

5 March 1984  
Policy Unit

PRIME MINISTER

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL

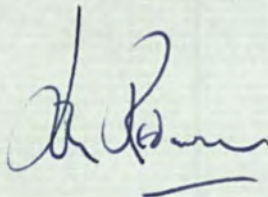
David Steel is introducing a Ten-Minute Rule Bill tomorrow. In view of recent allegations about undue secrecy, the Government's response to this needs careful handling.

Some of the demands for access to documents are entirely reasonable. Steel's Bill leaves aside the issue of repeal of the Official Secrets Act. It claims to concentrate on the right of parents to see their children's school files, of patients to see their own medical records, and those on council waiting lists to check information about their status.

If the Government's tone is too harsh tomorrow in response to this proposal it could be damaging. The aim should be to bolster the Government's work on data protection by showing sensitivity to these issues.

Could Michael Alison put this to those concerned before the matter is raised in the House?

Yes please not



JOHN REDWOOD

Note: There is no formal Government response to the Bill. I discussed with Mr Redwood, and passed his comments (as enclosed by the PM) to Lord Gowrie's office.

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