

SUBJECT
cc Master



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Minutes of a Meeting held
at 10 Downing Street on
Tuesday 2 April 1985 at
10:15am

PRESENT

Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

Rt.Hon. Nigel Lawson MP	Chancellor of the Exchequer
Rt.Hon. Sir Keith Joseph MP	Secretary of State for Education and Science.
Rt.Hon. George Younger MP	Secretary of State for Scotland.
Rt.Hon. Nicholas Edwards MP	Secretary of State for Wales
Rt.Hon. Patrick Jenkin MP	Secretary of State for the Environment.
Rt.Hon. John Biffen MP	Lord Privy Seal.
Rt.Hon. Tom King MP	Secretary of State for Employment.
Rt.Hon. Sir Michael Havers QC MP	Attorney General.
Mr Nicholas Scott MP	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office.

SECRETARIAT.

Mr P L Gregson

Mr A J Wiggins

SUBJECT:

SCHOOL TEACHERS

(Previous Reference: CC(85)7th
Conclusions, Minute 4
and CC(85)8th Conclusions,
Minute 4).

The Meeting considered a minute to the Prime Minister of 26 March by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Scotland about the Government's policy towards school teachers, together with minutes to the Prime Minister by the Lord Privy Seal and the Secretary of State for the Environment of 29 March, and by the Chancellor of the Exchequer of 1 April.



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2. The Secretary of State for Education and Science said that there was increasing dissatisfaction among school teachers about their pay and professional status. With falling school roles and a shrinking teaching force, promotion prospects had deteriorated sharply and 70 per cent of all teachers in England and Wales (E & W) were now at the top of their pay scales. An internal struggle for authority within the National Union of Teachers (NUT) resulted in that union being incapable of giving a responsible lead to its members, although it was effective in stirring up dissatisfaction, eg. by emphasising comparisons between teachers' pay and the pay of the police. Teachers were far too ready to be complacent about their own mediocre performance, but good teachers were now becoming very discouraged. Refusal to undertake lunch time supervision and other aspects of 'withdrawal of goodwill' (eg. refusal to meet parents out of school hours or to contribute to curriculum development) were having an increasingly damaging impact on the quality of education. Selective strikes, so far affecting only a small proportion of schools, were adding to the disruption, which was almost costless to the teachers concerned. Unless the Government took some other action, there was an increasing risk that teachers would within the next year or two secure an unacceptably large pay increase through arbitration, without the Government securing anything in return in terms of a satisfactory system of teacher appraisal or a clearly drawn contract specifying teachers' duties outside the classroom. The Government should continue to stand firm in the present pay negotiations, and make clear that there was no more money available to finance a pay increase larger than the 4 per cent offered; but as soon as the immediate problem of industrial action was out of the way, the Government should take an initiative. One possibility would be to offer specific payments for lunch time supervision, so removing any question of a duty which teachers could plausibly argue not to be within their normal responsibilities. More fundamentally the Government might offer to negotiate a pay restructuring for teachers which would go some way to restoring lost promotion prospects; the total cost might amount to about £250 million phased in over a period of 3 years, and this improvement would be dependent on the teachers accepting a contract of service confirming their obligation to undertake a wide range of duties outside the class-room and a system of



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performance assessment which would give them a strong incentive to do their job to the best of their ability. The negotiations to secure these objectives were likely to prove extremely difficult, but the Government should not shrink from making the attempt.

3. The Secretary of State for Scotland said that there were two problems: the immediate problem about teachers' pay in a very difficult public expenditure climate, and the long-term problems of improving the quality of education. Most teachers understood the need for changes in the curriculum and teaching methods, but in the present sour atmosphere they had seized on the need for change as an opportunity to demand higher pay. The campaign of industrial action with which they were backing this demand was virtually costless to them, but it had brought the development of education in Scotland to a standstill. Despite his offer to see whether additional money for teachers could be found within the total Scottish public expenditure programme, if a new agreement could be reached within the Scottish Joint National Council covering both pay and conditions, the teachers had persisted with their action and with their demand for an independent pay review not tied to conditions of service. He would now have to make clear to the teachers that, so far as the current year was concerned, the opportunity had been lost through their own intransigence; but a way would still need to be found to recover the support of the teachers for efforts to provide the standard of education needed by the community. So far as Scotland was concerned, this recovery of teachers' support for efforts to improve the education service was the first priority, rather than the introduction of teacher assessment procedures. Teachers had to be brought to accept that they could not avoid responsibility for developing and implementing changes in the curriculum, or for preparing children for examinations, and a dialogue had to be established about the definition of the whole range of teachers' duties. In order effectively to challenge the position of the teachers, the Government should seek support from the wider public for a reasonable definition of teachers' duties. Discussions would need to get under way before the Summer holiday if the threat of continuing disruption in the schools during the next academic year was to be averted.



