# 10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

The Prime Minister has now had an opportunity to consider your submission of 10 June about the leakage of Government documents. She has noted and is grateful for the expression of regret and apology which you make on behalf of your fellow Permanent Secretaries and the Civil Service.

The Prime Minister has also noted the steps which you are taking to try to stem the flow of leaks. She thinks that it is worth pursuing the possibility of numbering each paper of sensitive documents and of repeating the number through the pages, despite the cost. She also favours further exploration of a unique arrangement for every copy of every page of a document.

However, the Prime Minister has doubts about the wisdom of circulating a document on the lines of the draft memorandum attached to your minute, which is itself likely to leak. She would prefer to attach instructions on handling to each document which has to be closely restricted, rather than send out a general instruction.

The Prime Minister agrees that the root cause of the problem is a change of culture, and she would favour a letter from you to Permanent Secretaries on the lines which you suggest. It might be possible to incorporate in that letter one or two points from the draft memorandum, which would not embarrass the Government if they leaked - for example, that it is for the originating Minister or member of a committee to decide in the first instance whether special restrictions need to be imposed on the handling of a document.

/ The Prime Minister

The Prime Minister doubts the wisdom of a letter from you to The Times and is inclined to think that a re-definition of standards by a group of senior Privy Councillors would be unlikely to make much impact on the problem.

16 June 1983

CONFIDENTIAL

Top copy on Security Service Leak Investigation - Documents leaked during Election campaign.

MR. BUTLER

Thank you for your minute of 16 June about leaks.

We will continue to pursue measures to try to deter leaks, on the lines of the second paragraph of your minute.

On the "change of culture" I, like the Prime Minister, have come to favour a letter from me to Permanent Secretaries, rather than a letter to The Times or a committee of Privy Counsellors. I have a first draft of a letter, which I am looking at with a very few of my Permanent Secretary colleagues; I will of course show you a draft before I issue anything final.

I should like to keep that letter at the level of principle, and not use it to make points about the conditions or mechanics of distribution. But I wonder whether the Prime Minister would allow me to circulate a memorandum on the lines of the draft attached to my minute of 10 June. It would be useful to have a standard and clearly defined procedure for handling particularly sensitive documents, rather than deal with each document ad hoc. I have in fact discussed the proposals in my draft memorandum with my fellow Permanent Secretaries - and the fact that I did so was briefly noted in one of the newspapers! So the leak has happened, without exciting any significant notice or criticism. I doubt whether its issue in definitive form would give rise to further press comment; and I do not think that it would matter very much if it did.

I assume that we are free to go ahead with the use of paper with diagonal classification markings, specimens of which were attached to my minute of 10 June.

18 June 1983

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