



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

7 January 1981

Dear Norman,

Thank you for your letter of today about the reports in this morning's newspapers about the television interview which I gave yesterday.

I can well understand that these reports should have upset you. Let me make it absolutely clear that nothing I said in the interview was meant to suggest that I thought that you were responsible for the leaks of Cabinet discussions which, very regrettably, have occurred from time to time over the past months. Nor do I believe it reasonable that my remarks should have been interpreted in the way they apparently have been. I enclose a copy of the relevant extract from the transcript of my interview. You will see from that that I condemned - as you have done in your statement - both leaks and disloyalty to the Cabinet as a whole and said, in effect, that I hoped that these were problems of the past. But, as you can see, my remarks on this score contained no reference at all to the changes in Ministerial appointments which I announced on Monday, and I did not intend that anyone should see a link between the two things.

I am very sorry that you have been caused such distress and I hope that what I have said in this letter will reassure you that I was in no way casting doubt upon your integrity and loyalty as a member of the Cabinet.

/I think that

I think that you are right in the circumstances to ask that your letter and my reply should be made public, and I am arranging for this to be done immediately.

Yours ever
Margaret

The Right Honourable
Norman St. John-Stevas, MP.

EXTRACT FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH THE
"AFTERNOON PLUS" PROGRAMME ON 6 JANUARY 1981

Interviewer: I understand that what angers you rather a lot is disloyalty and leaks of information. I mean you have shown how displeased you have been with that - that has happened quite a bit in the Government so far hasn't it?

Prime Minister: Leaks there have been, yes. They shouldn't happen because it doesn't make for efficient Cabinet Government because you feel that anything you say might be repeated outside. It should not happen. It shouldn't happen in any Government. I hope it will happen less and less. I think people are very much aware of the damage that it has done. Disloyalty? It's not a question of being loyal or disloyal to a Prime Minister. Cabinet Government consists in coming to a decision by discussion. What you shouldn't ever do is say "All right, I'll go along with it inside Cabinet provided outside I can say I don't agree." And that is not Cabinet Government and will weaken any Government. We've had one or two problems. I hope we're through those.