

MR. WHITMORE

cc: Mr. Scholar o.r.  
Miss Stephens  
Mr. Hoskyns  
Mr. Ingham

ASLEF DISPUTE: HANDLING OF THE McCARTHY REPORT

I reported on Friday evening the outcome of Sir Peter Baldwin's meeting about the handling of the situation that will arise after Lord McCarthy reports; since events will move rather quickly in the next two days or so, it may be helpful if I set out the likely sequence of meetings and decisions required.

As agreed at the meeting on Friday, Mr. Howell has now spoken to Sir Peter Parker, who has undertaken that the BR Board will make no comment at all on the report of the McCarthy inquiry until he has had some communication with the Government. In practice, since the BR Board will meet on Tuesday afternoon, they may well be able to avoid commenting until Tuesday evening.

MISC 57 met this morning, as instructed by Ministers at their meeting on 11 February, and agreed a paper which, after confirmation of some of the details, will be circulated to Ministers first thing tomorrow morning. That will conclude with the assessment that in the event of an all-out strike starting on 1 March, power station endurance will be about 11 weeks, without the use of rota cuts or troops. But, of course, demand restrictions would have to be introduced before the 11 weeks were over.

No-one is any the wiser at lunchtime today than they were on Friday of whether the McCarthy inquiry team could reach agreement, or what they were likely to say. But it is still expected that they will report tomorrow morning, and we may also expect massive newspaper speculation tomorrow, probably as uninformed as it has been over the weekend.

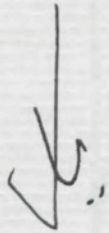
Sir Peter Baldwin will be holding another meeting of his group, which I shall attend, at 2.00 p.m. tomorrow, which will attempt to provide a short paper setting out the facts of the inquiry report,

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and the immediate response from ACAS and the unions; that report would then be available for Ministers to read at the beginning of their meeting at 5.15 p.m. tomorrow afternoon. Clearly, in case the McCarthy report is delayed, we need to retain the meeting slot for 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoon. I doubt if it will be possible for me to provide ~~ide~~ any help for the briefing for Prime Minister's Questions after Sir Peter Baldwin's meeting, and I think the Department of Transport will have to provide a holding reply at lunchtime.



15 February 1982

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