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CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF OIL PRODUCTS

1. SITUATION

Plans are already in existence within the oil industry for dealing with emergencies such as loss of electricity supply, loss of the major part of the BP storage (gantry facilities) and major loss of road tank wagons. The plans were formulated by an CIEC sub-committee in 1971.

It may be assumed at the beginning of an emergency that there will be an adequate supply of petroleum products held at the refinery and oil company terminals to meet essential services for a considerable period.

The delivery of petroleum products may be interrupted by failure of labour to attend for duty. This is possible on five counts:

- a. civil unrest escalating to such an extent that certain personnel are unable or unwilling to leave home;
- b. formation of vigilante or Home Guard organisations to protect areas ^{some} which effectively deter personnel from reporting for work;
- c. an industrial strike by, for example, tanker drivers, in pursuance of wage or other demands;
- d. terrorist attacks on road tanker vehicles;
- e. the use of the industry to bring political pressure on Government.

(The recent UWC strike is an example.)

2. OBJECTIVE

The basic objective is to deliver petroleum products to such services as are essential to maintain the life and health of the community. Depending upon the capability to deliver, the plan will be extended to include deliveries to a

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limited range of industrial and commercial activities.

The essential users are shown in Appendices A (bulk supplies), B (petrol and derv for private transport).

3. METHOD

In situations 1a. and b. it can be assumed that there will be sufficient manpower available to enable the oil industry, if necessary, to implement an existing plan for pooling resources within the industry.

In these circumstances Government would be requested by the industry to declare a state of emergency to enable all the companies to operate as a single unit. Government would at the same time make Orders listing users entitled to receive supplies.

In situation c., when there would be no movement of product by regular drivers from the terminal, Government would make Orders prohibiting the supply of petroleum products for other than defined essential services.

The contingency plan covering this is incorporated under the overall plan in situation e. and only that part of the plan affecting deliveries and nominated service stations need be implemented. It is to be hoped that in this situation the following would apply:

- (1) No objections from terminal staff to Army personnel driving vehicles and entering terminals.
- (2) Nominated service stations continuing to operate normally.
- (3) In the Northern Ireland situation it would be preferable if the Army presence were not seen, i.e. civilian task force to drive vehicles.

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(4) Deliveries being effected from all terminals.

However, because of the limitation of the Army to deliver 450,000 gallons a day, say one-quarter of normal demand, it may be necessary to operate from one terminal, say, SMBP and this would therefore require securing the base. In these circumstances the plan under situation e. would need to be implemented. Here again it may be possible to obtain co-operation from the nominated service stations.

In the event that only one company is involved in an industrial dispute this could necessitate some action on the part of Government such as restricting the sale of petroleum products at service stations to essential users only.

In situation d. at least three possibilities arise:

- i. terrorist action against RT vehicles in a defined area e.g. naptha deliveries to Londonderry Gasworks;
- ii. action on a more widespread plan;
- iii. escalation in vehicle hi-jacking.

In i. this has already caused difficulties on two occasions; the consequences being such that different contingency plans were required. It seems likely that this will continue to be sensitive delivery and the Gas Co should be assisted in preparing individual plans for an alternative source of supply.

ii. and iii. are analogous to a partial strike situation as referred to in situation c. This could necessitate the use of the Army to make deliveries and part implementation of the plan under situation e.

In the event of a total shutdown envisaged in situation e. which may eventually come about as in the recent UWC strike a full-scale contingency plan is outlined below.

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It is to be hoped that in the reconciliation of the Army's contingency plan with that of the Department the roles of each authority will be clearly identified and be mutually compatible. The requisitioning authority, ie DOC must act first and retain overall control unlike the situation which obtained in the UEC strike when the Army went in several hours before DOC staff could even be assembled and briefed.

COMMUNICATIONS

The inadequacy of communications was possibly the greatest inhibiting factor in the contingency plan which was brought into operation during the UWC strike. Arrangements for improving the communications network are proceeding in the Department and a meeting has taken place with the Post Office and RUC specialists. Because of the delay in obtaining a sufficiently sophisticated radio network as well as the high cost and the problem of training operators it seems likely that the telephone will continue to be the principal means of communication.

EMERGENCY STOCK OF FUEL OIL AND PETROL

It would be difficult to conceive any contingency plan for the distribution of fuel oil and petrol to essential users without making use of the existing facilities of the industry. Unlike many other essential commodities petrol cannot be pre-packed and stored for distribution by inexperienced helpers. There exists at Sydenham a large storage facility which formerly belonged to the Ministry of Defence but this has now been sold to Belfast Corporation and will eventually be dismantled and the area redeveloped. It has been suggested that the installation should be reacquired from

the Belfast Corporation for holding an emergency stock of petrol and oil. The installation is said to be in good order but it is not suitable for dispensing petrol in small quantities to private cars for example but only for distribution by road tanker. The installation has the advantage that it is convenient to but removed from the main company storage installations at Airport Road West. (It lies in the area bounded by the Sydenham bypass and the Bangor Road). Our Army advisers consider that it would be easily secured and guarded.

