



Prime Minister (2)

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John Vereker's note (Flag A)

shows that BR are mainly planning

non-flexible rostering post 17 May.

 immediate  
 No action on this report - which I  
 will put in the weekend box. Done

Prime Minister

BRITISH RAIL - ASLEF DISPUTE

M/S 31/3

The report from the Railway Staffs National Tribunal under Lord McCarthy on flexible rostering will probably not now be available until the week beginning 19 April. We should hopefully have available a few days after that the British Railway Board's proposals for handling the RSNT findings. Meanwhile, you may welcome this short progress report.

Your Private Secretary's letter of 16 March suggested that the process of introducing new flexible rosters for drivers should be begun as soon as possible. My officials have encouraged the Board to be ready to implement for drivers as many of the new rosters as possible when the new timetable comes into operation on 17 May. The Board expect to have flexible rosters ready for at least 15 - 20 (out of 269) drivers' depots by 17 May. That should be enough to bring the issue to a head; and flexible rosters for the remaining depots will be ready for imposition if necessary, by the beginning of June. When I see Sir Peter Parker tomorrow, I will urge him to see whether flexible rosters could be prepared for more drivers' depots by 17 May.

I will also emphasise again that the Board should take no precipitate action on the RSNT report but should consult Ministers on their proposed course of action.

The delay in the publication of the RSNT report means that it will not be possible to divorce the issue of flexible rostering entirely from the 1982 pay round. The Board will not respond to the unions' claims until after the report is available. We will probably need to consider how the Board are proposing to

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handle this at the same time as we discuss the RSNT findings. I will ask the Board to let us have their latest views on the pay round at the same time as they consult us on their proposed course of action on flexible rostering.

Another problem that we may have to take account of in our deliberations is the single-manning of trains on the newly electrified Bedford-St Pancras line. The new trains are designed to be operated by a driver only. The NUR is insisting on guards on these trains, thus delaying their introduction. This issue may worsen BR's relations with NUR at a difficult time.

I am attaching a further paper by the Official Committee on Railway Policy, which describes the latest position, particularly on the implementation of flexible rosters, in more detail.

I am copying this minute to the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Energy, Industry, Defence, Scotland and Employment and to Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Sparrow.

*RAF Mayer*

P.P. DAVID HOWELL

30 March 1982

(Approved by the Secretary of State  
and signed in his absence)

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BRITISH RAIL - ASLEF DISPUTE

Report by the Official Committee on Railway Policy

Latest Position

1. The RSNT report on British Rail's proposals on flexible rostering is not now expected until the week beginning 13 April at the earliest. It is likely that it will not be available until the week beginning 19 April, or possibly the following week. Despite Press reports about Lord McCarthy finding it difficult to understand the proposals, BR are still hopeful that he will find in favour of arrangements close enough to those already agreed with the NUR to be acceptable to the Board and the NUR.

Following the RSNT Findings

2. Since the RSNT findings will be non-binding, there is bound to be a period in which the parties (Board and unions) make up their minds what course to pursue. The Board's response is bound to be conditioned by ASLEF's. If the RSNT findings are substantially in the Board's favour and ASLEF do not reject them out of hand but show a willingness to discuss them seriously, the Board will probably allow some time for negotiations. This would allow pressure to be applied on ASLEF by the TUC and other unions. It would also allow ASLEF time to persuade their members that a change in policy is required. ASLEF might wish to take the issue to their annual conference in mid-May. If, however, ASLEF remain totally intransigent about moving from a minimum payment of 8 hours a day, then the Board may wish to make an early statement which will force the issue.

3. Other industrial relations considerations that will influence the Board's decision are:-

- i. the new annual timetable is introduced on 17 May. They would wish to introduce as many new flexible rosters as possible for drivers at that time. New timetables often lead to some industrial action irrespective of other changes.
- ii. the pay round. Although the unions are not pressing for a response to their claims for substantial increases, they can be expected to do so soon.
- iii. the progress or, in some instances, lack of progress on other productivity items. In particular, the introduction of one-man operation on Bedford - St Pancras services could lead to a confrontation with the NUR.

BR's readiness to impose flexible rosters for drivers

4. BR will not be able to prepare and dispatch 'flexible' diagrams

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to all drivers' depots for conversion into rosters until about the end of May. If ASLEF were accepting flexible rostering, it could take some further time for all flexible rosters to be implemented. At a large depot it can take the depot manager 4-6 weeks to draw up rosters in consultation with staff. However, if ASLEF were not accepting flexible rostering, and the rosters had to be imposed, it would take a depot manager only 2-3 days to convert the diagrams into rosters. (Annex A explains how rosters are normally drawn up, and why flexible rosters for all drivers' depots cannot be ready before the end of May.)

