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Prime Minister (2)

To see ~~XX~~ I have re-arranged

The long-postponed BR/wal meeting for Tuesday
when you will be able to take stock of the post
McCarthy BR position. M/S 5/5

MR SCHOLAR

cc Mr Walters
Mr Ingham

The Threatened Dock Strike; and the BR/ASLEF Dispute

The Prime Minister may welcome two pieces of modest good news.

There will be no national dock strike starting on Monday 10 May as threatened. The Cabinet Office Contingencies Unit met this afternoon to prepare for one, but we heard in the course of it that Connelly (TGWU Docks Group National Secretary) has decided to recommend to the TGWU suspension of action to allow time for the preparation of specific and detailed proposals, as suggested by Mr. Waddington on 5 May. The first reaction of Transport and Employment officials to this news is that the TGWU have accepted the lifeline thrown to them to avoid a strike, but that their demand for the extension of the Dock Labour Scheme to non-scheme ports (notably Felixstowe and Dover) cannot be put off indefinitely. The next danger point will be when the TGWU come back with proposals, perhaps in eight to twelve weeks, but the process of consultation may be extendable for much longer. Nevertheless this has been a nasty scare: we have come perilously close to the first national docks strike for ten years. Officials are agreed that we need to look urgently at the options for withstanding one if necessary - which ought to be more practicable as the docks have become less labour intensive. We may need to put the docks higher on the list of priorities for MISC 57 type work, and in due course the Cabinet Office will put forward proposals.

According to reliable sources the McCarthy tribunal is going to come down clearly in favour of flexible restoring on the railways. The report will definitely be available to the Parties this Friday; and behind a lot of unnecessary verbiage, it will say that flexible rostering is essential to the survival of the railways in the twentieth century. It will provide

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clear pointers to further negotiations between BR and ASLEF; on the maintenance of earnings, taken week by week rather than day by day, and on the proportion of rosters (McCarthy thinks they will be less than 25%) that will exceed an 8½ hour day; on both of these ASLEF will no doubt seek guarantees. And McCarthy will say that the rosters must be negotiated depot by depot, which the media may present as a fudge, but is in fact the only way to do it and what is already happening with NUR. McCarthy will also say that there is no question of the 39 hour week until flexible rosters are in place. The issue may thus become whether ASLEF will accept the tribunal's findings, rather than BR's reactions to them: and it is highly relevant that ASLEF's annual conference begins the week after next. We should see a period of intense negotiation between BR and ASLEF before then.

J.

5 May 1982

cc Mr. Selvester ✓

BR/ASLEF DISPUTE

AWARD OF THE RAILWAY STAFF NATIONAL TRIBUNAL (THE McCARTHY REPORT)

The Government has always said that improved working practices and greater productivity are essential to the future of the railways. I am therefore delighted that the RSNT makes a clear recommendation for the acceptance of the principle of 7 to 9 hour rosters for footplate staff so as to make more effective use of drivers' time. It is now up to BR and ASLEF to implement the proposed new arrangements without delay, for the benefit of the railway industry, its workforce, and its customers.

J.