

PRIME MINISTER

1983 PUBLIC EXPENDITURE WHITE PAPER - EMBARGO

The attached letter from the Treasury on their proposals for publication of the 1983 Public Expenditure White Paper should be read against my argument with Jock Bruce-Gardyne over the embargo system in your room last week.

The effect of the Treasury letter is to try unilaterally to overthrow the restrictive policy the Government adopted, with your approval, after the wholesale breach of the Falklands Honours embargo.

Essentially what the Treasury are proposing for the publication of the Public Expenditure White Paper on February 1 is a return to the old system of 24-hour overnight embargoes.

I hope I can rely on your support to block this move.

There is no doubt that my information colleagues and I wish to return to a more flexible embargo system as soon as we can have confidence to do so. The Press Council judgement, as you know, has given us no cause for confidence because its effect is positively to encourage journalists to break embargoes.

However, I think we could have some confidence in returning to a more flexible embargo regime on the basis of the replies I have received to my letter of last October from the BBC, IBA, Newspaper Society, Newspaper Conference, the Guild of British Newspaper Editors, the Scottish Daily Newspaper Society and the Press Association.

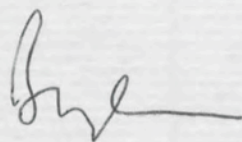
Unfortunately the Newspaper Publishers' Association, the organisation representing all bar one of the prime offenders, has taken three months to reply to my letter. And its reply goes no further than suggesting that the matter could best be progressed by an informal lunch or meeting. I am pressing them for a written assurance.

/This is not

This is not therefore the time for the Government to show weakness which the Treasury move, if allowed, would manifest. I hope you agree we must maintain a firm and resolute negotiating position.

I should add that the House would be severely critical of you if, without an agreement from the Newspaper Publishers' Association, Fleet Street were to break an embargo on a Command or Parliamentary paper under a more relaxed embargo regime.

Content that, in line with present practice, the Treasury should be told that the 1983 Public Expenditure White Paper should be published at 3.30pm on February 1, with advance copies made available under embargo at noon for the convenience of journalists?



B. INGHAM

21 January 1983

Yes - I am in total agreement with Bernard
me



Romola

Comments pl by MS

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MS 21/1

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

M C Scholar Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
No. 10 Downing Street
London SW1

21 January 1983

Dear Michael,

PUBLICATION OF 1983 PUBLIC EXPENDITURE WHITE PAPER

The preparation of the 1983 White Paper is on schedule, and we expect to have it ready on 31 January as planned. An oral statement in the House on publication of the White Paper does not seem necessary on this occasion, particularly as the White Paper will no doubt be followed by a fairly early debate. It should be sufficient to announce the date and time of publication in a Written answer and then place copies in the Vote Office. It would help with the publicity arrangements if the Answer could be given on Monday 31 January saying that copies of the White Paper would be available at 10 am on the following day. If the Prime Minister is content the Chief Secretary therefore proposes that publication should be on Tuesday 1 February. Our consultations show that this would not clash with any other major publication or announcement.

The Chief Secretary proposes to take an on-the-record press conference on the White Paper from 10.30 to 11.15 am on Tuesday 1 February.

The White Paper is a long and complex document, and we propose to issue Confidential Final Revises (CFRs) on the afternoon of Monday 31 January, embargoed until 10.00 am on the following day. An overnight embargo would not only help journalists in the preparation of their articles; it would also give us a better prospect of balanced and considered coverage in the press, and more opportunity to influence that coverage. This is particularly important given current sensitivities on the exchange rate. We will not require more than the 200 copies of CFRs normally allowed, but we do wish to provide copies to the economic and financial correspondents who usually write on public expenditure topics and have received CFRs in the past, and I shall be grateful for the approval of your Press Office to our doing this.

It would be helpful if you could let me have a decision by Monday 24 January so that our publicity arrangements can be finalised.

I am sending a copy to David Heyhoe.

yours sincerely
John Gieve
for JOHN GIEVE

Exec Pol.
Public Expenditure
pt 21



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CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 January 1983

PUBLICATION OF 1983 PUBLIC EXPENDITURE WHITE PAPER

Thank you for your letter of 21 January, which I showed the Prime Minister over the weekend.

Mrs. Thatcher agrees to your publishing the White Paper on 1 February, but would prefer that, in line with present practice, the White Paper should be published at 3.30 p.m. on that day, with advance copies made available under embargo at noon for the convenience of journalists. The Prime Minister is otherwise content with the arrangements set out in your letter. She has asked that the Treasury, in making its arrangements for publication, consult and agree these, in the usual way, with the Press Office here at Downing Street.

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Heyhoe (Lord President's Office).

H. D. SCHOLAR

John Gieve, Esq.,
Chief Secretary's Office,
H.M. Treasury.

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