CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

This only came in today. Tho' it was obviously drafted on Friday.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Civil Contingencies Unit met again on 19 June under my chairmanship to review the state of play on the ambulancemen's dispute.

There was a varied response to the strike call in London on Monday and the police and voluntary services were able to provide emergency cover in those areas where the emergency service had been withdrawn. The number of emergency calls made by the public fell by half and the arrangements for medical screening of the calls that were made worked well. Military assistance was not required. London ambulancemen did not take part in Wednesday's national strike, and seven other areas worked normally. In four of the remaining 37 no emergency cover was provided, but the police and the voluntary bodies were able to cope. Ambulancemen in South Yorkshire stayed out on Thursday, and ambulancemen in the Isle of Wight have imposed an indefinite ban on paperwork. In Wales military assistance had to be provided in Gwent and South Glamorgan. Both sides in the dispute have met with ACAS and talks are continuing. Union executives are to meet in the next day or so to decide what form further action might take and London ambulancemen are being balloted on a second 24 hour stoppage.

Against this background we have agreed to extend servicemen's notice in England and Wales to 48 hours to give the troops a break over the week-end; notice in respect of London, South Glamorgan and Gwent will return to 24 hours from 7.00 a.m. on Monday. Health Ministers have delegated authority to shorten notice further and to commit troops if necessary.

i.e. last w/end

In Scotland, the police and voluntary organisations continue to cope. The same is true of Northern Ireland.

The Department of Transport does not think that there is a serious risk of official industrial action on British Rail until the decision of the Railways Staff National Tribunal (RSNT) on the railway pay claim has been announced. This is not expected before 6 July at the earliest. The decision is not binding on the parties, and much will depend on the decision itself and the response to it. Management decisions by British Rail involving job losses will no doubt encourage some militancy but the announcement which the Secretary of State for Transport is to make on electrification on Monday should be an important factor in determining union attitudes.

You may also have seen reports of the possibility of industrial action on the London underground. The London Transport Executive has spelt out to the rail unions the productivity package it is prepared to offer on top of an 8 per cent rise in basic rates. The

CONFIDENTIAL

unions have referred this back to their executive committees. Despite the reported threats of immediate action, management expect that the unions will wait until the RSNT decision on British Rail pay is known in the expectation that they will be able to use this to justify higher increases. The Civil Contingencies Unit will continue to keep the position under review.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretaries of State for Employment, Defence, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Social Services and Transport, the Financial Secretary, Treasury, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

HOW

4. June 1981

c. Mr. Duguid
Mr. Lankester

MR. INGHAM

Nat Health

AMBULANCEMEN'S DISPUTE

You should know that it was agreed at the meeting of the Contingency Unit this morning that, although sporadic and isolated outbreaks of industrial action are still occuring in the ambulance service, Servicemen's notice will be lengthened to five days, from the present arrangements of two days for London and three days elsewhere. In the one-day strikes so far, Servicemen have actually had to be used only once, for one day, in Wales; so we can be pretty confident that local health authorities can continue to cope with the present pattern of action. The Service ambulances and materials will of course be kept on stand-by.

There are some signs of a negotiated settlement: the unions have asked for a meeting with Mr. Jenkin on 21 July. And PA is carrying a story today that London ambulancemen have decided not to stage any more one day strikes while there is a danger of rioting and looting.

J. M. M. VEREKER

13 July 1981

SM

CONFIDENTIAL

Nat Health.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY
ALEXANDER FLEMING HOUSE
ELEPHANT AND CASTLE
LONDON S.E.1

TELEPHONE: 01-407 5522

cc Vereker
Inglham

Andrew Jackson Esq
Private Secretary to
The Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON SW1

/ July 1981

72

M7

Dear Andrew

Further to our telephone conversation this afternoon I am writing to confirm that 26 Army Vehicles and personnel are being placed on a four hour standby and 25 vehicles and personnel on a twelve hour standby as from 7am tomorrow, 2 July 1981. This is against the distinct possibility that lightening industrial action, without any emergency cover, will be taken by two of the four divisions of the London Ambulance Service.

We will, of course, review the position with the London Ambulance Service tomorrow.

I am copying this letter to Mike Pattison (No 10), Brian Norbury (Defence), Godfrey Robson (Scottish Office), John Craig (Welsh Office), Stephen Boys Smith (Northern Ireland Office) and John Rogers in Cabinet Office.

Yours ever

Mary McVerry

MARY McVERRY (MRS)
Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL

cc J. Jordan
Lyhn

2 pp's
Not Health.