5. It had been BR's intention not to seek to impose flexible rosters until all the new rosters were available, but in view of Ministers' decision (recorded in Mr Scholar's letter of 16 March to Mr Mayer) that the process of introducing new flexible rosters should begin as soon as possible after an RSNT decision, the Department of Transport have discussed possible changes in tactics with the Board.

6. An important constraint is the introduction of the new annual timetable on 17 May. The Board will be preparing new flexible rosters based on the new timetable. They would not wish to divert train planning resources from that task to preparing rosters that could be worked for only a few days. On 19 March the Board was still saying that they could have flexible rosters ready by 17 May for only about 15 out of the 269 drivers' depots. However, they now estimate that new flexible rosters could be ready for imposition on 17 May at a larger number of depots.

7. It is recommended that, in the event of the Board deciding to impose flexible rosters for drivers, they should be encouraged to make an early statement of their intention to do so in as many depots as possible from 17 May, and as soon as possible thereafter in the remaining depots. It is for consideration whether this view should be immediately conveyed to the Board as the considered view of Ministers.

Department of Transport

26 March 1982

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ANNEX A

IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXIBLE ROSTERING

Preparation of rosters for staff is essentially a two-stage process. First, train services (eg the 8.00 from Euston to Manchester) are 'diagrammed', ie a locomotive and coaching stock is assigned to the service, and the staffing of the train ('a turn') is allocated to particular drivers' and guards' depots. This 'diagramming' is a highly specialised job, and is done by the 75 train planning officers at the 5 Regional Headquarters. These diagrams are sent to depots where 'rosters' are drawn up for individual staff by the depot manager in consultation with the staff. This normally takes 2-3 weeks from the diagrams being received at a depot; but it can take 4-6 weeks at large depots.

2. Early May is the normal date for the annual major timetable change, and in the first months of the year the train planning officers are usually planning new diagrams to fit the new timetable. But at the beginning of January this year the Board were faced with a difficult choice. They had just secured an agreement on flexible rostering with the NUR, whilst ASLEF were bitterly opposing its introduction. The Board decided to concentrate their train planning resources on the preparation of flexible rosters for guards (based on the old timetable) in the hope that the earliest possible working of flexible rostering by guards would be an important step in persuading ASLEF members of the benefits that flexible rostering would bring. The preparation of new 'flexible' diagrams for guards was completed in January and February. These diagrams have been put to guards' depots as they have been completed. Over 70% of guards' depots (total 305) have now agreed the new flexible rosters, and over 50% are now working them.

3. When it came to devising new diagrams for drivers, the Board felt it necessary to take the fail-safe decision that they must preserve their ability to run the new May timetable (to be introduced on 17 May this year). They decided in January, therefore, that 'non-flexible' diagrams would have to be prepared for drivers. Their preparation should be completed by end-March or the beginning of April. As they become available, they are

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being put to drivers' depots.

4. Train planning resources are now concentrated on:-
  - i. completing 'non-flexible' diagrams for drivers based on the new May timetable
  - ii. preparing new 'flexible' diagrams for guards to work the new May timetable.

Only when these tasks are completed will resources be available for preparing flexible rosters for drivers based on the May timetable. It will not be possible, therefore, to commence preparing the new diagrams for dispatch to all 269 drivers' depots until about the last week in April. Until then the train planning staff will be occupied with queries and revisions arising from depot examination of the diagrams already dispatched.

5. On this basis flexible diagrams should be available for all drivers' depots by end-May. It normally takes 4-6 weeks at a large depot for rosters to be prepared and agreed. With reasonable co-operation from ASLEF members, therefore, all the new rosters could be operated from 4 July. But if ASLEF are not accepting flexible rostering, the Board would be in a position to impose flexible rosters at the beginning of June. It takes a depot manager no more than 2-3 days to convert the diagrams into rosters if he does not have to consult the staff.

6. The Board advised the Department as recently as 19 March that flexible diagrams would be available at only about 10-15 drivers' depots by 17 May. However, if some train planning resources are diverted to their production, rather than checking queries on the new May diagrams now being prepared (see para 4), as soon as the RSNT findings are known, then it should be possible to have flexible diagrams available at a few more drivers' depots by 17 May.

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