

Ref: A0608

CONFIDENTIAL

MR. LANKESTER

*Prime Minister*

*You said we should have an early meeting on this.*

*Robert Armstrong suggests putting it off until we*

*have an outline of the White Paper. Shall I write as per his draft?*

*Yes*

I have seen the letter which the Chief Secretary's Private Secretary sent to you on 6th November, and the Treasury memorandum on the presentation of public expenditure figures for the years after 1980-81.

*12  
8/11*

2. I find it difficult to see what other methods might be adopted for taking the spurious precision out of figures for the later years than some aggregation and rounding; and that is what the Treasury propose. It is clearly difficult to comment on the effects of doing this without seeing the actual results: one particular programme as an example is not really enough to go on. This makes me wonder whether there is much point in the Prime Minister having a meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary at this stage: it might be more to the point to have a meeting - if one is necessary - when an outline draft of the White Paper is available, later this month.

3. If this approach commends itself to the Prime Minister, you may like to write to the Chief Secretary's Private Secretary on the lines of the draft attached.

*ReA*

(Robert Armstrong)

8th November 1979