

Prime Minister
Agree that

Departments should
be reminded of the
earlier warnings?

Ref. A088/2958

MR WICKS

Yes - emphatically
no

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In my minute of 9 June I drew attention to a number of articles which had appeared in the press about the Review of the National Health Service and discussed what could be done to prevent a repetition.

2. With the agreement of the Prime Minister I subsequently asked the departments concerned to ensure that the dates of future meetings of the Prime Minister's group were not made available to the press and were notified only to those within departments who needed to know them. I also asked departments to warn all officials and Special Advisers engaged in the Review, and Press Officers, of the dangers of involving themselves in any sustained conversations with journalists on matters related to the Review, since they might inadvertently enable journalists to try out a proposition in order to gauge reactions. Departments were warned that these instructions were particularly important as the Review entered its later, and most sensitive, stages.

3. The lead story on the front page of the Guardian today, by David Hencke, their Westminster correspondent, includes information which could only have been obtained from sources with access to the Review which Ministers are carrying out. It is clearly important as the exercise moves towards its final stages, that the good security which we have managed to achieve since June should be continued. If the Prime Minister agrees I think it might be timely if I were to arrange for departments to be reminded of the earlier warnings.



4. I am copying this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chief Secretary and the Secretaries of State for Health, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

R.R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

6 October 1988



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