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*From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service*

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref. A086/2864

MR MACLEAN

cc Mr Wicks

We were discussing last week the possible form of the Government's Motion for the debate on the responses to the Third and Fourth Reports from the Defence Committee about Westland plc.

2. I suppose that the Government will want the Motion to be more positive than "take note". The best verb would be "approve"; a verb which would not specifically commit the House but would still be positive might be "welcome". I hope that we can go for "approve".

3. Mr Terence Higgins has made it clear that in the light of the last paragraph he would have problems if the Motion simply invited the House to approve the response. If we need to make qualifications in the Motion, I hope that we can still retain the thought that the House approves the principles of accountability described in the response: it is only their application to the work of Select Committees that is in issue.

4. With these suggestions in mind I suggest the following:

"That this House approves [welcomes] the Government's response (Cmnd 9916) to the Third and Fourth Reports from the Select Committee on Defence, while recognising that

the application of the principles of accountability described in the response to the work of Select Committees will need to be the subject of further consideration [discussion]."

Robert H. Mustang

20 October 1986

WESTLAND plc

That this House takes note of the Third Report of the Defence Committee of the current session on the defence implications of the future of Westland plc (H.C.518) and of its Fourth Report on Westland plc: The Government's Decision Making (H.C.519); approves the Government's response to these Reports (Command 9916) with regard to the conduct of affairs relating to Westland plc; and reaffirms the principle concerning evidence before Select Committees charged with examining the expenditure, administration and policies of Government departments, that it would not normally be appropriate for this House to seek to enforce its right to secure information from the Executive at a level below that of the Ministerial head of the department concerned.

(i.e. PAC  
P.C.A.).

See  
below