Y SWYDDFA GYMREIG
GWYDYR HOUSE
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WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
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From The Parliamentary Under-Secretary

22 June 1981

Dear Home Secretary,

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

On 18 June I wrote to colleagues summarising our experiences during the 24 hours ended on midnight 17 June when the ambulancemen were, for the most part, providing only a restricted service in Wales and in the areas of two Area Health Authorities almost no service because the authorities concerned had decided that their ambulancemen should work normally in return for full pay, or not at all. I included a breakdown of how emergency calls were handled, including those answered by service personnel and vehicles, in the two areas, South Glamorgan and Gwent, where ambulancemen were, with one limited exception, not responding to emergencies. Subsequently, at Friday's meeting of the Civil Contingencies Unit, CCU(81)13th Meeting, I was invited to circulate a further note on the potential use of the voluntary services and the police, particularly in Gwent.

In Wales the voluntary services are strongest in South Glamorgan and, although there was some uncertainty beforehand about the extent to which they would be available on 17 June, mainly because of the acrimony of two years ago, in the event they did handle about half the emergencies. The situation in Gwent is different. The voluntary societies there are very weak, as was demonstrated during an extensive local dispute in July/August 1978. The back-bone of the membership is in fact made up of full-time Gwent AHA officers and ambulancemen, offering voluntary assistance in their spare time, and the latter threatened to withdraw from the voluntary organisations indefinitely if they engaged in "strike breaking", leaving only a few middle-aged ladies unaccustomed to driving large vehicles, and since this would have crippled the voluntary bodies, they preferred not to get involved. This was the main reason why, in February 1979, the AHA decided that it would be futile to call for voluntary assistance and, of course, on the present occasion. Apart from Gwent and South Glamorgan, the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in the rest of Wales rely heavily on full-time ambulancemen in their off-duty hours.

/As regards ...

Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP
Home Secretary
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON SW 1

As regards the police, I must pay a warm tribute to their effectiveness and co-operation throughout. Both the South Wales and Gwent forces responded magnificently to our calls for assistance, and made determined arrangements to cover the emergency. In both areas these arrangements were that the police would provide an escort service with local knowledge of the area and its hospital facilities, and a communications link, and would handle any motorway emergency using their vans to transport casualties from the scene of the incident to the nearest exit point where a Service ambulance would be waiting. We agreed to arrange for loose canvas/pole stretchers to be provided, where needed, for police vans and regarded these as an essential ultimate safeguard. Professional advice within the Department was that, given the nature of the service, that is the handling of critically-ill or injured people, the use of purpose-built ambulances with the full range of emergency equipment, including resuscitation apparatus, and with trained medical orderlies, was essential in the interests of the patient, particularly in view of the potential range of distances involved in transporting casualties in the county of Gwent. An analysis of the eight incidents handled by Service ambulances has vindicated this approach. For example, one Service ambulance cared for a mineworker with serious head injuries, and transported him 16 miles from Oakdale Colliery to the Royal Gwent Hospital, Newport, and then a similar distance to the St Lawrence Hospital, Chepstow. In such cases we should I believe have subjected patients to unacceptable risks if our arrangements had not involved the use of proper ambulances, with full emergency equipment. We should also, incidentally, have exposed ourselves to very serious public criticism if the purpose-built ambulances, which it was known generally were on standby, had not been used. It would also have placed an extremely unfair burden on the police, with their basic equipment, to have expected them to handle this sort of casualty when purpose-built vehicles and trained personnel were available.

Since our meeting on Friday, we have had further discussions with the Gwent and South Glamorgan Area Health Authorities, and with the police, and are continuing to appraise the situation with a view to reducing or eliminating Service participation if at all possible.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister's Office, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretaries of State for Employment, Defence, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Social Services and Transport, the Financial Secretary, Treasury, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely

Susan Cobbold

for WYN ROBERTS

(Approved by Mr Roberts but signed in his absence)

CONFIDENTIAL National Health 2

PRIME MINISTER

MT.

The Ambulancemen's Dispute

The industrial action by the ambulancemen earlier this week was not very effective. Servicemen were needed only in South Wales, where they coped without difficulty, and elsewhere police and voluntary services managed. Publicity was almost invariably critical of the unions, and there was no loss of life directly attributable to the dispute.

No progress was made when ACAS saw both parties to the dispute on Wednesday, and there will be a meeting of the unions' executives over the weekend, with an announcement early next week as to further action. A ballot of London ambulancemen is now taking place, and the result will be announced on Monday. The most likely outcome is the calling of another country-wide 24-hour strike.

The Servicemen will be put back on to 48 hours' notice over the weekend, but in London and South Wales they will be put on 24 hours' notice as from Monday morning. That will enable us to say, if necessary, that the troops are continuing to stand by, and that we are confident that any further action by the ambulancemen will be ineffective. I think there is a real chance that the ambulancemen will eventually give up, and in the meanwhile the Government's firm stand is certainly helping our public service pay posture generally.

