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PRIME MINISTER

BROADCASTING BILL: QUALITY: BILATERAL WITH THE HOME SECRETARY

You are seeing the Home Secretary tomorrow afternoon to discuss the proposals in his minute (flag A) for various concessions on "quality" in the handling of the Broadcasting Bill.

You decided at the weekend that you would not invite Ministers from other Departments to the meeting (and as you will recall Mr. Mellor is not coming). But, as requested, notes are now available from Mr. Ridley (flag B) and the Chief Secretary (flag C). Both these interventions support your doubts about the Home Secretary's proposals.

You may also want to have to hand the earlier note from Brian Griffiths (flag D) - whose views are very close to those of the DTI - and your own notes on the Home Secretary's paper when you first saw it (flag E).

Handling

I have alerted the Home Secretary's office to your doubts about his proposals, although I have not at this stage recorded them in any detail. You may want to give him an initial chance to set out his assessment of the Parliamentary difficulties. The discussion will then need to focus on whether these Parliamentary concerns merit any weight as against the objections in principle to the sort of concessions proposed.

You will need to consider the next steps in the light of tomorrow's discussion:

- (i) If you can reach an agreement with the Home Secretary, you may want me simply to minute out the position reached and dispense with any wider meeting of colleagues on the "quality" issues (although a separate meeting probably will be needed at some point on the issue of cross-ownership restrictions to which Mr. Ridley's letter also refers).

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(ii) Alternatively, if you and the Home Secretary are unable to reach an agreement, you may want to convene a wider meeting, either:

- MISC 128; or
- an ad hoc group comprising the Home Secretary, and Messrs. Ridley and Lamont.

Other issues

If time permits you may want to take the Home Secretary's mind on the handling of various issues relating to Family Policy. The Policy Unit (flag F) have prepared a note suggesting that you should convene a Ministerial group on family policy, which would bring together a whole range of issues, and focus on the run up to the next Manifesto as well as more immediate decisions.

You will want to consider whether you judge the time is right for such an initiative. The coverage suggested by the Policy Unit would include the issue of child benefit/child tax allowances which we have already tentatively arranged that you would discuss with the Chancellor and Tony Newton after the Budget.

On the handling of the proposed Ministerial group the Policy Unit suggest that, in your absence, it should be the Home Secretary rather than the Lord President who should deputise.

*Rec.*

PAUL GRAY

5 March 1990

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