

PRIME MINISTER

Rx

12a

DOCK LABOUR SCHEME

Mr. Fowler's minute (Flag A) seeks your agreement to instruct Parliamentary Counsel on a contingency basis to prepare a Bill to abolish the scheme; and he outlines the main proposals for the Bill. He is also asking for your agreement for the Cabinet Office to undertake contingency work to minimise the impact of whenever abolition of the scheme is eventually made public. You will in any case need a meeting of a larger group of Ministers on substantive issues before the Bill is made public. The issue now is whether you wanted to give Mr. Fowler permission to do the contingency work straight away or whether you want him to have a meeting of the small group of Ministers early in the New Year first.

The element of surprise about the scheme's abolition is going (Lord Wyatt has, for example, published an article about it about a fortnight or so ago) and the battle lines are being drawn but you will want to go with it at the right time and be well prepared. The closest analogy is with the coal dispute and the preparation which Peter Gregson's group did. It is essential that work as good is done this time.

No ??
The other point is that in Richard Wilson's note (Flag B) about Lord Wyatt and the expressed intention to introduce a Private Member's Bill. Richard suggests the need for someone to have a private word with Lord Wyatt to get him to bide his time. This might come best from you: Lord Wyatt will be at Chequers on Boxing Day which would be a good occasion if you wanted a private moment with him.

I have deliberately
not spoken to him for
very obvious reasons.

Agree Mr. Fowler should now set in hand the contingency work he proposes?

Or

Prefer a meeting of the small group of Ministers early in the New Year first?

Yes not

Agree to speak to Lord Wyatt on the lines Richard Wilson suggests over the Christmas break?

*Don't see him
over the Christmas break*

Jim

DOMINIC MORRIS

23 December 1988

SL3BFW