JS

19 June 1981

CONFIDENTIAL

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01-233 7448 (Llinell Union)
Oddi wrth yr Is-Ysgrifennydd Seneddol

cc Duguid
& Veterans

Nat Health

WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
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From The Parliamentary Under-Secretary

18 June 1981

Dear Willie,

MBM

PL 18/6

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

Last Friday's meeting of the CCU, CCU(81)12th Meeting, authorised the deployment of servicemen in Wales from Wednesday 17 June and agreed that we should be empowered to commit them if required.

During the course of Tuesday 16 June our officials, who had been carefully monitoring the likely pattern of strike action by ambulancemen in the Principality, received requests for military assistance from two of the eight Area Health Authorities in Wales, that is from South Glamorgan and from Gwent. In each case the request was made by the Area Chief Ambulance Officer with the knowledge and approval of his Area Chairman. These requests were considered very carefully. South Glamorgan reported that, although voluntary organisations had promised to provide four ambulances, the minimum requirement for the maintenance of an emergency service was assessed at eight. In the case of Gwent, the minimum emergency requirement was considered to be nine, against which four ambulances, two manned by senior officers and two by ambulancemen working normally, were thought likely to be available. In these circumstances, Ministerial approval was given for officials to activate contingency plans for servicemen to assist in providing an emergency service from midnight in the areas of the two authorities.

During the 24 hours ending at midnight on 17 June, there were 51 emergency calls in South Glamorgan and 35 in Gwent. These were dealt with as follows:

/...

Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP
Home Secretary
Queen Anne's Gate
London SW 1

South Glamorgan

Service personnel	-	26
Voluntary organisations	-	25
		51

Gwent

Service personnel	-	8
Senior ambulance officers and ambulancemen working normally	-	27
		35

I am clear, therefore, that the use of servicemen was justified. Even in Gwent, where the use of ambulance officers was more extensive than anticipated, the servicemen responded only to calls where other resources were already fully committed to emergencies. In the remaining areas of Wales, ambulancemen provided a complete emergency, or in some cases a full, service.

I have been reviewing the experiences of the past 24 hours and my view is that while there may be a case for examining with Gwent their need for service assistance in any similar situation in future, there seems to be little doubt that servicemen will be required in South Glamorgan. Immediately, I would be content for servicemen to revert to 48 hours notice over the weekend, but I would hope that the Unit would continue thereafter to delegate authority to us to commit service personnel as we think fit. We shall do so only if we consider that the situation would otherwise be truly critical.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister's Office, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretaries of State for Employment, Defence, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Social Services and Transport, the Financial Secretary, Treasury and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever

Wyn

WYN ROBERTS

CONFIDENTIAL

cc Mr Vereker
Mr Duguid
Mr Ingham

Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Minister for Health

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP
The Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

16 June 1981

Dear Home Secretary,

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE 16 JUNE 1981

I thought that you would wish to be kept informed on what happened yesterday. Ambulancemen in London took unofficial action, despite an appeal from Alan Fisher, General Secretary of NUPE. Of the 145 ambulances normally available for emergency use, 26 were available during the whole day; 15 of the 76 ambulance stations in the GLC area were operating some kind of service. In addition 53 voluntary aid society vehicles and 40 police vehicles of various description were also used.

The statistics show that there was a 50 per cent reduction in the level of emergency calls - 726 emergency calls were received; the LAS dealt with 174, the police 196, the Red Cross 148 and the St John Ambulance handled 208. Medical staff at the LAS control were very effective in filtering calls and the end result was that London coped without calling for military assistance.

As far as we are aware there was only one untoward incident in London which has attracted publicity. This involved a patient at Claybury Hospital who fell from a window and later died in Whipps Cross Hospital. There was to be a post mortem earlier today and the Coronor's inquest was adjourned pending receipt of that report. The full facts surrounding the incident have yet to be established but it appears that a request for an ambulance was not received at the LAS control centre and the patient was moved to Whipps Cross Hospital by hospital transport.

As for the rest of the country on Wednesday, it looks as if health authorities will be able to cope with the official union action without requesting military assistance.

I am copying this letter to CCU colleagues.

Yours sincerely

J E Knight

Approved by
DR GERARD VAUGHAN
and signed in his absence

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Lankester cc Mr Vereker

Prime Minister

Sec Health

To note.

PRIME MINISTER

INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Civil Contingencies Unit met this morning under my chairmanship to consider what steps we might take to ensure the maintenance of an emergency ambulance service now that pay negotiations have broken down. The Unit is concerned only with the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community, and Patrick Jenkin will be reporting to you separately on the negotiations.

The trades unions concerned are now consulting their national executives and will then co-ordinate their plans for industrial action. Official action is unlikely to begin before next week; while we do not know what form it will take, there is some suggestion that it will consist of 24 hour strikes during which an emergency service only would be provided alternating with 24 hours normal duty. There is a possibility of unofficial action before the week-end but this is likely to be confined to the London area and may not be total.

