

Prime Minister ②

PRIME MINISTER

PUBLIC SERVICE PAY: THE HEALTH SERVICE

My minute of 28 April summarised the state of play on our pay negotiations and I promised to keep colleagues in touch with developments.

You will have seen the reports in the newspapers today that the Conference of the Royal College of Nursing decided yesterday to ballot their members about removing the present bar to industrial action. This is disappointing, but it is probably not a serious setback so far as the present pay round is concerned, because it looks as if the College are separating the strike question from the immediate issue of the 6.4 per cent pay offer. They are not running the two issues together in a single ballot, but balloting on the pay offer first. We shall know the outcome of that by about the end of May, whereas the ballot on the strike issue is not likely to be finished until the autumn.

The flavour of the RCN debate suggests that this decision may have more to do with strengthening their position in negotiations for settled longer-term pay arrangements than with influencing the present pay round. The Conference debate on the pay issue on Wednesday gave some room for optimism that the present offer might be accepted.

The DDRB decision will become known next week, and this should strengthen our hand in relation to the nurses. But it will remain vitally important to avoid leaks about the TSRB recommendations before we are ready to make an announcement. An untimely disclosure could upset everything - for example it could tip the nurses' ballot the wrong way. I am very concerned therefore that there should have been an accurate account of some of yesterday's Cabinet discussions in the Financial Times and other papers this morning. We really must be very careful about this.

I am copying this minute to all Members of the Cabinet, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

30 April 1982

N F



30 APR 1962

0 1 2 3 4
9 8 7 6 5
B A

CONDENSER