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transport
Prime Minister

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Prime Minister

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LONDON TRANSPORT STRIKE ON 10 MARCH

I met London Transport Trade Unions this afternoon and impressed on them the futility of the strike action they propose for 10 March. Immediately afterwards I issued a Press Notice aimed among other things at encouraging the rank and file to think hard about going on strike, whatever the union orders might be. I propose to reiterate this message both after my meeting with Ken Livingstone on Monday morning, and in any press notices thereafter.

It is not possible to give a reliable assessment on what will happen to traffic in London on the day. We have no experience since the General Strike to guide us on closure of both the underground and the buses simultaneously.

Overall the general expectation seems to be that a great many London travellers will treat it as a day off. The clearing banks for example are only proposing to run a small fraction of the number of coaches they ran during the ASLEF action.

It appears there is unlikely to be sympathetic action from the railways or London Country Bus. Both want to keep their powder dry for their own pay claims and disputes.

Against this background we have discussed with the Police what arrangements would be appropriate. The emergency car parking facilities will be made available in the Royal Parks. Extra police will be on duty on major roads to help traffic flow

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freely. And although it would require GLC agreement to suspend the bus lanes, the Metropolitan Police on the ground will not be enforcing them. The Police have approached the GLC about the use of their parks for car parking but we do not yet know the answer.

Press Notices will be issued explaining the arrangements and drawing attention to the availability of parking facilities. I am not proposing at this stage to make a special statement to the House on Tuesday. But during my First Order Questions, my appearance before the Select Committee on Transport (both on 10 March) and in speeches and press statements I shall be taking every possible opportunity to emphasise the pointless and damaging nature of the strike.

I am sending a copy of this minute to all members of the Cabinet, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

DH.
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DAVID HOWELL
4 March 1982

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