The National Health Service have reviewed their contingency plans against the possibility of a dispute, and consultations have taken place between NHS regional administrators, military commanders and Chief Officers of police. They consider that it would be possible to maintain an ambulance service, albeit on a skeleton basis, with the help of the ambulance officers, the police and the voluntary bodies for a week or more in many areas, and in some cases indefinitely. Some areas, however, felt that military assistance would be needed within days.

The Unit agreed that if such assistance were to be provided it should be on the basis of Plan HELICAL, using service ambulances. Servicemen are at present at seven days notice. The Unit will be meeting again on Monday to consider in the light of developments whether to shorten notice and whether to authorise the drawing of vehicles and equipment from store, which would be likely to become a matter of public knowledge and could therefore influence the course of the dispute. The Unit have invited Patrick Jenkin and the other Health Ministers to consider with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and with your Office what guidance we might give our backbenchers before the week-end on the Government's attitude to the dispute. We shall need to keep our public stance under review. It would, however, be premature to activate the Central Press Unit at this stage.

Contingency plans in Northern Ireland envisage an emergency service provided by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the voluntary organisations. There would be no direct call on the armed forces, though there might be some need to escort police vehicles.

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I will report further to you after Monday's meeting.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State for Employment, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Secretary of State for Wales, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State for Social Services, the Financial Secretary, Treasury, and Sir Robert Armstrong.

3 June 1981

cc Mr. Lankester
Mr. Gaffin

MR. INGHAM

Ambulancemen

As agreed, I attended the meeting of the CCU this morning, chaired by the Home Secretary. The CCU agreed to authorise the deployment, and if necessary use, of the armed forces in support of local health authorities as from Monday morning in London, and Wednesday morning in Wales; and that the armed forces should be on 48 hours notice from Wednesday for the rest of the country. Servicemen will not be asked to shorten their notice in Scotland or Northern Ireland, where the health authorities think they can cope without.

Dr. Vaughan circulated the attached draft statement, and suggested that it ought to wait until Monday morning. In the light of our discussion yesterday, which I had already recorded in a letter to the Chancellor of the Duchy's office, and copied to the CCU Secretariat, I said that your clear view was that the Government must convey its message - both that the strike would be ineffective and that the Government's offer was reasonable - in time for media coverage this weekend. The Home Secretary felt that it would be best if the message was put out before Mr. Jenkin left the country, and we therefore agreed, subject to your views, that it should go out today. You have since confirmed that it should go out as soon as possible, and I have so informed Neville Taylor in the DHSS.

No comments were offered in the CCU on the text of the draft statement, but Employment reported that the ambulancemen had agreed to have a meeting with ACAS on Wednesday. I said this ought to be mentioned, the point being that emergency services above all should not strike while negotiations were continuing - provided we did not raise expectations that ACAS would be allowed to arbitrate between the 6% cash limit and the ambulancemen's claim. DHSS have since said that they do not hold out any hope of ACAS arriving at an acceptable settlement, and would prefer not to refer to it, which I have agreed. Subject to one or two other small changes, therefore,

/the

the press notice will be put out early this afternoon, and we will be sent the final text in time for your lobby briefing this afternoon.

I also reported briefly that you now had in hand all necessary co-ordination arrangements.

12 June 1981

SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

cc J. Vereker

Prime Minister

Mike Pattison Esq
Private Secretary
No 10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

10 June 1981

Dear Mike,

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Home Secretary's minute to the Prime Minister of 9 June records that action by the Scottish ambulancemen is now to be deferred until next week.

That was indeed our information last night. We have now learned, however, that ambulancemen in the Greater Glasgow and Argyll and Clyde areas started industrial action at 7 am today, when the day shift did not report for duty. Accident and emergency cover is being provided by the police, and so far no problems have arisen for the police.

Crews in Kilmarnock have now given notice that they will not bring patients back from Glasgow (though they will continue to take them there). Otherwise ambulance crews in other areas of Scotland are working normally, though some other depots are to call meetings later in the week.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Wales, Northern Ireland and Social Services and to the Private Secretary to the Financial Secretary, Treasury.

Yours ever,

GODFREY ROBSON
Private Secretary

cc J Vereker

Ingham

CONFIDENTIAL

2

Prime Minister

To note that the army ~~contingency~~ arrangements have now been activated.

MT

PRIME MINISTER

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Civil Contingencies Unit met again yesterday under my chairmanship to review developments in the ambulancemen's dispute.

