

PRIME MINISTER

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MR. BRISTOW AND THE TWO LORDS

The Speaker has received Mr. Bristow's letter which names the two Lords. The Speaker will send the letter early tomorrow morning to Mr. Warren whose Committee will, hopefully, consider it later in the morning. Apparently, Mr. Warren's view is that it is no longer necessary for the Committee to report Mr. Bristow's refusal to tell the Committee of the two names (since he has now recanted), but he needs to persuade the other members of his Committee, especially Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop, to this view. If he does, there is a good chance that the Committee will decide not to make their report of Mr. Bristow's refusal to the House tomorrow. (It was due to be presented at 2.30 pm.)

N.L.W.

N.L. WICKS
7 April 1986

EL3BAM

Showed to P.N.
She agreed that
we should not act
to warn the 2 Lords
(unless by one).

MW

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Pa
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PRIME MINISTER

BRISTOW

The Chief Whip has spoken further to the Clerks in the House. (One new fact emerged: the Select Committee have already agreed their report and instructed their Chairman to have it published. This reduces, it is argued, the freedom of manoeuvre since it makes it harder to reopen the findings of the report.) The Chief's tactic now is to have Cranley Onslow persuade Bristow to send the draft letter below to the Speaker. It would be left to the Speaker to decide whether to pass the letter to the Select Committee (though he almost certainly would). According to the Chief Whip, the Clerks would then advise the Speaker that a debate on any report from the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on this issue should not take precedence over the other business of the House. So in Parliamentary terms, the matter would disappear. The Chief Whip is to discuss all this with Cranley Onslow next Wednesday.

It seems to me that we have two objectives in all this:

1. To avoid publication of the two Lords names.

The Chief Whip is adamant that unless Bristow discloses the names to the Select Committee, he will be called before the Bar of the House to explain himself (when the Chief Whip thinks he will divulge the names anyway). The Chief Whip believes Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop will not let the matter rest until the names are made available to his Committee. The Chief Whip believes (and Murdo agrees) that there is "a very good chance" that the names would not become public even if told to the Speaker and the Select Committee. I am more doubtful.

2. To forestall an unseemly row in Parliament with Bristow being summoned to the Bar of the House and perhaps being despatched to Brixton Prison. The Chief Whip believes that his tactic described above would avoid that outcome.

So the Chief Whip's tactic stands a good chance of meeting the second objective, but it seems doubtful to me whether it will meet the first. It is a great pity indeed that the names of the two Lords have to be mentioned to the Select Committee. The Chief Whip is absolutely adamant that that is unavoidable.

If you want to object to the Chief Whip's approach (and given the constraints in which he seems to be working, there does not seem to be another) you may wish to speak to him over the weekend before he discusses the issue with Cranley Onslow next Wednesday.

Good Friday

N.L.W.

(N. L. WICKS)
27 March 1986

DG2AYN

There is one important point that must be cleared up - whether the letter to the Speaker is covered by

Parliamentary Privileges. - Letters from

M.P.'s to Ministers are NOT. If

he is being advised to divulge names via

letter which renders him liable to action on the part of the names, that is a factor

he should know and on which he should take advice before embarking on this course of

action. I do not believe the 'in confidence' of itself would protect him. I must say I have some of 'privilege' to advise people of a remedy not

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I have heard that the Trade and Industry Select Committee are likely to make a report to you because I have so far not given the names of my two friends with whom I had certain conversations some time ago. I do not believe that revealing the names of my friends will in any way help the Committee's deliberations in view of the personal statement I made on 7 February, a copy of which I attach.

However the Gentlemen concerned are
and and if you think it correct
you have my agreement to pass this letter onto the Committee.

If I can be of any further assistance to the Committee, no doubt they will be in touch with me.

PRIME MINISTER

Words not here
The Clerks wanted the words "in confidence" in the second paragraph to be omitted on the grounds that Bristow could not bind the confidentiality of his letter on the Speaker. The Chief Whip argued that Bristow would not write without the protection that he believed those words would give him. They will probably be retained. But their effect is unclear. The Chief Whip is nevertheless still hopeful that the contents of the letter can be kept confidential. I wonder.

N.L.W.

(N. L. WICKS)

27 March 1986