

Ref: A0514

MR. WHITMORE

We discussed the business for Cabinet this week with the Prime Minister earlier in the day.

We agreed that the discussion of Public Expenditure to 1983-84 should be postponed until next week. Before that discussion takes place, she proposed to hold a meeting of a smaller group of Ministers at which the outstanding issues could, if possible be resolved before they came back to Cabinet. It was agreed that the Prime Minister herself would take the chair at this meeting, which would be held early in the week beginning 5th November.

For attendance at that meeting I propose (apart from the Prime Minister herself): Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary of State for Industry, Lord President, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Secretary of State for the Environment, Secretary of State for Trade, Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Chief Secretary.

The programmes at issue will be education, housing and agriculture. It seems better to have the departmental Ministers concerned in for the complete discussion as full members of the group rather than one by one. If they are taken one by one they will think they are being picked out and they are bound to stand out and reserve their position in Cabinet.

If the Prime Minister is content, we will promulgate these arrangements tomorrow.

We also discussed the handling of strikers and supplementary benefits. The Prime Minister said that, before this came to Cabinet, she would like to take it at a smaller group of Ministers. I shall be making proposals to her tomorrow.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

(Robert Armstrong)

29th October 1979