10/6

The unions have now called a 24 hour strike in England and Wales on Wednesday, 17 June which will be the first of a series of stoppages. They will instruct their members to maintain an emergency service, widely defined; it will include, for example, the transport of radiotherapy patients and the discharge of the terminally ill from hospital. It is likely that ambulancemen in London will take unofficial action on Monday, 15 June and that emergency cover will not be provided. In Scotland, the unions called a 24 hour strike for Wednesday, 10 June, including a withdrawal of emergency cover but we have since learned that this will be postponed to next week.

Health authorities are divided in the response that they will make. Some will send home at once those who take action and will then have to rely on the police and the voluntary services to provide emergency cover. Others will delay their response. Many authorities expect to be able to maintain an emergency service for a week or more, and in some cases indefinitely; others however, including London, expect that they will require military assistance within a matter of days.

Against that background the Unit decided that it would be right to authorise servicemen to draw vehicles and equipment from store for use if required throughout Great Britain. (There is no requirement for military assistance in Northern Ireland). Servicemen are at present at 7 days notice. Servicemen's notice for those who will be deployed in London will be shortened to 48 hours from Friday so that they can be deployed if necessary for Monday. The Unit will meet again on Friday morning to review the position. It would be possible to deploy servicemen nationally in time for Wednesday if the situation on Friday appeared to warrant it.

These moves are almost bound to become a matter of public knowledge. Arrangements are in hand for the Trades Union Congress to be informed that the Government is taking precautionary measures. The Secretary of State for Social Services will refer to these decisions as appropriate in answer to Parliamentary Questions.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Secretaries of State for Employment, Defence, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Social Services and the Financial Secretary, Treasury.

CONFIDENTIAL

9 June 1981

010

Mr Duguid
cc Mr Kerr
Mr Lyne

MS

Prime Minister

As expected the talks broke down. The unions will announce what they are going to do on Monday

PRIME MINISTER

AMBULANCEMENS PAY

Negotiations broke down at yesterday's meeting of the Ambulancemen's Whitley Council. The Trade Union Side were not prepared to accept the offer on the table - 7¾ per cent on basic rates with leave improvements - equivalent in total to 7.59 per cent increase in the pay bill over 15 months unless the cash total available was increased. The Management Side refused to go beyond the 6 per cent per annum in cash limits.

TL 4/6

2. Claims for increases on a par with the police and fire services were rejected. The Management Side offered a joint investigation into the feasibility of moving to a salaried structure for ambulancemen. The Trade Unions declined to commit themselves unless there was a guarantee now of any "new money" which may prove necessary for this purpose.

See also minute below from Home Secretary.

Industrial Action

3. The four unions (NUPE, COHSE, GMWU and TGWU) are considering this week how to react, including the possibility of a succession of 24 hour strikes. Emergency cover would, it is believed, continue to be provided but even this could be withdrawn at short notice should NHS management move to suspend any ambulancemen not willing to carry out his normal duties. There are indications that Health Authorities are ready to take a robust line, and it is to be expected that some at least will start fairly soon sending men home who are not prepared to work normally. The unions' intentions are expected to be announced formally on Monday, 8 June followed by a few days warning of the start of official action. There is a risk of earlier, sporadic unofficial action, especially in London, perhaps starting before this weekend.

4. ACAS have intervened by inviting both sides to exploratory talks. This may delay the onset of industrial action by a few days but is not expected to lead to a settlement.

5. The Home Secretary is submitting to you a note of the discussion at CCU on plans to deal with industrial action.

Publicity

6. Apart from maintaining the general thrust of our policy on cash limits, there are specific arguments on this dispute that must be deployed, both to persuade ambulancemen not to heed the call to strike action, and to win the public argument. I attach a draft of some Questions and Answers that should be helpful both at Westminster and in the constituencies, and I am discussing the timing of distributing this with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

7. I am copying this note to William Whitelaw, John Nott, Jim Prior, George Younger, Nicholas Edwards, Humphrey Atkins and Francis Pym.

P.J.

4 June 1981

ENC.

Y OF AMBULANCEMEN - THE FACTS

Members will have seen that Ambulancemen are threatening strike action following the breakdown of pay negotiations. The following notes may be found helpful in dealing with questions over the week-end.

1. How is the pay of ambulancemen negotiated?

Negotiation of pay and conditions of service for ambulancemen is a matter for the Ambulancemen's Whitley Council which includes representatives of NUPE, COHSE, GMWU and TGWU and NHS employing authorities.

2. Where do pay negotiations stand?

The Whitley Council Management Side's offer, within the 6 per cent pay factor in NHS cash limits, is an increase in basic rates of 7¾ per cent for a 15 month settlement period from 1 January 1981 until 31 March 1982. For the grades of Leading Ambulanceman and Qualified Ambulanceman (over 85 per cent of all ambulancemen) the increases in basic weekly rates would be £6.43 and £5.94 respectively. The offer was rejected on 2 June.

