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PRESENTATION

B/C: MR ALISON

10 DOWNING STREET

24 September, 1985

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

*Yes Joan,*

PRESENTATION

I have prepared a brief note of this morning's discussion between the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and others about presentation of Government policy, and now attach a copy for the Lord President's reference.

I would not want to pretend that the remits for action were quite as precise as I have indicated, but I thought it might be helpful to try to specify the sense of the discussion on "next steps".

I am sending a copy of this letter to Andrew Lansley (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office), and to Bernard Ingham in our Press Office.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Nigel Wick*

Miss Joan MacNaughton,  
Lord President's Office.

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

PRESENTATION

The Prime Minister held a meeting this morning to discuss presentation of Government policies. The Lord President, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Mr. Alison, Mr. Sherbourne and Mr. Ingham were present.

The main points emerging from the discussion were as follows:

1. It was necessary to check that there were adequate procedures for authorising Ministers to appear on radio and television when they were likely to discuss matters outside their Departmental interest. In all such cases the Minister concerned should be briefed by the responsible Department. Special care needed to be taken when a junior Minister was appearing on a programme with a more senior Opposition figure. (Action: Mr Ingham)
2. Departments should establish arrangements for monitoring the early morning broadcasts on the Today programme, commercial radio, TV AM and Breakfast TV so that, where appropriate, a Minister could make a quick response. (Action: Mr Ingham)
3. While it was accepted that Ministers in charge of Departments should bear the responsibility for presenting their Department's policies and that central machinery, beyond existing coordination arrangements, would be inappropriate, there was a place for some central monitoring of Departments' progress and success in presenting their policies. To that end, there was broad sympathy for many of the arrangements described in Mr. Ingham's note of 16 September. In addition, Ministers in charge of Departments should be asked to keep a record of their Departmental Minister's appearance on radio

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and TV. This record should be sent to Mr. Ingham, say quarterly, together with information on the occasions when Ministers had been refused appearance on TV or radio. Of course while such arrangements recording Ministers' activity would be helpful, it would be wrong to equate a large number of TV and radio appearances with a successful presentational operation. That would only necessarily be achieved if presentation was properly planned and followed through on a continuing basis. (Action: Lord President and Mr Ingham)

4. Cabinet papers should not include a passage on presentational aspects. Instead, the Minister speaking to the paper should describe orally how the policy would be presented. Cabinet Office briefing could remind the Prime Minister, or the Chairman of the relevant committee, to draw the committee's attention to presentational aspects. (Action: Mr Wicks)

5. There was a need for a group, perhaps under Central Office auspices, to produce half a dozen headline phrases for the main areas of Government policy such as defence, pensions. (Action: Chancellor of the Duchy)

6. The Chancellor of the Duchy, as Party Chairman, would concentrate on attacking Opposition policy. Departmental Ministers, while exposing the deficiency of the Opposition's plans, should focus especially on presentation of their Department's policies and the Government's approach in general. Ministers should take a special care to identify sensitive policy issues, at their earliest stage of development and report them to the Lord President and the Chancellor of the Duchy, so that the issues could either be aborted or the ground prepared for their presentation. The Liaison Committee provided a mechanism for linking Central Office and Governmental work on presentation. (Action: Lord President and Chancellor of the Duchy)

7. The Lord President and the Chancellor of the Duchy would consider the future of the ministerial group on the

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presentation of economic and social policy. (Action: Lord President and Chancellor of the Duchy)

8. The liaison between the No.10 Press Office and Departments on the one hand, and the Whips and backbenchers on the other, on presentation of Government policy should be re-examined with a view to their reinforcement. (Action: Chief Whip and Mr Ingham)

N.L.W.

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