

Subject filed on.
Govt. mach: ministerial
Responsibility for the
Arts.

CONFIDENTIAL AND MANAGEMENT
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NOTE OF A MEETING AT 10 DOWNING STREET AT 1500 HOURS ON 23 AUGUST

Present

Prime Minister
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Mr. Ian Gow M.P.
Mr. M.A. Pattison

After exchanges about the Chancellor of the Duchy's motor accident the previous evening, the Prime Minister turned to the Chancellor's function in Government. His role as Leader of the House was going to be troublesome and demanding in the winter. Major legislation was in prospect on trade unions, housing, education and nationality. This had to be his top priority. She asked whether there would be any remaining demands on his time from the devolution issues. The Chancellor of the Duchy was confident that he could handle the devolution questions, which should not amount to much.

The Prime Minister said that the Government and its supporters would need to master the procedural arguments. On the Opposition benches Messrs Rooker and Cryer, amongst others, are now very effective on procedure. Some of the younger Conservative Members such as Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones were interested and should be encouraged to follow up their interest.

The Prime Minister asked how much time the arts' responsibilities took: responsibilities as Leader of the House must come clearly first. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster ^{said} that he had used the recess period to take in a number of events in his capacity as Minister for the Arts, and he had also been handling the issues arising from public expenditure decisions. The Prime Minister said that she had not yet done anything about the Chancellor's request for further assistance. The Government was already only

/one Parliamentary

one Parliamentary Secretary smaller than the Labour Administration. She was not therefore prepared to increase the number of Ministers. She was also reluctant to remove someone from another post. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had further suggested that Mr. Paul Channon might be able to help. It seemed he might have a reasonable light load in his present responsibilities. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster regarded this as an excellent proposal, and was entirely confident that they would work well together. The Prime Minister said that she would discuss this with Mr. Channon and others involved. She stressed that he would have to be seen as part of the Department of Education and Science in respect of any role in relation to the arts. At a time of expenditure constraints, a physical move for the arts' staff was out of the question. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster hoped that something might be possible in the future. The Prime Minister said that the time would come when the Chancellor of the Duchy's other responsibilities might cause him to want to give up arts responsibilities. These still rested essentially with the DES: the recent transfer of functions had been for Mr. St. John-Stevas personally, and was not necessarily a permanent arrangement.

In discussion of staffing, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster stressed that he was unhappy with current arrangements. Whilst he personally would be content to have an office headed full-time by the Under Secretary he was concerned at the possible loss of status in Whitehall.

The Prime Minister asked if any change was necessary. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that if he was to be satisfied with a full-time Under Secretary some strengthening at Assistant Secretary level would be necessary. The Prime Minister emphasised that there would be no question of additional staff. The staffing structure must remain as it was, with the possible economy of the present time devoted to the arts by a Deputy Secretary. She would be prepared to make the present Under Secretary Head of the office at his current rank. She would also discuss with Mr. Channon the possibility of his sharing the arts' load to enable the Chancellor of the Duchy to give maximum energy to his role as Leader of the House.

/The Chancellor of

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that he would be quite satisfied with these arrangements. The Prime Minister said that she would discuss them with the Lord President of the Council, the Head of the Civil Service and Mr. Channon.

Discussion then turned to the progress of the Government's legislative programme. The Chancellor of the Duchy asked the Prime Minister to ensure that Ministers did not bypass him and the Chief Whip on the House of Commons Procedural Questions. The handling of the Competition Bill had been disastrous because procedural decisions had not been taken through the proper channels. The Prime Minister recognised this and enquired on the progress of the main Bills in the legislative programme. She mentioned that Mr. Prior had been talking of Trade Union legislation in two Bills. The Chancellor of the Duchy said that he would be strongly opposed to this. The Prime Minister asked that he should add his weight to the views she had already expressed to Mr. Prior on this point.

The Chancellor of the Duchy said that he was worried there might be seven or eight Bills requiring guillotine motions, which was almost unprecedented. The Prime Minister stressed the need to get ahead with the drafting of the main Bills. There should be no more than one guillotine at a time. She instructed that her Private Office should chase progress in the drafting of Housing, Education, Trade Unions and Nationality Bills.

The Chancellor of the Duchy said that the legislative programme was likely to keep the House sitting until August of next year, possibly with some hang-over. If the programme got too crowded, his advice would be to leave the Nationality Bill aside. The Prime Minister said the Government had to do what it had to do in immigration. The Chancellor said that the Government could achieve its objectives without a Bill.