



Ref. A08384

MR WHITMORE *MJD*Report of the Security Commission

With my minute of 26th March to the Prime Minister, I submitted a draft oral statement for her to make on the Security Commission report together with a written statement to be published a day after the oral statement as a White Paper. It was intended that the statements should be made on 6th and 7th April, but they were postponed on account of the Falklands crisis. I now understand that the Prime Minister would like to go ahead with the statements next week, with the shorter statement issued as a Written Answer to an arranged Parliamentary Question.

- 2. I attach a draft Question and Written Answer. The Written Answer follows very closely the original oral statement which was prepared and cleared with both Lord Diplock and No 10. The only addition is the sentence at the end of paragraph 2 about copies of the statement being available in the Vote Office. This replaces the sentence in the draft oral statement about it being published as a Command Paper.

3. When the original oral statement was circulated, the only Minister to comment on the text was the Chancellor of the Exchequer. His Private Secretary's letter of 1st April to you recorded that the Chancellor thought the first sentence of paragraph 4 of the statement, "The report is generally reassuring", might be seen as provocatively bland. The phrase is in fact taken from paragraph 9 of the Commission's Report ("The general impression with which we are left as a result of our review of security procedures and practices is one of reassurance"). I think therefore that it could and should be allowed to stand. But, if the Prime Minister prefers, the phrase could be omitted.

4. The White Paper containing the long written statement now has to be re-printed, since in its present form it refers to publication in April and not May. This





will take six or seven days, which should enable the statement to be made by written answer next week. I should be grateful if you could let me know what day is selected so that the necessary arrangements can be made. We will also have to inform Lord Diplock and his colleagues in advance of the publication day. You will yourself wish to arrange for the Prime Minister to write to the Leader of the Opposition to advise him of the new date. I will let you have a draft letter for this purpose. You will also wish to make arrangements for the No 10 Press Office to announce the changes in the membership of the Security Commission on the day on which the White Paper is published.

5. The written statement and White Paper may in due course provoke questions to the Prime Minister. We have already supplied draft supplementaries which may be useful in preparing for such questions. These will be reconsidered and if necessary revised in the light of reactions to the statement and White Paper.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

12th May 1982



DRAFT QUESTION

To ask the Prime Minister whether she can yet make a statement about the recent report by the Security Commission into security procedures and practices in the public service; and whether the Commission's report will be published.



DRAFT ANSWER:

THE PRIME MINISTER

In my statement to the House on 26 March I announced that, after consultation with the Rt Hon Gentleman, the Leader of the Opposition, I had asked the Security Commission to conduct a review of security procedures and practices in the public service and to consider what changes, if any, were required.

The Commission has completed its task and submitted its report. I am most grateful to Lord Diplock and his colleagues, Lord Bridge of Harwich and Lord Allen of Abbeydale, for their thorough and painstaking work. After careful consideration, I have concluded, albeit with some regret, that it would not be in the national interest to publish this report since substantial portions of it concern the most sensitive aspects of security procedures. By the same token an expurgated version of the report would give a misleading impression of it. I therefore propose to make as full a statement as possible and which is consistent with national security, about the Commission's findings. I am authorised to say that Lord Diplock and his colleagues are content with this course, and they believe it to be the right course to follow in the circumstances. Copies of the Statement will be available in the Vote Office tomorrow.

This is the first comprehensive review of security procedures which has taken place since the Report of the Committee on Security Procedures in the Public Service, known as the Radcliffe Report, was published in April 1962. Like Radcliffe, the Commission has taken "security" in their terms of reference to mean the safeguarding of such information in the possession of the Government as would by its unauthorised disclosure cause injury to the interests of the country. Their report does not cover the protection of government buildings or their contents or vital installations against sabotage or terrorist attack, although it does cover physical precautions for denying access to classified information by unauthorised persons.

The Report is generally reassuring. Subject to the Commission's views about the need for an urgent evaluation of the risks involved in electronic information processing and the means of countering them, Lord Diplock and his colleagues conclude that the security procedures,



they have been applied since Radcliffe and considerably modified and updated since, have worked well and can be relied upon to prevent infiltration of any of those bodies dealing with particularly sensitive security issues of the kind which took place in the 1930s and 1940s. Nevertheless they make a number of recommendations which the Government accepts (subject in a few instances to further necessary inquiries) and will implement as soon as possible.





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18 May 1982

Dear ~~MICRE~~, *MAP*.

SECURITY COMMISSION REPORT

As arranged with Teresa Rolleston, I enclose 7 advance copies of the White Paper on the Security Commission Report. This includes the four copies to be laid in the House, which our Parliamentary Clerk will collect from the Prime Minister's room in the House on Thursday afternoon, & the copy the Prime Minister has agreed to send to the leader of the Opposition tomorrow. The copies required by your Press Office will, as agreed, be delivered to Mike Faule's around noon on Thursday. Although no formal Final Confidential Revises have been produced, all advance copies should, of course, be treated as confidential until publication at 3.30pm on Thursday.

Yours sincerely

Sally Sutton  
CRS Division