

MR. CATFORD

P1. file

I attach a letter which I have received from the Lord Chancellor's Office, covering a paper about public records. So that you may know the provenance of this, I am also enclosing a copy of a letter from John Coles to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dated 9 ~~March~~^{December} (Flag A).

The question of the Falkland Islands records was resolved by a Cabinet meeting on 15 December when the Prime Minister decided that the Falkland Islands records should be returned to the Public Record Office, but that legislation should be considered in the normal course of business to put right the deficiency in the present legislation which makes it impossible to close documents once they have been open to the public.

You may like to submit the attached document to the Prime Minister with any comments which you want to add. The Lord Chancellor's paper does not call for a decision by the Prime Minister since the Cabinet has already decided, on 15 December, that the question of legislation on the general issue of public records should be considered in the normal course of business. But the Prime Minister will undoubtedly be interested in the points which the Lord Chancellor makes about other deficiencies in the present legislation.

The Prime Minister will, I think, also be interested in another aspect, and that is the arrangements made in No. 10 for us to review the No. 10 records and any comments we have on how well these work. It may be that you have a piece of paper on this which can be readily submitted with the Lord Chancellor's paper. If not, may I suggest that you submit the Lord Chancellor's paper, through me please, and ask the Prime Minister whether she would like a note on the way in which our machinery in No. 10 operates in reviewing the No. 10 papers before either they are submitted to the Public Record Office or an application is made to the Lord Chancellor for their retention or closure.

F.R.B

2 February 1984