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CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

cc Chief Secretary
Financial Secretary
Sir Douglas Wass
Mr Bailey
Mr F E R Butler
Mr Unwin

MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER : FORM OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE WHITE PAPER

This is an addendum to the brief for your meeting with the Prime Minister today Monday 5 November. It is not something to be discussed then in substance, but a point which might be mentioned.

2. I heard on Friday from Sir Robert Armstrong that the Prime Minister would like a meeting later this week with Treasury Ministers and officials about the form of the main public expenditure White Paper which we now hope to publish in January, subject to satisfactory resolution of the problems about its relationship to a financial plan etc. A letter will be coming, probably to the Chief Secretary, in the course of today about this, probably suggesting a paper.

3. For my part I should welcome such a meeting, and there will be no difficulty about producing a paper. We had preliminary warning last week, and a paper is almost ready.

4. According to Sir Robert Armstrong, the Prime Minister's concerns in regard to this year's White Paper are primarily about the degree of detail to be published about the later years. We are in any event already planning more rounding and grouping of figures than in previous White Papers. I hope it may turn out that what we already have in mind may meet the Prime Minister's concern. Nevertheless, if she is suggesting a meeting, I think this would be useful.

5. She may also want to raise some questions about the general conduct of the Survey and especially the way in which Ministerial discussion is handled. These would be matters concerning next year's Survey rather than the forthcoming White Paper. Because of our own concerns about certain aspects of the Survey, and also in response to concerns expressed by Departments, we are just setting in hand a review of these matters, particularly in the hope of simplifying some of the

material and hence the procedures necessary to collect and present it. A report will be made in due course, in time for action when plans are set for the next Survey. It would be a pity to rush to conclusions before the matter has been properly studied and discussed at official level, but obviously if the Prime Minister has any immediate thoughts, we could take account of them in steering the work.

6. The substance of these matters will be better discussed at the proposed further meeting than today. The purpose of this minute is simply to tell you that this is in the offing and to suggest that if the Prime Minister mentions it, you should welcome the idea of a meeting for this purpose.



A K RAWLINSON
5 NOVEMBER 1979