

PRIME MINISTER

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE PAY DISPUTE

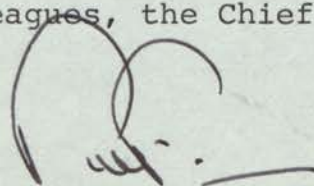
I should let you have an assessment of today's action. Initial reports indicate that its effects have been patchy across the country with intensive activity in many places but little or no action in others. The action has mainly involved ancillary workers and the great majority of nurses have continued to care for their patients.

Before today's national stoppage, local action was being taken in a number of districts and this can be expected to continue and may well increase. Our stance has been to stand firm on the Government's case concentrating in particular on:

- increased expenditure and real growth in Health Service pay;
- secure and growing employment;
- additional provision above the 4 per cent factor for nurses and other groups directly providing patient care;
- our discussions on better long term arrangements for nurses' and midwives' pay;
- rebuttal of the union claim that low paid staff are on the "poverty line";
- the harm that any action has on patient services and care.

The co-ordinating body - the TUC Health Services Committee - meet tomorrow, no doubt to discuss their strategy in the light of today's action. The position at present is that the local action will continue and 2-hour national stoppages will take place on Thursday afternoons starting on 27 May. As you know nurses who are members of the Royal College of Nursing are now balloting on the 6.4 per cent offer. We should know the result by the end of this month. Clearly we will continue to stand firm on our offer.

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



19 May 1982

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