



Civil Service

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

29 November 1982

PERSONAL

Dear Douglas,

I attach a letter describing the Prime Minister's reaction to the text of your lecture. I said that I would also let you have a note of one or two points raised by Bernard Ingham, whom I asked to look at it with a journalist's eye.

Bernard Ingham commented that journalists would be quick to try to apply the epithets "apologist, complacent, self-satisfied". He thinks that you have adequately protected yourself against this, but he suggests that the general line in dealing with the press should be that the lecture does not portray a complacent Service, but rather one which is lacking in self-assurance: the lecture is aimed at securing not merely more informed criticism but also a more balanced approach to some more serious current questions about the civil service.

On the passage on efficiency, Bernard wondered whether it would be helpful to insert a sentence before the last sentence on page 6 as follows:-

"It is not my experience that civil servants as a race are Luddite or obstructive of change whatever the popular or cultivated view of them may be".

The effect of this addition would be to play down a little the rather positive statement at the end of the previous sentence. Bernard also wondered whether the draft does not make too much of a dichotomy between efficiency and accuracy, commenting that surely we should now be pursuing the quest for efficiency (as well as accuracy) with the same dedication with which our forebears pursued accuracy (as well as efficiency).

In the passage on accountability, Bernard suggested that it would be helpful if at the end of this section on page 10 you could insert a sentence or so about how the service does now pursue the most rigorous standards of accountability.

Bernard commented that the last sentence of the second paragraph on page 12 may be read as a rather exaggerated panegyric; it could be played down a bit by rephrasing it: "If there is a prototype, it is a person who is continually seeking to further the interest of his Minister and who sees his job as being to initiate and develop ideas within a contextual framework the Government has set".

I mention to you my concern about the last paragraph on page 19 and the first paragraph on page 20. Bernard Ingham also picked out the passage on page 20 and suggested that the paragraph might be ended at the words "research and development department". My own feeling was that some of the dangers could be avoided by removing the most quotable sentence starting off "The distinction of activities in society .....".

I hope that these comments are helpful. In general, Bernard Ingham and I found this a most interesting talk and one which, if I may say so, we as civil servants were glad to think that the head of our service should give.

Yours ever,

Robin.

Sir Douglas Wass GCB