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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

The Foreign Secretary called on the Prime Minister at his request at 3.30 pm in the House of Commons on Wednesday 20 October. He said that he had been much concerned by the article in The Standard on the previous evening. It was clear to him that such an article would not have been written without guidance from 10 Downing Street. It presented the appointment of the foreign affairs adviser as a slap in the face for himself and the Foreign Office. While he could live with this himself, the damage done to the Foreign Office was very serious. The article was an example of what he had feared about the presentation of such an appointment. He thought that it was now necessary for the announcement of any appointment to be held until it could be distanced some way from this article.

The Prime Minister said that she had herself seen Mr Shrimpsley, the author of the article, on the previous Friday. A press officer had been present with her throughout the interview. Mr Shrimpsley had raised the question of the enlargement of No 10, and she had referred to the appointment of one or two more people to help on the foreign affairs side, working with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as Professor Walters worked with the Treasury. There was nothing in what she had said which could justify the presentation of such an appointment as a slight to the Foreign Secretary or the Foreign Office and in fact the picture at the head of the article had shown her applauding the Foreign Secretary at the Party Conference. Too much significance should not be attached to this article, which was one of a series on this subject. It would be wrong to be prevented by such articles from going ahead with what was necessary.

The Foreign Secretary said that the Prime Minister would understand how the article had seemed from his point of view. He was not in favour of the appointment of a foreign affairs adviser within No 10, and his position was well known. He had,

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however, gone along with it because the Prime Minister felt she needed it. But this article had ensured that any announcement would be presented as a slap in the face for himself and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Prime Minister agreed that the presentation of the appointment would need careful consideration, but she could not afford to delay going ahead with the appointment. Her need for help on the foreign affairs side within No 10 was immediate and urgent. She had now contacted Sir Anthony Parsons, and was hoping to see him over the weekend. He had been invited to Chequers, and there was a better chance than at No 10 that this meeting would avoid publicity.

The Foreign Secretary said that he continued to have misgivings over the timing of the announcement. He accepted that, since Sir Anthony Parsons had been invited to see the Prime Minister, he should do so, and he would himself try to see Sir Anthony Parsons when he returned to this country in the following week. He hoped that any announcement would be made before then, and that the terms of an announcement could be considered very carefully.

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