

PRIME MINISTER

Prime MinisterAgree line proposed
at X?JMS
7/12

NO STRIKE PLEDGE: ADDITIONS TO THE REVIEW BODY

The Association of Clinical Biochemists has made a determined bid for inclusion in the terms of reference of the new Review Body for nursing and midwifery staff and professions allied to medicine. They have picked up in particular your remarks in the House of 28 July in answer to a question from Dr Owen that "Should other unions come to us and say that they wish to have that type of agreement (ie a no strike agreement), we would of course consider it".

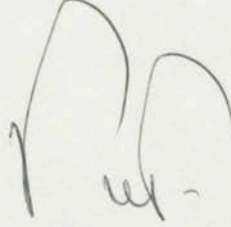
It is clear that, for practical reasons, we could not meet the Association's wishes in relation to the review now beginning, because the new Review Body is going to find it difficult enough to complete by next April its review of the staff groups already within its purview without any additions being made. I think, however, that we should now decide whether thereafter we should accede to the Association's request.

I can see substantial advantages in doing so. Any staff organisation which is prepared to give a no-strike pledge deserves recognition. But we must bear in mind that there will be a number of staff groups which might make the same case as the biochemists - there are three or four within the NHS, and there could well be others elsewhere. Our decision on these matters will determine whether I send an encouraging or a negative reply to the Association of Biochemists.

X | My own view is that we should say we see merit in their case, but that there is no possibility of acting on it for 1983/84. We would undertake to consider it further when the Review Body has had time to make its first report. I should be grateful though to know whether you would prefer the matter to be handled differently.

E. R.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Members of E(PSP) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'NF', is written above the typed initials 'NF'.

6 December 1983

N F

CONQUEROR

144
CORRECTION
- 6 DEC 1983



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

8 December 1983

c. E(PSP)
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No Strike Pledge : Additions to the Review
Body

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of 6 December about the bid by the Association of Clinical Biochemists for inclusion in the terms of reference of the nurses Review Body.

The Prime Minister agrees with the line proposed by your Secretary of State in the penultimate paragraph of his minute.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the recipients of yours.

MR. D. BARCLAY

S.A. Godber, Esq.,
Department of Health and Social Security,

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MR. TURNBULL

*Mr Owen: The PM has already agreed
the line proposed by the GPs (see
my letter attached). We agreed that
it was cc Mr. Mount
therefore too late to put this to the PM
DWB
4/12*

NO STRIKE PLEDGE: ADDITIONS TO THE NURSES REVIEW BODY

Mr. Fowler is looking for a steer on how to respond to the Association of Clinical Biochemists' bid for inclusion in the Nurses Review Body, when it has had time to make its first report.

The proposal raises a wider issue than the appropriate treatment of clinical biochemists: does the Government wish to extend review body treatment to those professional groups in the public service as a reward for pledging not to strike? Groups such as clinical biochemists do not as a rule tend to strike, or threaten to strike. Why, then, should the Government take a step which could multiply the number of review bodies in return for very little?

More specific to the health service, the inclusion of clinical biochemists could lead to similar bids from physicists, speech therapist and medical laboratory scientific officers. Chaplains and senior administrators could conceivably make a claim, too. It is difficult to see how the Nurses Review Body could cope with the diversity of these groups: it will already have to deal with two distinct groups, trained staff and auxiliaries. The structure of the review body might need to be changed if it were to cope. There is also a difficulty in that whereas the biochemists seem prepared to offer pledges not to strike, the COHSE nurses have not been asked to do so, since it was not expected that they would agree. The Government merely made the condition that the continued existence of the review body would depend on no-strike behaviour. The Government might find it that much more difficult to withdraw, or threaten to withdraw the review body in the event of a COHSE nurses strike if it included a substantial number of groups, such as the biochemists, which had pledged not to strike.

My inclination is to suggest that in his reply to the clinical biochemists, Mr. Fowler should play it as long as possible and avoid any commitment whatever to according review body treatment to them.

no
NICHOLAS OWEN
8 December 1983

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NHS
Nurses Pay

Dr. Owen: The Prime Minister made an important statement yesterday about the National Health Service. Can she explain why more than the million or more people who work in the National Health Service should not have the opportunity to negotiate a no-strike agreement in exchange for a fair method of assessing their pay, so that they do not fall behind? Does the Prime Minister agree that if this issue were put to a ballot, the vast majority of Health Service workers would support it and the Health Service would thereby not have the disruption from which it has suffered severely in the past few years?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, we are most anxious that there should not be industrial action in the National Health Service. I have been very very firm in condemning all such action.

With regard to the review body, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, as far back as November last year when we were discussing this review body, for which the nurses had asked some time ago, made this point:

"The new review body recognises the special position of nurses and other professional groups who do not take industrial action and on whom we have relied heavily in the last six months . . . The fact that these groups do not take industrial action has now been adequately recognised." — [*Official Report*, 9 November 1982; Vol. 31, c. 429.]

Should other unions come to us and say that they wish to have that type of agreement, we would of course consider it. No union other than the Royal College of Nursing has ever approached us, nor have other unions received the review body on nurses with acclamation.

Q2. Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 28 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. MacKay: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that, in addition to the Royal College of Nursing strongly supporting the Government's decision to set up this independent review body, with a no-strike clause, the overwhelming majority of patients in this country consider that, as we live in a civilised society, it is an absolute obscenity that many patients' lives should be put at risk because of possible industrial action in the Health Service?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. I think that we owe a great deal to the nurses who, at a time of great difficulty, when other groups in the National Health Service were taking industrial action, stayed at their posts, gave attention to the sick and often carried out as well the duties of others who were on strike. A review body is a proper recognition of the excellent standards that they uphold.

~~**Mr. James Callaghan:** Reverting to the Prime Minister's meeting with the Turkish Foreign Minister this afternoon, may I ask her why the Government abstained on the United Nations vote last May calling for the withdrawal of Turkish troops? Why has she changed British policy on this matter?~~

~~**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman is, of course, talking about Cyprus. We abstained because we did not think that the vote on that resolution would help to further the matter. We are, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware, trying to pursue the matter through the good offices of the Secretary General of the United Nations with~~