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c.c. Trade
Industry
Employment
Bank of England
Cab. Off.
CSO
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Security

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

22 June, 1979.

Security of Economic Statistics

You will be aware of the importance which is attached to the avoidance of premature disclosure of key economic statistics which could cause not only political embarrassment but also in some circumstances speculation on the foreign and domestic exchanges. The statistics involved are the trade figures, money supply, unemployment, retail price index, earnings index and the index of industrial production.

The Prime Minister therefore wishes to draw your Minister's attention to the current strict arrangements for guarding against the disclosure of these statistics in the usually short period between their being available within Departments and subsequent publication.

Pre-publication copies of the statistics are to be sent by originating Departments to the following Ministers and their Permanent Secretaries:-

<u>Trade figures</u>	Prime Minister Chancellor of the Exchequer Secretaries of State for Trade and for Industry
<u>Money supply</u>	Prime Minister Chancellor of the Exchequer
<u>Unemployment</u>	Prime Minister Chancellor of the Exchequer Secretaries of State for Employment and for Industry
<u>Retail price index</u>	Prime Minister Chancellor of the Exchequer Secretaries of State for Employment for Industry and for Trade

/ Earnings

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Earnings

Prime Minister
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretaries of State for Employment and for Trade

Industrial
production

Prime Minister
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for Industry

Copies should also go to the Governor of the Bank of England, the Secretary of the Cabinet, the Head of the Government Statistical Service, and the Chairman of the Board of Customs and Excise (trade figures only).

Only those in paragraphs 3 and 4 above have discretion to circulate figures to others in their Departments (whether Ministers or officials) on a strictly 'need to know' basis. No Press copies are to be released ahead of publication even under embargo.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of all those mentioned in paragraphs 3 and 4.

T. P. LANKESTER

A.M.W. Battishill, Esq.,
H.M. Treasury.

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Security

CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 0: 233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet: Sir John Hunt GCB

Ref: A0177

11th September 1979

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MS

Security of Economic Statistics

Tim Lankester wrote to you on 22nd June setting out the arrangements for protecting the confidentiality of certain key economic statistics before publication. The same arrangements should now be applied to the new Tax and Price Index.

The first issue of the index was published on 17th August. Advance copies of future monthly issues will be circulated by the Central Statistical Office to the same Ministers and their Permanent Secretaries as now receive advance copies of the Retail Prices Index. The Ministers are: the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Secretaries of State for Employment, for Industry and for Trade. Copies will also go to the Governor of the Bank of England, the Secretary of the Cabinet and the Head of the Government Statistical Service.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of all those mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

M. J. VILE

(M. J. Vile)

A. M. W. Battishill, Esq

12 SEP 1979

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S.R.
Ms. Jim Finis
for my
signature

Ref. A09829

MR. WHITMORE

12.

Security of Economic Statistics

In his minute of 13th June Mr. Stowe asked us to provide a draft Private Secretary letter reminding those concerned about the importance of this matter.

I attach a draft accordingly.

John

(John Hunt)

21st June, 1979



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DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

Security of Economic Statistics

You will be aware of the importance which is attached to the avoidance of premature disclosure of key economic statistics which could cause not only political embarrassment but also in some circumstances speculation on the foreign and domestic exchanges. The statistics involved are the trade figures, money supply, unemployment, retail price index, earnings index and the index of industrial production.

2. The Prime Minister therefore wishes to draw your Minister's attention to the current strict arrangements for guarding against the disclosure of these statistics in the usually short period between their being available within Departments and subsequent publication.

3. Pre-publication copies of the statistics are to be sent by originating Departments to the following Ministers and their Permanent Secretaries:-

Trade figures

Prime Minister, Chancellor
of the Exchequer,
Secretaries of State for
Trade and for Industry

Money supply

Prime Minister, Chancellor
of the Exchequer

Unemployment

Prime Minister, Chancellor
of the Exchequer,
Secretaries of State for
Employment and for Industry



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Retail price
index

Prime Minister, Chancellor
of the Exchequer,
Secretaries of State for
Employment, for Industry
and for Trade

Earnings

Prime Minister, Chancellor
of the Exchequer, Secretaries
of State for Employment and
for Trade

Industrial
Production

Prime Minister, Chancellor
of the Exchequer, Secretary
of State for Industry

4. Copies should also go to the Governor of the Bank of England, the Secretary of the Cabinet, the Head of the Government Statistical Service, and the Chairman of the Board of Customs and Excise (trade figures only).

5. Only those in paragraphs 3 and 4 above have discretion to circulate figures to others in their Departments (whether Ministers or officials) on a strictly 'need to know' basis. No Press copies are to be released ahead of publication even under embargo.

6. I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of all those mentioned in paragraphs 3 and 4.

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

bf 20/c 175

SIR JOHN HUNT

Security of Economic Statistics

Thank you for your minute of 5 June, which I have shown to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is content with the present arrangements for confining the distribution of key statistics to the irreducible minimum. She would, however, think it timely for her to issue a reminder, on the setting up of the new Administration, of the importance she and her colleagues attach to security of these statistics. This could perhaps best be done by a Private Secretary letter: you may like to let us have a draft.

K.R.S.

pe

13 June 1979

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Prime Minister.

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We have progressively tightened up on distribution of key statistics in advance of publication.

Ref. A09703

MR. STOWE

Yes - excellent
ref.

I don't think we can cut back on this: but a fierce reminder of the need for security would be timely. KRS 2/11

Security of Economic Statistics

This minute seeks the Prime Minister's approval for the continuance of the current arrangements for protecting the confidentiality of certain key economic statistics before publication. The sets of figures involved are overseas trade, money supply, unemployment, retail prices index, earnings and industrial production index.

2. Last year there were a number of suspected leaks of certain of these statistics in advance of publication. Because of the risks not only of political embarrassment but also of speculation on the foreign and domestic exchanges we tightened up the handling of these statistics and restricted their circulation in the usually short period between them becoming available and the day of publication.

3. At present Permanent Secretaries of originating Departments (or the Governor in the case of the money supply) are required to satisfy themselves that those contributing to the preparation of the figures, or with access to them are kept to an irreducible minimum.

4. Pre-publication copies are sent only to the following Ministers and their Permanent Secretaries:-

<u>Trade figures</u>	Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretaries of State for Trade and for Industry.
<u>Money supply</u>	Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer.
<u>Unemployment</u>	Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretaries of State for Employment and for Industry.
<u>Retail Prices Index</u>	Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretaries of State for Employment, for Industry and for Trade.
<u>Earnings</u>	Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretaries of State for Employment and for Trade.
<u>Industrial Production</u>	Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary of State for Industry.



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5. Copies also go to the Governor of the Bank of England, the Head of the Government Statistical Service, the Chairman of Customs and Excise (trade figures only) and to me.

6. Only those in paragraphs 4 and 5 above have discretion to circulate the figures to others in their Departments (whether Ministers or officials) on a strictly 'need to know' basis. No Press copies are released ahead of publication, even under embargo.

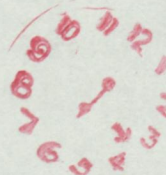
7. Of course, there is no practicable way of eliminating all leaks as a balance has to be struck between minimising the risks and preserving the usefulness of the advance figures, but the present very limited circulation lists, despite inconveniences to a few individuals, have led to a considerable increase in security and there have not to my knowledge been any recent serious leaks of the figures.

8. I should be glad to know whether the Prime Minister is content for these arrangements to continue.

(John Hunt)

5th June, 1979

15 JUN 1979



SECRET

(TOP SECRET)

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