

Mr. Butler

PRIME MINISTER

Eve of Session Dinner - Monday, 5 November

I attach the list of guests attending the Eve of Session Dinner and the list of refusals.

The draft seating plan is at Flag A. Are you content with it?

The procedure for the Eve of Session Dinner is as follows. Towards the end of drinks before dinner, which are held in the White and Blue Drawing Rooms, you take up your position between the Blue and White Drawing Rooms, with the Speaker, Deputy Chief Whip, the Secretary of the Cabinet, your Parliamentary Private Secretary and your Principal Private Secretary flanking you, and you instruct the Deputy Chief Whip to guard the doors. The waiters serving the drinks withdraw.

You then briefly welcome your colleagues and invite the Secretary of the Cabinet to read out The Queen's Speech. After that you welcome the Speaker, who replies briefly. You then lead the Speaker and the Mover and Seconder of the Address in the Lords and Commons into dinner and the other guests follow.

At dinner there are no toasts, not even the Loyal Toast.

This follows the same procedure as previous years.

Agree?

F.R.B.

2 November 1984

THE TRADITION OF AN EVE OF SESSION DINNER AT WHICH THE SPEECH
FOR THE THRONE IS READ IS A LONG AND HONOURABLE
ONE.

INDEED, IN 1894 THE FIRST EDITION OF THE DOWNING
STREET BIBLE, THE INFALLIBLE GUIDE TO PROCEDURE,
REFERS TO THE NEED FOR THE SPEECH TO BE CIRCULATED
IN SUFFICIENT TIME BEFORE THE DINNER.

IT WAS NOT JUST THE PRIME MINISTER WHO HELD A
DINNER: IN THOSE DAYS THE LEADERS OF THE
OPPOSITION IN THE COMMONS AND LORDS HELD THEIR
OWN OCCASIONS.

HALF OF LONDON MUST HAVE KNOWN THE CONTENTS OF
THE SPEECH BEFORE THE STATE OPENING!