

Immigration

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 October, 1982

The Prime Minister met the Home Secretary and the Chief Whip today to talk about the handling of the White Paper containing the new draft Immigration Rules. Mr. Gow was also present. The Prime Minister said that the meeting the previous evening of the Conservative Home Affairs Committee had indicated a degree of opposition to the Rules, which went further than had hitherto been anticipated. In these circumstances, the handling of the White Paper, both before and after its publication, would require careful consideration. In discussion of the present position, the Home Secretary said that there was no way of avoiding a major furore; the new Immigration Rules were required by the British Nationality Act which came into effect on 1 January and to retain the present entitlement in relation to husbands and fiances would provoke as much opposition on the Government backbenches as the new Rules. Some of the opposition, moreover, appeared to be based on a misunderstanding of the new Rules; it would be important, once the Rules were published, to stress that they did not involve a return to the pre-1979 position whereby settled status conferred a right to bring husbands and fiances here. It was also important to avoid giving the impression that the new Rules were prompted by the likelihood of an adverse ruling in the ECHL; indeed, an adverse ruling was probable whatever we did. The Prime Minister said that the distinction between the rights of British citizens under the new Act and those settled here should be brought out as clearly as possible; no suggestion should be given that settlement carried with it any automatic right to citizenship.

It was agreed that all these points would be made as strongly as possible when the White Paper was published. In the meantime, however, the line should be taken that there would be an early opportunity for the House to debate the

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White Paper and the draft Rules and only after the Home Secretary had considered the views expressed in the debate would he lay the new Rules themselves.

I am sending a copy of this to Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office).

TIMOTHY FLESHER

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