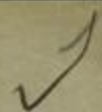


SECRET



Index

MOST CONFIDENTIAL RECORD

~~SUBJECT~~

cc (81) 24<sup>th</sup> CONCS

Thursday 18 June 1981

No.	Contents	Date
	<p><u>CONFIDENTIALITY OF CABINET</u> <u>PROCEEDINGS</u></p>	

SECRET

MOST CONFIDENTIAL RECORD  
TO  
CC(81) 24th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE  
Thursday 18 June 1981

CONFIDENTIALITY  
OF CABINET  
PROCEEDINGS

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY drew attention to the reports in the Press and broadcasting media the previous afternoon and that morning on the Cabinet's discussion of economic strategy on 17 June. If the proceedings of the Cabinet were to continue to be divulged in that degree of detail, the confidentiality which was necessary to sustain confidence and trust among colleagues could no longer be sustained. This could have a serious effect upon the readiness of members of the Cabinet to disclose confidential information and to speak their minds at meetings of the Cabinet.

In discussion there was much support for what the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had said. It was not just that the accounts in the newspapers had put a gloss on the proceedings, in terms of reports that the views of one group had prevailed against those of another, but there had also been factual accounts of the nature of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's paper, the order in which Ministers had spoken and the content of what they had said. No doubt members of the Parliamentary Lobby acted like a team of sleuths, piecing together information from different sources. It would be unwise to suppose that Press Officers were to blame, and the stories appeared in the Press long before the minutes were circulated. The sources of the information must be among those who were present at the meeting, and the channels by which the information reached the Press must be assumed to be primarily political. It was suggested that members of the Cabinet needed to brief their junior Ministers and Parliamentary Private Secretaries about the outcome of meetings of the Cabinet, in order that they should be able to defend Government policies; but briefings of this kind needed to be undertaken with great caution, if they were not to become sources of unauthorised and unwanted disclosures to the Press.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that, in view of the interest taken by the Press in the meeting of the previous day's Cabinet, it had been necessary for her Press Secretary to give guidance to the Lobby after the meeting. She had told the Cabinet at the meeting the nature of the guidance to be given; and the guidance which he had actually given followed what she had said, going beyond it only to the extent of emphasising the need for keeping public expenditure under control. While it was necessary for the conduct of Government that decisions taken by the Cabinet should be



SECRET

disseminated to those required to take action upon them, and while it was no doubt on occasion desirable that some indication of the reasons for the Cabinet's decisions should be given to Ministerial colleagues or senior officials before the minutes were circulated, the general rule should be, as it had been in the past, that junior Ministers and senior officials should rely upon the circulated minutes for their knowledge of Cabinet decisions and the reasons for them. Members of the Cabinet should be extremely cautious about divulging details of proceedings in Cabinet, even to Ministerial colleagues in their own Departments, and should not in any circumstances disclose them to journalists.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

Cabinet Office

19 June 1981