



CONFIDENTIAL

CC B/PP
BG.

PRIME MINISTER

PRISON OFFICERS' DISPUTE
SITUATION REPORT

1. After the serious troubles on the night of 31 April/1 May, the Prison Officers' Association (POA) suspended their industrial action and restored normal working in order to allow preliminary talks to take place with the Home Office. Since then the situation in the prisons has stabilised. There was no trouble over the weekend, and there is no immediate threat of further action. Those officers who had been suspended have returned to duty. The local dispute at Gloucester prison was resolved yesterday (Monday), with the prison officers concerned returning to work. The Bank Holiday weekend passed quietly in Northern Ireland.

2. Thirteen prisoners who escaped during the disturbances are still at large.

3. Work is in hand to repair the damage caused to prisons. Northeye, which was most severely damaged, will be out of action for some time, but it should be possible to return 50 prisoners in a fortnight to act as a work party. The Home Secretary is considering the arrangements for an inquiry into the disturbances (probably to be undertaken by the Chief Inspector of Prisons, but that is still to be decided).

Negotiations with the PAO

4. The Permanent Under-Secretary, Home Office held procedural talks with the PAO on Friday to find a basis on which substantive negotiations could resume. These talks are to continue tomorrow morning (7 May). The Home Secretary has made it clear that he will only resume substantive negotiations if the PAO remove the threat of industrial action. They are prepared to do this, but

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

believe that their internal rules require them to hold a further ballot in order to release them from their mandate under an earlier ballot. They will set this in hand, but as a preliminary step have asked the Home Office to clarify the basis on which formal talks can resume. Tomorrow's informal talks are aimed at agreeing the preliminaries necessary to return to the substantive discussions. The Home office are hopeful that they will be able to achieve this and the Home Secretary will be able to report the outcome of the talks at your meeting tomorrow afternoon.

Military Camps

5. As requested by the Ministerial Meeting under the Lord President last Thursday evening, the Ministry of Defence are preparing two camps for possible use as prisons. Following intensive work over the holiday, Rolleston Camp will be ready from tonight to receive some 360 prisoners at any time given 24 hours notice. The second camp will be Nescliffe (near Shrewsbury) with a capacity of about 350: the MOD and Home Office have initial planning in hand, but the actual physical preparations for receiving prisoners will take 5-7 days from a decision to authorise them. Since there is no immediate prospect of further disruption in the prisons I recommend that further work at Nescliffe should not be put in hand now but that the Home Office should keep the situation under continuing review so as to seek immediate authority when circumstances require.

6. Primary legislation will be required if these camps are to be used. A Bill and the associated procedural resolutions are drafted and ready for immediate introduction, but again I recommend that the Government should defer introducing the legislation until the situation warrants it. In extremis, the legislation could be obtained during one sitting day.

CONFIDENTIAL



A

Coordination Arrangements

7. There is close coordination between the Home Office, Ministry of Defence and Treasury (who are concerned among other things with the pay aspects). In addition the Civil Contingencies Unit remains available to provide formal interdepartmental co-ordination as and when necessary.

8. I am sending copies of this report to the Lord President, Home Secretary, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Secretary of State for Scotland, Chief Secretary, Treasury, Secretary of State for Employment, the Attorney General, the Chief Whip, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J B Unwin', is written above the typed name.

J B UNWIN
Deputy Chairman,
Civil Contingencies Unit

Cabinet Office

6 May 1986