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*From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service*

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref.A083/3218

HOME SECRETARY

Responsibility for Discipline in the Civil Service

Thank you for your minute of 10 November.

2. In disseminating the proposed guidance on responsibility for discipline in the Civil Service, I would propose (in a separate document) to make it clear that nothing in the formulation was intended to inhibit or discourage a Permanent Secretary from consulting his Minister in any case in which it seemed appropriate to do so and particularly in any case which it seemed at all liable to become the subject of political or press comment. As you say, the judgment on what is a sensitive case has to be left to the Permanent Secretary; if the relationship between the Permanent Secretary and his Minister is right there should be no problem about that.

3. Like you, I see no need to spell out what would occur in the case of a substantive difference of view between a Permanent Secretary and his Minister. But I envisage that it would be rather like a situation in which a Minister wants to do something which a Permanent Secretary believes would be in breach of his responsibilities as an Accounting Officer. I think that the Permanent Secretary should report the issue to the Head of the Civil Service. The Head of the Civil Service might use his good offices to try to resolve



the matter in dispute, but in the last resort the matter would clearly have to go to the Prime Minister.

4. I am sending copies of this minute to those who received copies of yours.

**ROBERT ARMSTRONG**

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11 November 1983



Civil Service

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July 88

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

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CABINET OFFICE

With the compliments of  
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