



Prime Minister

I showed this to

Bernard. His comments
are attached.

Agree to a meeting

to discuss these issues?

Ms 23/12

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SWIP 3AG
01-233 3000

PRIME MINISTER

Yes MS

GETTING THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC MESSAGE ACROSS

We have discussed how to improve the presentation of economic policy. I report below on changes which are being introduced in arrangements within the Treasury, and suggest some which require action Government-wide.

In-house improvements

2. Within the Treasury, we have set up regular arrangements designed to spot trends in opinion, and to consider appropriate responses whether by way of speeches or otherwise. This work is supervised by Jock Bruce-Gardyne, who holds review meetings twice a week with advisers and officials.

3. In addition to this, I am seeking to establish improved co-ordination, and planning, of contacts with responsible people in both the Press and Television. We are also increasing our effort to involve business and industry in support of our policies, through contacts with people like the CBI, the BIM, and the Institute of Directors. In addition we are seeking to maintain and improve contacts with academic organisations such as the Universities and Business Schools. In both these areas we seek not so much a "political" input, but something which should be educative and explanatory.

4. Finally, I am concerned to simplify the language of public statements on economic issues: the message must be so expressed as to be readily understood by a wide audience. A review of the Budget publications, FSBR, PEWP, etc. is in hand, with a view to making them less forbidding to the lay reader; and I am examining



whether there is scope for a leaflet at Budget-time which would help to explain key aspects in simple terms.

Government-wide Action

5. I regard it as crucial that we secure the more effective involvement of non-economic Ministers in the presentation of our economic policy. On economic issues your speeches are of course fully reported as are some of mine and other Treasury Ministers, and we secure some useful television and radio appearances; but efforts by others, e.g. the Lord Chancellor's occasional, and very valuable, contributions, get little publicity. This is no doubt a disincentive to such efforts. Yet for others to do more, and be seen to do so, to expound the Government's economic policy would demonstrate that the policy is not just that of the Treasury but that of Cabinet as a whole, and would make the message more persuasive.

6. If you agree, you might wish to raise the point in Cabinet soon after the Christmas break. You might urge non-economic Ministers to make it their business fairly regularly to make speeches, setting their Departmental interests squarely in the framework of our wider economic policy, and their support for it. You and I might follow this up with specific requests to individual senior colleagues, e.g. the Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary. (I have already spoken informally to Peter Carrington, who was receptive.)

7. Material for such speeches must of course be available to our colleagues. That is one reason why I have arranged for the circulation to all Cabinet colleagues of the briefing prepared for your First Order Questions: my letter of 23 November to the Home Secretary. I also envisage the circulation of short succinct notes on particular aspects of our economic policy (and



analogies abroad), key developments and new economic statistics. Some of this material might be regularly produced in "fact card" form. And I am considering designating Treasury contact points for help with particular speech drafts. It would be useful if we could also revive the practice of advance clearance of economic speeches: had we had advance warning of the Lord Chancellor's speeches this autumn we might have been able to ensure, by tipping off economic correspondents, that Fleet Street paid them the attention they deserved.

Action outside Government

8. I believe that we need also to improve the flow of information to our backbenchers and the Party at large, perhaps by making greater use of the system of "PMG notes". I should like to see more, and speedier, identification of potential causes for concern on the backbenches and in the Party, with a view to the speedy issue of guidance notes, and not just to Ministers. We should also try to find ways of mobilising backbenchers in the selling of policy - for example, the Business Opportunities Programme.

9. You may wish to consider whether the organisation and co-ordination of this work should be done from No.10, from Francis Pym's office, from Cecil Parkinson's office, or even from the Treasury, though I suspect it would be best that it should not appear a Treasury exercise. Improved links with the Party machine might be valuable, and Peter Cropper's new appointment could prove helpful. It is also for consideration whether Whitehall's information forces are ideally deployed for the proper presentation of the overall economic message.

10. I would welcome a talk with you about these issues. You might wish to include Francis Pym and Cecil Parkinson, to whom I am sending copies of this minute. A copy also goes to Sir Robert Armstrong.

(G.H.)

23 December 1981