The Management Side have also offered a joint investigation of ambulancemen's pay and conditions. The Trade Unions are not willing to co-operate unless a guarantee be given now that any new money needed to bring changes eg to move to a salaried service, is on the table.

3. What are Ambulancemen being paid?

The case presented for an increase in ambulancemen's pay tends to quote current basic rates. This is very misleading. Few ambulancemen receive the basic rate; extra money is earned for shift and weekend working, overtime in excess of the standard 40 hour week and through bonuses. The figures are:

	Basic Rates	Estimated Average Weekly Earnings	
		London	Elsewhere
Leading Ambulancemen:	£82.97	£172	£152
Qualified Ambulancemen:	£76.60	£156	£132

ADDING THE LATEST OFFER THE FIGURES WILL BE:

	New Basic Rates	New Estimated Average Weekly Earnings	
		London	Elsewhere
Leading Ambulancemen:	£89.40	£184	£163
Qualified Ambulancemen:	£82.54	£166	£142

Since May 1979 the basic rate for a qualified ambulanceman has been increased by 48 per cent and average earnings have risen by about 54 per cent. The current offer would lift these figures to 59 per cent on basic rates and about 66 per cent on average earnings. Similarly 1979 the average earnings across the whole economy have risen by 35 per cent.

4. How do average earnings compare with the average for all industries and services as recorded by the D E Employment Gazette?

The average earnings (Great Britain) after the 1980 pay settlement, for all ambulancemen including those not qualified were about £130 pw.

According to the latest available estimate for 1980 (March), the figure for 'all industries and services Great Britain' was £124.50 pw.

5. How does the pay of ambulancemen compare with that of firemen?

Comparisons are complicated by the fact that the fire services basic salary is inclusive - there is no separate payment for shift working or weekend/night working or bonus. The ambulanceman's basic rate is enhanced by extra payments for these features. For example - an ambulanceman of two years service working the fire services duty system (ie 42 hours a week with duties rotating over seven days a week 24 hours a day) would earn on ambulance scales about £108 a week - this would go up to about £116 pw on the current offer. This should be compared with the fire service rates payable since 1 April 1981 of £110.53 pw for a two year service man.

6. How many hours do Ambulancemen work?

The national average working hours for the Leading and Qualified Ambulanceman grades are 46½ hours, and in the London Ambulance Service, 51 hours a week.

7. Are Ambulancemen being treated fairly in comparison with the other emergency services?

The Government fully recognises the important role of the ambulance service as part of the NHS Accident and Emergency Service. But only around 10 per cent of the patients carried by the Ambulance Service are from emergency calls. The Clegg Commission considered the ambulancemen's unions' claim for pay to be settled in relation to the pay of police and firemen but concluded that this would not be right.

8. Why did Firemen get an increase of more than 6 per cent?

The TUC issued a statement at the end of last year endorsing support for the Fire Brigades Union which said "The General Council emphasises that whatever the position of unions generally in respect of the Government's 6 per cent cash limit, that was clearly a separate matter from the 1978 Agreement between the Fire Brigades Union and the Local Authorities, where the issue was simply that of honouring a binding collective agreement and bore no direct relationship to the collective bargaining circumstances of other unions".

9. Why special treatment for the Police?

The Edmund-Davies Committee of Inquiry into Policy Pay [Cmnd 7823 (1978)] stated quite clearly that the police service cannot properly be compared with any other single group of workers and it was not possible to equate the work of the police with that of any other group of workers for pay purposes. Police officers occupy a unique role in the constitution of the country and this role is reflected in the restrictions and limitations to which they are subjected; the most important being those which prohibit joining a trade union or taking strike action. These factors were among those which influenced the Committee of Inquiry in determining the level of police pay. The Government made a specific commitment in its Manifesto to implement in full the recommendations of the Edmund-Davies Committee.

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Civil Contingencies Unit met again this morning under my chairmanship to review the state of play on the ambulancemen's dispute.

The present position is that there is to be a national 24 hour strike on Wednesday during which emergency cover will be maintained. Sporadic unofficial action has already taken place in England and Scotland, including a withdrawal of emergency cover; contingency arrangements relying on the police and the voluntary bodies have worked well. There is to be a 24 hour unofficial strike in London on Monday, again including withdrawal of emergency cover; the health authority consider that if all goes well they will be able to maintain an emergency service without recourse to military assistance but the balance is a fine one.

Against that background we have decided that it would be right to place troops on standby to provide an emergency service for the capital if needed and have delegated the authority for their use. We have shortened servicemen's notice in the rest of England to 48 hours from Monday. There is uncertainty in Wales how far the voluntary bodies will co-operate; servicemen will be deployed there against the possibility that they will be needed on Wednesday. In Scotland the police and voluntary organisations expect to be able to contrive to cope and Scottish Ministers see no need to activate contingency plans at this stage. Contingency plans in Northern Ireland likewise rely on the police and voluntary bodies.

