

Strictly Private and Confidential

Prime Minister

Fox and Goose

My group report that the principal topic among the backbenchers at present is a re-shuffle and the urgent need for one.

The observations below are simply a summary of received views, not necessarily the views of individuals in the group. Where possible, reasons expressed for changes are appended to the names:

Sir Keith Joseph	General feeling that it is imperative that he should be moved from Department of Industry. Everyone appreciated his qualities but felt performance had not matched promise.
Sir Ian Gilmour	Would not be missed. Not known for his enthusiasm for Government policies.
David Howell	Widespread criticism. Felt that the wily experienced industry bosses have run rings round the Secretary of State. Also the Department have failed to communicate our policy and explain it to the public.
Lord Soames	Hardly the right image. Another non-communicator. Unease about handling of Civil Service negotiations. Doubts about wholehearted support for Government policies.
Willie Whitelaw	There appears to have been a concerted campaign in the last 10 days or so since the first trouble at Brixton to suggest that the Home Secretary should make way for someone else. No specific reason. Just vague criticism. Not confined to one section of the Parliamentary Party.
Jim Prior	Hoped that he would not be moved to Northern Ireland. Feeling that such a move would be counter-productive, cause some backbench friction.
Humphrey Atkins	Had performed well, but deserved a move.

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Junior Ministers who have earned high marks in the eyes of backbenchers include Norman Tebbit, Kenneth Baker, Tim Raison, Tom King, Patrick Mayhew (at the Home Office) Kenneth Clarke.

There remains one other topic which is constantly mentioned - the Chairmanship of the Party. Whilst every observation starts with unqualified praise for the Chairman, the overwhelming view is that in the best interests of yourself, the Government and the Party there should be an early change to allow the new Chairman the largest possible time to revitalise the Party organisation.

I must stress that all the above remarks are recorded in the most objective way and are not the views of one or two individuals, who might seek to reflect their own prejudices.

The unanimous view of the group, and this encapsulates the views of others, is that the Party would welcome changes ahead of the Party Conference.



Derek Howe

16th July 1981