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BTE BF 14/5/79

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 May 1979

Questions of Procedure for Ministers

The Prime Minister has seen Sir John Hunt's minute of 4 May, with which he encloses a draft "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

The Prime Minister regards a document of this length and detail as being particularly useful for Private Offices, but would like to see a briefer summary document prepared for Ministers to study with greater care than they are likely to be able to give the full version.

I would be grateful if you could arrange for such a summary document to be prepared. I attach for your information a copy of the draft annotated by the Prime Minister, which shows points she particularly wishes to see emphasised. Could we please see the summary in draft before it is issued.

The longer text requires a few amendments. I set these out below:-

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| Paragraph 3 | Insert "unless he or she wishes to have the advice of colleagues." after ".... to a Cabinet committee". |
| Paragraph 9 | Redraft to instruct that Ministers must see the papers 48 hours before the meeting, and that Private Offices must not hold papers back until the night before the meeting. |
| Paragraph 22 | The Prime Minister is not convinced that it is "undesirable in principle" to disclose the structure and detail of Cabinet committees. She takes the view that this is unnecessary secrecy, and that the information eventually gets out, after providing fertile ground for speculation. Could you therefore please reconsider this section. |

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.../Paragraph 96e.

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Paragraph 96e.

The Prime Minister has commented that extra copies of the text of statements after Questions rarely reached her in Opposition before 3 p.m. on the day in question, and were often delayed further than this. Could you please ensure that the text brings out the importance which the Prime Minister attaches to compliance with this instruction.

Paragraph 105d(i) & (ii)

The Prime Minister wishes Ministers to be readily available to propound their policies in the media. Please include a sentence to this effect.

Paragraph 109

The Prime Minister would wish Ministers to make such contributions only rarely. Please include this in the paragraph.

Paragraph 111

The Prime Minister does not wish any Minister to write and publish a book on ministerial experience whilst in office. This should be without exception, and the paragraph should be redrafted accordingly.

Paragraph 116

The Prime Minister wishes to ensure that this is scrupulously observed.

Paragraph 118-120

The Prime Minister intends to discuss these matters at tomorrow's informal meeting of the Cabinet: I will let you know thereafter how she wishes the subject to be treated in "Questions of Procedure".

Could you please provide amended texts for these paragraphs: once these are agreed, the full length version can be issued in advance of the summary if necessary.

M. A. PATTISON

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