Health Ministers will make the Government's position clear over the week-end, emphasising that the settlement now on offer is fair and just and that adequate contingency arrangements exist to deal with any disruption. They will draw attention also to the efforts that ACAS is making to end the dispute; ACAS is to meet the trades union side on Wednesday.

I understand that you have expressed concern about the possibility, reported in some newspapers today, of a rail strike next week. The announcement by British Rail of their decision to close their works at Ashford will certainly add to militant pressure for a rail strike. But I understand that the Department of Transport takes the view that a major rail strike is unlikely before the NUR conference at the end of this month or the announcement by the Railways Staffs National Tribunal of its decision on the railway pay claim. Although the timing is uncertain, this is unlikely to be for a few weeks yet. An important factor will be what the Secretary of State for Transport is able to say following next week's discussion in the Committee of rail electrification.

CONFIDENTIAL

You will recall that earlier this year the Civil Contingencies Unit reviewed the steps which the Government could take in the event of a rail strike; their report was circulated under cover of E(81)49. I do not think that further action by the CCU is required at this stage but we shall, of course, continue to keep the position under review. We shall need to meet each week and review the developments in the ambulancemen's dispute in any case.

below

I am sending copies of this minute to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretaries of State for Employment, Defence, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Social Services and Transport, the Financial Secretary, Treasury, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

GHW.

12 June 1981

cc J. Vereker
cc Ingham (CF)

Nat Health

Prime Minister
This is a further note for information. Mr Jenkin will seek approval from CCU, and then you, if army assistance proves necessary.

PRIME MINISTER

INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

1. You and colleagues will doubtless be aware from press reports that the main trade unions representing ambulancemen - NUPE and COHSE - have both been making threatening noises about strike action if their current pay claim (in excess of 18 per cent) is not met. The ambulancemen have been made offers within the 6 per cent pay factor built into cash limits but have made it clear that such offers are not acceptable.

2. The last negotiating meeting was on 29 April. The Management Side agreed to take away for further consideration a number of issues raised by the Staff Side, including a request for a declaration that the Ambulance Service was part of the Emergency Services and that its staff were of similar status to police and firemen. The Staff Side also demanded that ambulancemen's pay should be taken outside the arena of industrial dispute and accorded automatic linkage with a recognised index.

3. The next negotiating meeting is on 2 June. Whatever the response on the two points mentioned above (and the response is unlikely to be satisfactory from the union's point of view, although it may conceivably provide the basis for further talks), the fact that no further money will be on the table makes it probable that talks will break down and the unions will authorise industrial action.

4. The NHS has experienced disruption in the ambulance service in the past and has shown itself capable of maintaining an emergency service for some days, if not weeks, using the resources of the police, Red Cross and St John's, volunteers and, crucially in some respects, ambulance officers. On this occasion, however, we have indications that the ambulance officers, particularly at junior levels, will not co-operate as in the past, (they too have a pay claim under negotiation). This puts at risk not only the

NHS's ability to maintain emergency services for any length of time but also their ability, if industrial action occurs, to keep services going for more than a very limited period until further assistance from military sources can be provided.

5. Following a meeting of the Civil Contingencies Unit at official level yesterday, at which the implications of this situation were discussed, I have authorised urgent and confidential "Three Wise Men" discussions between ambulance authorities, the police and the armed forces at local level to discuss the possible use of troops to assist in the event of industrial action. I have made it clear to the NHS that these discussions do not assume that a collective Ministerial decision to use troops either has, or will be, taken. The discussions are simply intended to ensure that if that decision has to be taken, it can be implemented without unnecessary delay. I have also made it clear that the use of troops is a last resort.

6. From reports of NUPE's annual conference, it appears that the likely form of action may well be a series of 24 hour total stoppages on alternate days. In these circumstances, I have concluded that it would not be possible to implement the contingency plan which depends on Army drivers using NHS vehicles because of the problems of handing vehicles over to the Army and back every 24 hours. Accordingly, if any plan has to be implemented, it will have to be that relying on Army drivers and Army ambulances.

7. I expect the initial discussions to be completed by the weekend. Depending on the reports which I receive and on any indications of the likely response to a strike call I expect to be in a position, following the outcome of next Tuesday's negotiating meeting, to judge whether it is necessary to ask colleagues to consider further steps on Wednesday. If it is clear that the NHS cannot, in the absence of support from ambulance officers, keep emergency ambulance services

going, it may be necessary for me to ask colleagues for authorisation to use troops from the outset of any industrial action which may be called and therefore to ask for a shortening of the seven-day period of notice normally required for the use of troops. I realise that this requires overt action to be taken and the fact that troops would be on stand-by would become public knowledge. In the interests of not raising the temperature of the dispute, I would prefer not to do this until absolutely necessary and to wait to see whether the NHS can maintain services using non-military resources. However, I think that it would be prudent to arrange a meeting of CCU at Ministerial level for Wednesday, 3 June in case immediate action is required.

