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Prime Minister  
The only likely  
contentious issue  
is covered in  
para. 9. below.  
RACG

Ref. A088/3126

PRIME MINISTER

CABINET: BROADCASTING WHITE PAPER (C(88)12) 26/10

#### CONCLUSIONS

1. The Home Secretary's memorandum seeks the Cabinet's agreement to the publication of the Broadcasting White Paper in the week beginning 7 November and that he should make an oral statement at the time of publication.
2. The White Paper proposes a radical reform of the framework of broadcasting in the United Kingdom. It is bound to excite a great deal of Parliamentary and public interest and the Home Secretary asked that it should be brought to Cabinet so that he could obtain their specific endorsement of his proposals.
3. Legislation will be needed in the 1989-90 session so that the new arrangements are in place when the present ITV franchises expire at the end of 1992.

#### BACKGROUND

4. The present review of broadcasting policy started with the Peacock Report in July 1986. The White Paper also takes account of the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee's report on broadcasting (published in June 1988) and reports by consultants on subscription and on MVDS.
5. The White Paper's main proposals are summarized in paragraph 5 of the Home Secretary's memorandum. We have checked the draft White Paper and are satisfied that it embodies the decisions which MISC 128 took at their meeting last Thursday. Although you agreed at that meeting to give the Home Secretary latitude to indicate that the draft circulated to the Cabinet might require final revision and polishing, we understand that the Home Secretary spent a good deal of



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time last weekend refining the draft and that there are now only a handful of further minor adjustments which he might wish to make.

6. We understand from the Home Office that the White Paper will be given a glossy cover and will incorporate some photographs, as you requested at last week's meeting. The index has been improved and some of the paragraphs shortened in order to sharpen the presentation, and tables have been added setting out the expected timetable for additional television services and summarizing the proposed programme obligations for commercial television services. The Home Office will be producing a summary of the White Paper in leaflet form for issuing to journalists and parliamentarians (the arrangements for which have been cleared by the Chief Secretary).

Educational issues

7. Following last week's meeting of MISC 128, the Home Secretary and Education Secretary have exchanged correspondence about the treatment of educational matters in the White Paper. They have now agreed an amendment to the text of the White Paper to reflect the Group's decision that the position of Open University and schools broadcasting should continue to be secured. The Education Secretary has now accepted that, as MISC 128 agreed last week, there should be no special protection for children's and general educational programming (which, unlike Open University and schools programming, is supported by advertising and can therefore be expected to continue even in the absence of a specific requirement to this effect).

Legislative timetable

8. The Lord President and the Home Secretary have agreed a slight re-ordering of paragraph 1.5 of the White Paper to make clear that legislation will be introduced at the earliest opportunity after the expiry of the consultation period on 28 February 1989.



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OUTSTANDING ISSUE

9. We are aware of only one, relatively minor, outstanding issue. At last week's meeting of MISC 128, the Home Secretary made the point that if a suitable bidder did not come forward for the night hours channel which the BBC will be giving up then that channel should revert to the BBC. A sentence to this effect has been included at paragraph 3.12 of the White Paper, but the Trade and Industry Secretary may press for its exclusion on the ground that it sends the wrong signal. You may feel, however, that the sentence does no more than set out the commonsense position, on which the BBC seem bound to ask for clarification if the White Paper is silent on the point.

*Brian Griffiths and I disagree with this; we think the sentence is best deleted.*  
PHB  
20.10

HANDLING

10. You will wish to invite the HOME SECRETARY to introduce his Memorandum.

11. Before inviting comments from other members of the Cabinet, you may wish to explain that the proposals in the White Paper have all been very carefully considered by the Ministerial Group on Broadcasting Services (which, under your chairmanship, comprised the Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Trade and Industry Secretary, Welsh Secretary and Chief Whip and, at the last meeting, the Education Secretary and Mrs Chalker).

12. You might then wish to invite the TRADE AND INDUSTRY SECRETARY and the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER to comment before asking if other members of the Cabinet have views to express.

F.R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER  
26 October 1988