d. enquiries about the possible effects on certain sections of industry, particularly iron and steel, chemicals, some petroleum products and some building materials are being pursued in low key, in view of the need to maintain the position that there is no direct Government involvement in the dispute;
- e. the possible involvement of other unions is being assessed in the light of events and relevant trade union legislation;
- f. the capability of the road haulage industry to carry loads normally carried by rail is being reviewed, especially in view of the late harvest and the demand for additional transport for harvested crops being concentrated into a shorter period than usual - no insoluble problems are anticipated;

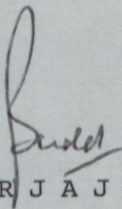
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- g. preparations are in hand to implement, if necessary, plans made after the last rail strikes in 1982, to ensure that essential Government Department staff can travel to and from work in Central London;
- h. the need for additional car parking facilities in London is being kept under review - although it will probably not prove necessary whilst London Underground trains and buses are working.

All these matters and any others that arise will be reviewed at the CCU meeting next week.

5. There is background material on railway strikes in Section I of the Cabinet Office Civil Emergencies Book if you wish to read it. A copy is held in No 10.

6. You may wish to use the contents of this note in briefing the Prime Minister on her return from holiday.



BRIGADIER J A J BUDD

22 August 1985



CC/10
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

Tim Flesher Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

22 August 1985

Dear Tim,

I attach a note on the current industrial problems of British Rail, reporting events since my Secretary of State's minute of 18 August to the Prime Minister. A further paper on the financial and procedural constraints on BR, and on possible future developments, will be circulated next Tuesday.

On the assumption that the Prime Minister would like to review the position, my Secretary of State would be happy to attend a meeting next week. The results of the NUR's ballot of guards should be known on Tuesday, so Wednesday 28 August would be an appropriate day.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Employment, Energy, Scotland, Trade and Industry and Wales, and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,
Huw Hopkins

HUW HOPKINS
Private Secretary

BRITISH RAIL: INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Note by the Department of Transport

The British Railways Board (BRB) are trying to extend Driver-Only-Operation (DOO) with modern rolling stock to suburban passenger services in Strathclyde, and from Kings Cross, and freight trains to BSC Llanwern and BSC Scunthorpe. At Glasgow Central (Strathclyde) and Kings Cross guards have refused to operate trains which had been converted for DOO. The conversion consists of putting into the driver's cab buttons to operate the sliding doors and a microphone so that the driver can use the address system to speak to passengers, and radio communication with signal boxes. At Margam (which serves BSC Llanwern) and Immingham (which serves BSC Scunthorpe) guards refused to be rostered on other guard duties. When men were sent home, the Kings Cross men banned overtime and rest-day working, and the Glasgow Central, Margam and Immingham guards went on unofficial strike. Guards at Llanelli struck in sympathy with their Margam colleagues - again unofficially. ASLEF drivers refused to run trains without guards at Margam and Immingham and refused to undergo DOO training at Kings Cross.

The strike at Glasgow Central and the overtime/rest-day ban at Kings Cross disrupted suburban services south of Glasgow severely and reduced services to Hertfordshire. The strikes in South Wales and at Immingham halted rail traffic to the steel plants.

On 13 August BRB wrote to each of the guards on unofficial strike - 180 at Glasgow, 32 at Llanelli and 58 at Margam to say that the Board would consider dismissing them unless they resumed normal working by Friday 16 August. One hundred and forty seven of the Glasgow guards voted to defy the Board and were dismissed, notwithstanding an appeal by the NUR leadership for a return to work. Guards at Llanelli and Margam initially agreed to return to work but subsequently voted to continue their strike under pressure from members of the NUR Executive. The 32 guards at Llanelli and 58 guards at Margam were dismissed on 19 August. Striking guards at Immingham were given until 22 August to resume normal working, or face dismissal. Their dismissal notices were sent today.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

There have been sporadic unofficial, 24-hour sympathy strikes at some twenty guards' depots - notably on 19 August when 10 depots in the Southern Region were strike-bound causing considerable disruption to services to and from Victoria, Charing Cross and London Bridge. There has also been intermittent disruption to services from Paddington, Cardiff and the north of Glasgow.

The NUR's position reflects a resolution of its annual delegate conference in 1984 (which amplified a decision taken the previous year) which said: "We therefore, absolutely reinforce this policy of the Union not to enter into any further talks on productivity and this to certainly include any proposals to extend 'Driver-Only-Operation' of trains." Although the action is unofficial the NUR are paying strikers £15.70 per day "hardship" allowance; official NUR strike pay is only £1 per day.

BRB met NUR leaders on 20 August and said that reinstatement for dismissed guards could be considered only if the union agreed arrangements for the progressive introduction of Driver-Only-Operation (DOO) of passenger and freight trains, and undertook to discuss further productivity measures. The NUR have not replied formally. They have forwarded the guards' ballot on industrial action which had been scheduled for 29 August. The ballot will now be held on 23 August with the result known probably next Tuesday (27 August). The question on the ballot has been carefully drafted to comply with the Trade Union Act 1984; it seeks support for industrial action up to, and including, a strike.

The NUR have sought to persuade the public that Driver-Only-Operation is unsafe and have accused BRB of abrogating the railway negotiating machinery. BRB and independent experts have explained that there are, in fact, no safety issues. BRB have made clear that there is little point in bringing extension of DOO to the negotiating machinery when the NUR refuse to discuss the subject and the principle is already settled. The Board have ensured that they have a single spokesman (Mr John Palette - Managing Director, Personnel) to act as a focus for the presentation of their case. Mr John Prescott and Mr Robin Cook MP have publicly accused the Government of interfering. Their allegations have been rebutted by Ministers who have avoided any further public comment.

Transport Pt 8
B.R..