The Department considers however that the stocks of petrol and fuel oil held at the refinery and the other terminals at Airport Road West (with standby stocks at the Texaco terminal, Carrickfergus and the Shell terminal at Londonderry) are adequate to provide an emergency stock to meet essential needs for the duration of an emergency situation. Even should these stocks run out finished product could be brought in by ship and pumped ashore using the existing jetty facilities at all three terminal points.

DISTRIBUTION

The only acceptable method of distributing petrol to vehicles is by using a number of the filling stations throughout the country. It is considered that 20/30 filling stations are adequate to supply all essential users.

FUEL oil can only be distributed by road tankers direct from the terminals at Belfast or Londonderry.

THE CONTINGENCY PLAN

Objectives

The objectives of the plan can be phased as follows:-

- as. the distribution of petrol and fuel oil to a specified list of essential users in order to maintain the life and health of the community in a crisis situation.
- b. having satisfied the requirements at (a) to distribute products to

other desirable but non-vital users within the capability of the Army to deliver stock.

OPERATION

The plan should be designed to cope with two situations (1) the cessation of deliveries from the terminal by a strike of the tanker drivers or the refinery staff. This would necessitate the use of Army drivers to deliver product to selected filling stations and other essential users. (2) A general strike situation involving the shutting down of filling stations.

In situation (1) the Refinery and sufficient oil storage terminals would have to be requisitioned and guarded by the Army and the company vehicles would be used to distribute products to essential users.

In situation (2) in addition to seizing the Refinery and oil installations it would be necessary to requisition, guard and man sufficient filling stations to distribute petrol to essential users.

ESSENTIAL USERS

The DCC is preparing a list of essential users in consultation with all Departments. The list is not yet complete because of the delay in getting returns from Department owing to the leave season. When complete it is hoped that the list will be capable of being divided into various categories of need ranging from the 'vital' to 'desirable' and 'less essential'. The factor determining how far down the list it is possible to operate will be the capability of the Army to delivery which is said to be 450,000 gallons of all products per day.

PETROL COUPONS

It is considered that the only satisfactory method of distinguishing essential users is by the issue of coupons. Decisions cannot be left until the emergency arises and it

It would be impracticable to deal with large numbers of applicants at the onset of the emergency either at filling stations or at a coupon issue centre bearing in mind that communications may be interrupted and staff prevented getting to work.

Once the list of essential users has been finalised the Department would propose distributing coupons as far down the line as possible to be held for release at the initial stage of an emergency. For example, coupons for essential civil servants would be forwarded to departments, coupons for doctors would be sent to the Department of Health and Social Services which would in turn forward appropriate numbers to Area Boards. It would be the responsibility of each department to arrange for the transmission and safe custody of coupons for all its related functions not necessarily its own staff.

A particular difficulty arises in the case of food distribution. The Department of Agriculture which works in association with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food points out that the wholesale distribution of staple foods is no longer centralised and that the vast majority of food shops buy wholesale from Cash and Carry centres using their own transport. Such collections must be made one or more times per week otherwise food stocks in the shops would rapidly be exhausted.

MAAF say it would be impossible to list all the grocers involved but the numbers could be between 2/3 thousand.

The Department of Agriculture have agreed that their County Executive Offices and staff could be used for the distribution of coupons to food traders and furthermore that under instruction from the DCC these centres could also be used to deal with emergency applications from users not included in the coupon scheme.

[A detailed operation of this part of the plan have still to be finalised with the Department of Agriculture]

MANNING

A manning of the terminal installations and filling stations is at present being considered by the DCC Establishment Officer in consultation with CSMO. If civil service staff are used it is estimated that approximately 250 people would be needed to man a control room, the filling stations, the oil refinery and other storage terminals. Most of the staff would have to be found from other departments as the DCC would be stretched to man the public information service and operate the Contingency Plan.

FUEL OIL

Orders for fuel oil required by published list of essential users would be taken by telephone by terminal staff.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The DCC would man a telephone information service by which the public would phone in on a special number.

ASPECTS OF THE PLAN WHICH HAVE STILL TO BE DEVELOPED

- (1) The telephone communication system has to be further refined in consultation with the Post Office. This includes not only the operation of the information service but also the links between the department and the various terminals and especially with the civil service manned filling stations if they are used.
- (2) the price at which products are to be sold, ie to be charged a flat rate or do we continue to sell at the grade price. The latter could be difficult when there is no guarantee that, for example, five star petrol will not be unloaded into a three star tank.
- (3) The designation and briefing of key members of the plan many of whom will be outside the immediate control of DCC having regard to the need for secrecy.

- (4) The drafting of public advertisements etc including the lists of essential users divided into categories.
- (5) The manning and briefing of staff at the coupon centres. Again many of whom are outside the immediate control of the DOC.
- (6) The preparation of basic operating instructions for inexperienced staff working in the oil refinery, oil terminals and in filling stations. These can only be prepared by people in the industry.