

Neither Ministers nor
Officials should appear on this
programme. It is not long

Prime Minister 1

You have already agreed with Bernard
that neither ministers nor officials should
appear on this programme. Is there
anything in this that leads you to change
your mind? No.

Ref. A09229

PRIME MINISTER

W.D.S. etc.

LM
6/8

BBC Panorama are planning to do a programme on the handling of information by the Ministry of Defence and the media during the Falklands crisis. They plan to film interviews with Fleet Street and broadcasting editors, defence correspondents and reporters embarked with the Task Force.

2. They have sought an interview with Sir Frank Cooper about Ministry of Defence information policy during the Falklands Islands crisis. They would also very much like to film a short interview with Mr. Ian McDonald (if it is a short interview, he will not have time to say very much).!

3. The Secretary of State for Defence has said that he is content for Sir Frank Cooper to appear, subject to your views. No

4. It is of course desirable that in any such programme the Ministry of Defence case should not go by default. Sir Frank Cooper himself was in the thick of the matter: indeed, one of the complaints relates to a meeting which he had with a number of editors the day before the landing at San Carlos. His defence of the Ministry of Defence case would no doubt be robust.

5. But it seems inevitable that the programme will be highly critical of the Ministry of Defence in particular and the Government in general; and of course the whole subject is highly political.

No

6. If Sir Frank Cooper were to refuse, it would be desirable for someone else in the Ministry of Defence to do it in his place. On balance I should have thought that this was something which ought to be done by a Minister rather than by a senior official, however robustly he might do it: either the Secretary of State himself, or perhaps Mr. Pattie or Mr. Wiggin. No.

7. I should be grateful for guidance as to how you would like me to reply to Sir Frank Cooper.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

6th August, 1982