



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Press Secretary

CHIEF WHIP

AWACS/NIMROD

You have seen my separate note to the Prime Minister last evening in advance of today's meeting. I am in touch with the MoD on the preparation of a presentation paper for Ministers for their boxes on Monday evening.

If you agree, I will work in a reference to the need for the Whips' Office to be provided with explanatory material. But you may well feel that the paper should not trespass further on your activity.

Against that background, it may be helpful if I suggested how your office might make a major contribution to overall presentation.

First, positive. The Government's first requirement is a background note which brings together the best possible presentation of the Government's case for its particular choice. This needs to be in your hands for use immediately the Defence Secretary has read out his statement and before he takes questions. In this way you will be able to arm those who are disposed to be helpful and, so armed, to urge them to go on local radio etc.

I assume you will have in mind those figures, both heavyweight and in process of winning spurs, who would go enthusiastically into bat for the Government.

Second - and still positive - the Government needs to work through those MPs whose constituencies will benefit from the Government's eventual decision. I shall be asking the MoD to identify the areas which will benefit from the Government's choice.

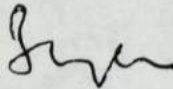
Third, negative. If the decision goes against NIMROD, you will need a paper to deploy with that extensive list of MPs who have declared their support for this system and especially those with a constituency interest.

Mr Wicks

Given the presentation/disadvantages to whatever choice is made, and the damage which a Government divided within itself can do, the "negative" role of the Whips' Office - or its role in mitigating criticism - will be almost as important as the positive role in this case.

In this context we need particularly to ensure that Defence, Science and Technology and Industry Select Committee members are informed, and where possible to enlist their aid in speaking up for Government on radio and television, and to the Press Association. It would be particularly helpful if, say, six substantial Backbenchers could be persuaded to give supportive quotes to PA soon after the Defence Secretary sits down.

You may wish to discuss.



BERNARD INGHAM
11 December 1986