

MR. INGHAM

Econ Pol ✓  
cc: Mr. Scholar  
Mr. Gaffin  
Mrs. Gilmore (HMT)

SPEAKING NOTES FOR MINISTERS

I have seen the minutes of the last meeting of Chief Information Officers and I see from the Agenda for today's meeting that there will be a further discussion of the value of speaking notes for Ministers. It may be helpful if I offer the following comments.

First, it is not the case that speaking notes are no longer produced. Speaking notes on non-economic subjects - none of my affair - do seem to have become much less frequent; on economic subjects, I have for some time been producing them only in relation to particular events, rather than as general background. Thus we have had economic notes on ambulancemen's pay (4 June), the economic censure motion in July (27 July), the NEDC discussion on pay (5 August) and the 4% pay factor (15 September). As you know, we have one in draft for issue this week on the pay implications of the Chancellor's package. There are strong arguments for continuing to do economic speaking notes, but only when there is a particular occasion. That is what the Lord President wants. It also means they are more heeded by Ministers, and they become less repetitive.

Second, Ministers are still doing their stuff on the economy. In the last two weeks I have received the texts of 19 speeches on economic issues by senior Ministers, of sufficient substance for me to think it worthwhile retaining them. That excludes two by the Prime Minister, and all those made in the House of Commons.

So I think the real gap is on non-economic issues. Trespassing on to the territory of others, I offer the reflection that it is surprising that Ministers have not received briefing on disarmament, Scarman, industrial relations legislation and recent developments in Northern Ireland.

JOHN VEREKER

30 November 1981