

File

PRIME MINISTER

SERIOUS FRAUD OFFICE

I asked Robert Armstrong to probe the Attorney's conclusion, in his minute at Flag A below, that his office's added responsibilities of the Superintendents of the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office do not call for the appointment of a Parliamentary Secretary to the Law Officers Department.

Sir Robert Armstrong has now discussed this with Mr. Michael Saunders, the Legal Secretary to the Law Officers. He confirmed that the Attorney and the Solicitor were clearly against asking for a Parliamentary Secretary. The Solicitor General obviously felt that he had spare capacity to take on more work than at present and would be happy to do so. Experience under a previous Administration suggested that a Parliamentary Secretary in the Law Officers' Department tended very much to be the fifth wheel on the coach: it tended to add to the work without relieving the Attorney General of any significant part of the responsibility.

Robert also told Mr. Saunders that he was concerned about the additional burden upon the Attorney General, who seemed to be making rather slow progress in recovering from major heart surgery last year. Mr Saunders said that the Attorney General's health and vigour seemed to have improved markedly in the last six weeks. Though he still tended to tire, his enthusiasm for the work had revived. He really thought that the Attorney General was well on the mend and we need not worry about his capacity to take on the work.

The Attorney also raises in his minute the possibility of additional lawyers in the Department. No need for you to react to that.

Shall I simply reply that you have noted the Attorney's
conclusion that he does not need a Parliamentary Secretary?

N. L. Wicks
16 June 1986