

Prime Minister

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cc Mr Mount
Mr Ingham

WATER STRIKE MEETING, 3 FEBRUARY

These are the points you need to cover at your meeting tomorrow (I am following the agenda order which you announced today would be the regular pattern for these meetings):

- (i) Physical Effects (Mr King, and the Regional Secretaries of State)

Does the experience of recent bad weather and floods show that, contrary to expectation, there has been no increased risk to water supply - because the unions accept without question their obligation to cope with real emergencies?

- (ii) Negotiating Tactics (Mr King)

Is the NWC clear what they will say about the closed shop agreement if those returning to work are expelled from the unions?

Can we deny today's stories that water rates will not be cut for those without water? Otherwise the employers will lose some public sympathy. - especially where interruptions are lengthy.

Is it still the case that from the Government's point of view arbitration is not the best way forward unless the unions demand it?

(iii) ACAS Activity (Mr Tebbit)

Do ACAS plan any further initiatives?

(iv) CCU Activity (Mr Whitelaw)

Who is doing the further work, commissioned at your 31 January meeting with Mr King, on how to withstand a strike of up to six weeks? (You will recall that a main element in this is putting together an alternative work force, and if Mr King agrees I think Peter Gregson would accept that it is appropriate for MISC 61. They should be given a deadline to report.)

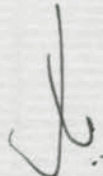
Does the CCU need to meet over the weekend? (I think not: it can always be convened at short notice if the situation deteriorates.)

(v) Presentation (Mr Ingham)

Is the media reflecting sufficiently clearly that the unions have been asked to choose between the mediator's report (including paragraph 8) and arbitration?

Are we starting to get appropriate messages across in the regions? Bernard's monitoring of the regional press so far has been discouraging.

You may want to conclude by agreeing with Mr King what he will report to Cabinet, where there are some interested Ministers - notably the Chancellor, with his responsibility for the pay round effects of any deal - who have not been attending your small group.


2 February 1983

SITUATION REPORT No 8 AT 16.30 HOURS WEDNESDAY 2 FEBRUARY

Day 10 of the strike developed in what has become a familiar mould; additional mains leaking, and additional homes without mains water.

Today's totals are :

Mains failures remaining unrepaired	137
Properties without mains water - Authority areas	2267
Company areas	2706
	<u>4973</u>
	<u>=====</u>

Treatment plants continue to operate generally satisfactorily, and there are no problems with water quality.

And now two brighter notes : firstly, we reported in Situation Report No 6 that the crews of the sludge vessels had decided to join the strike. Yesterday the crews changed (they work one week on, one week off) and this week's crews have decided to work normally. Sailings began again this afternoon.

Secondly, last night brought very high tides, and the Authority's North Thames Tidal Defences were brought into use - the first time that they have been used for genuine flood-prevention. Despite the heavy work load already being shouldered by managers and engineers, and the very unsocial hours that were required on this occasion (21.30 to 04.00), all went well.

Next report Thursday 3 February

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