

No - we let out
all reference to
organisation

Prime Minister

Sir Robert Armstrong's suggestion
offer an ingenious way of forestalling
questions while keeping options open.

Ref. A082/0331

MR BUTLER

See revised
draft. mt.

Do you agree?

FERB
1.12.

With my minute of 26th November (Ref. A082/0244) I attached
a Press Notice about Sir Derek Rayner's withdrawal.

2. You told me yesterday that the Prime Minister agreed that we should issue a Press Notice, but wanted to delete from paragraph 3 of the notice as drafted the words "as it has operated since April 1982, as part of the Management and Efficiency Group in the Management and Personnel Office".

3. I understand the Prime Minister's reluctance to enter into an apparent commitment about the future of the unit at the present moment. But, even if we omit those words from the Press Notice, we have to be ready with an answer to the question that is liable to be put, as to whether the unit is going to stay where it is. If we cannot give an answer to that question, and the uncertainty is reflected in the Press - as it would be almost bound to be - that would have a very unsettling effect on the staff concerned.

4. I wonder if a solution to the problem might be to recast paragraph 3 of the Press Notice in the present tense, so that it becomes simply a statement about what is, as follows:

"The unit continues to operate, as it has operated since April 1982, as part of the Management and Efficiency Group in the Management and Personnel Office under the leadership of Mr Clive Priestley, who has assisted Sir Derek Rayner in the work of the unit since its inception in May 1979".

5. That would require consequential amendments in the Notice for Editors: in paragraph 10, line 2, for "will continue", read "continues". You told me that the Prime Minister was minded to delete paragraph 11; and paragraph 12 could also come out. I suggest also the deletion of the side heading "Future Arrangements".

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

30th November 1982