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4. In discussion, the following main points were made:

(a) The Government's power to intervene directly in the operation of schools was limited, since the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were actually the employers. Although the Government could seek to exert influence by attaching conditions to the payment of Rate Support Grant, it would be very difficult to use this mechanism to secure precise objectives. Moreover the LEAs were exposed to local political pressures, and - particularly in Scotland - were often on the side of the teachers.

(b) If the number of teachers could be reduced more rapidly, through the elimination of those whose performance was inadequate, money would be available to provide better rewards for those who remained. But control was in the hands of the LEAs, and the scope for closing down schools in direct proportion to the reduction in pupil numbers was limited by the need to provide again for an increasing school population in the 1990s. Moreover the unsatisfactory state of school education owed more to the mediocre performance of, perhaps, a third of the current teaching force rather than the bad performance of a much smaller number; this was a problem which had to be tackled by better in-service training rather than through the elimination of a few individuals.

(c) The NUT was engaged in litigation against the Newcastle and Solihull LEAs, which had sought to impose lunch time supervision as part of the teachers' contract. It was unlikely that the cases would be heard before the Autumn, and the delay suited the NUT well, since the impending litigation would inhibit other action to clarify teachers' responsibilities. The possibility should be pursued of settling the issue in the courts more quickly, perhaps through the involvement of another LEA sympathetic to this objective.



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(d) Considerable sums were already being spent on lunch time supervision, either by the provision of free meals to teachers or through the employment of part-time helpers. There might be a case for removing the grounds for complaint by making separate arrangements for lunch time supervision in which teachers would not be involved; this was a task which unqualified people could undertake, at a much lower hourly pay rate than teachers. On the other hand, the importance of lunch time supervision should not be exaggerated; satisfactory arrangements operated in most schools, and the Government should avoid any commitment to possible additional expenditure on this as long as there was a chance that the courts would rule against teachers.

(e) If the prospect were held out of additional money for pay restructuring, there was a high risk that heavy new expenditure commitments would be incurred without the Government being able to ensure that LEAs actually implemented the desired teacher assessment procedures. Further work was needed on how far the required procedures, and teachers' contractual arrangements, could be embodied in Regulations with which LEAs could be obliged to comply.

(f) Careful consideration would need to be given to the timing of any initiatives by the Government in response to the industrial action campaigned by E & W and Scottish teachers. There would be no point in offering, say, 5 per cent in advance of the forthcoming teachers' union conferences, since such an offer would simply induce the militants to step up their demands. The impact of the situation on next month's county council elections would also need to be taken into account.

(g) It was expected that the Scottish unions would widen their campaign of industrial action well beyond schools in Scottish Ministers' constituencies after the Easter holidays. In that event there would no longer be a foundation for a complaint



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of breach of privilege on the lines set out in the draft statement attached to the Lord Privy Seal's minute. The position should be reviewed after the Easter Recess, in the light of developments.

5. The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said there was general agreement that the Government should stand firm against teachers' current demands. The unreasonableness of the teachers' narrow interpretation of their contractual responsibilities should be made clear to the wider public. The Government had to recognise teachers' dissatisfaction with their pay and status, but teachers in their turn would have to accept that improvement could only come about through discussions in which pay, performance and conditions of service were closely linked. The Education Ministers, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment, should explore the scope for defining in Regulations both the assessment procedures essential to an improvement in teacher performance and a model contract clarifying the extent of teachers' duties outside the classroom. This work should be undertaken as quickly as possible, so that the Government could be in a position to hold out the prospect of an improvement in pay on conditions which could really be enforced. She would convene a further meeting shortly after the Easter Recess to review the results of this work, and to consider whether it could provide the basis for an early Government initiative, which could if necessary be undertaken while the present campaign of disruption was still in operation.

The Meeting -

1. Took note, with approval, of the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion.
2. Invited the Secretary of State for Education and Science, in consultation with the other Education Ministers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment, to explore the scope for defining in Regulations with which LEAs would be obliged to comply, the assessment procedures essential to an improvement in teacher performance and a model contract clarifying the extent of teachers' duties, and to report back before the end of April 1985.

3 April 1985

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 April, 1985

Jean Strabek

I attach a record, prepared by the Cabinet Office, of the meeting held by the Prime Minister yesterday to discuss school teachers.

I am sending a copy of this to Rachel Lomax (H.M. Treasury), John Graham (Scottish Office), Colin Jones (Welsh Office), John Ballard (Department of the Environment), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's Office), David Normington (Department of Employment), Jim Daniell (Northern Ireland Office), Henry Steel (Law Officers' Department) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Timothy Flesher

TIMOTHY FLESHER

Miss C. E. Hodkinson,
Department of Education and Science

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