

CCB/UP  
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cc: Lord President  
Chief Whip  
Sir Robert Armstrong

*You can discuss this  
with R. T. A. Tamm*

1. MR WICKS
2. PRIME MINISTER

*N.L.W  
17.7*

WESTLAND REPORT - MEDIA HANDLING

We are, as I understand it, agreed that the Government's response to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report on the relationship between Ministers and Civil Servants should be published at the same time as the Defence Select Committee report. This is partly because, on the evidence of leaks of the Defence report, there is some specific as well as general link between the two reports - eg the combined position of Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service and the role of Press Officers.

Press Officers will be able to draw attention to relevant passages in the Government's reply to the Civil Service report. But this is unlikely to suffice to protect the Government's position.

In the normal course of events the Government does not react immediately to Select Committee reports; instead it says they have been received, will be studied and that a reply will be made in due course.

In recent years, however, the Government has from time to time adopted a more robust initial stance in order to protect its interests.

In this case I suspect more will be required and I know arrangements are in hand for any response to be considered immediately a copy of the report is to hand.

Without knowing what is in the report, it seems likely that the following issues will need to be covered:

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

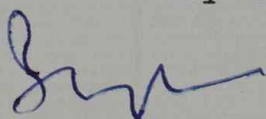
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1. The extent to which the Defence implications have, or have not, been covered and consequently the extent to which the Defence report concentrates upon the "leak".
2. The extent to which leaks of the Defence report match up to its substance, if necessary to make the legitimate point that the Select Committee's handling of its own report is not reflected in its preoccupation with another so-called leak.
3. The position of the Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service.
4. The position of any other official criticised; here it will be necessary, especially in view of the promotion this week of one of the cast, to ensure that there are immediate and firm expressions of Government confidence in all those involved and that no action against them is contemplated.
5. The Government's need to study the implications of the conduct of the Select Committee's inquiry and its report for the conduct of Government and the relationship of Civil Servants to Select Committees, especially in view of the public reservations as far back as 1977 about this relationship.

It may well be felt that some effort should be made in advance of publication to reduce the report's impact.

Whatever view is taken on this, I am sure that the officials concerned should not be implicated in pre-emptive strikes, especially in view of reports already circulating that this is exactly what they expect me to get up to.

You may feel that this issue should be discussed.



BERNARD INGHAM  
16 July 1986