8. I am copying this note to Willie Whitelaw, John Nott, Jim Prior, George Younger, Nicholas Edwards, Humphrey Atkins and Francis Pym.

28 May 1981

P J

(APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND SIGNED IN HIS ABSENCE)

CONFIDENTIAL

Nat Health

MR LANKESTER

cc Mr. Ingham
Mr. Duguid

Possible Industrial Action by the Ambulancemen

The Prime Minister should know that there is now a serious possibility of industrial action by the ambulancemen, possibly supported by ambulance officers. The ambulancemen's Whitley Council meets on 2 June to consider the latest offer (7¾ per cent within the 6 per cent cash limit) and the Staff Side may sanction industrial action shortly thereafter. The Civil Contingencies Unit met this morning to dust off the plans for the use of Service vehicles and personnel, and I understand that their assessment is that these plans are adequate. I believe that Mr. Jenkin will be minuting the Prime Minister shortly about the negotiations.

27 May 1981

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Nat. Health.

Ref: B06092

MR LANKESTER

13/1

Yorkshire Ambulance Strike

The Home Secretary has this morning held a meeting of the Civil Contingencies Unit to review, with the Secretary of State for Social Services and others, the state of the dispute described in Mr Jenkin's minute to the Prime Minister of 9th January. He has asked me to let you know the upshot.

2. A return-to-work formula worked out locally late last night between management and union representatives is to be considered at a mass meeting of the ambulancemen at 4 pm today. In order not to prejudice the atmosphere for that meeting no decision will be taken before this evening either to shorten the troops' notice or to deploy them. If the mass meeting accepts the formula, the need for troops disappears. If it does not, the Ministry of Defence will this evening bring the necessary troops (80 men in one Field Amblance Unit) to 12 hours notice; a decision will be taken by Mr Whitelaw and Mr Jenkin, in consultation with Ministry of Defence and Department of Employment Ministers, to deploy the troops; Mr Whitelaw will inform the Prime Minister; and the troops will be able to deploy by tomorrow afternoon, which will in Mr Jenkin's view be time enough.

3. Meanwhile, Government spokesmen can truthfully go on saying, if asked, that no decision to deploy troops has yet been taken. Publicity will be carefully co-ordinated between the Department of Health and Social Security and the No. 10 Press Office and the Paymaster/Chancellor of the Duchy's office (both were represented at Mr Whitelaw's meeting).

4. Mr Jenkin was quite clear that if the mass meeting rejects the peace formula military assistance will be needed to maintain emergency cover and that there are no practicable alternatives.

5. I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Offices of Ministers who attended this morning's meeting: viz Mr Whitelaw, Mr Jenkin, Mr Lawson, Mr Goodhart and Mr Morrison.

13th January 1981

R L WADE-GERY

NAT Health
Jan 80

Mutaxed to Chequers
See - by PM.

cc Mr Ingham

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

STRIKE BY YORKSHIRE AMBULANCEMEN

Ambulancemen in South Yorkshire went on all-out strike on Wednesday. This followed six months of negotiations with the Regional Health Authority over the ending of a bonus scheme that gave the men unjustified returns. The Authority gave the unions proper notice of their intentions, gave adequate time to negotiate a new scheme, and followed the proper procedures.

The result of the strike is that not even emergency services are being provided and a scratch service is being arranged only by the combined efforts of the ambulance officers, the police and Red Cross volunteers. The ambulance officers, who are crucial to the running of an emergency service, are working flat out and will be unable to keep going much longer at their present level of activity.

We are exploring alternative ways of providing help (including more assistance from volunteers) but in case these are insufficient officials met in the Civil Contingencies Unit this afternoon to consider the case for prividing military help. Obviously, this is a last resort measure, and before taking a decision actually to commit troops Ministers will need to consider the implications, including the extent of military assistance in other public services. In the meantime some covert planning can be undertaken that will ensure that if we do decide to use troops they can be deployed in time.

An important part of our tactics will be, one way or the other, to ensure plenty of publicity, in the first place to bring out just how disgraceful and dangerous to the public is this piece of industrial action, and so put pressure on the strikers to return to work, but secondly to start

preparing the public for the use of troops if they become necessary. I am in touch with Francis Pym about the publicity arrangements. For the moment this is just to alert you to the nature of the situation and to the possibility that on Monday or Tuesday Ministers will need to decide whether to use troops.

I am copying this to Willie Whitelaw, Francis Pym, Jim Prior and John Nott.

P.J.

9 January 1981.

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