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Cabinet

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MR. WRIGHT

We have spoken about the processing of White Papers which are to be presented to Parliament in the name of the Prime Minister.

In recent months, we have twice found that, because no clear written guidance is available to Departments, the detailed arrangements for these White Papers can sometimes fall between several stools.

There is no easy way of ensuring that the procedures are correctly understood. At working level, officials may well find themselves handling such a White Paper only once, so that they are unable to rely on accumulated experience. It might, nevertheless, be helpful to make some reference to the procedures in "Questions of Procedures for Ministers". I have already checked that there are no existing instructions in the handbook available to Departmental Parliamentary Clerks.

The question might be covered by an additional paragraph in "Questions of Procedure" between the existing paras. 99 and 100. This might be on the following lines:

"From time to time, White Papers are laid before Parliament in the name of the Prime Minister. In all such cases, the lead Department on the policy issues concerned takes responsibility for the processing and distribution of the White Paper. This must be handled in close consultation with the Parliamentary Clerk at 10 Downing Street."

M. A. PATTISON

18 November 1981

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