

SPEAKING NOTE FOR THE LOBBY: FRIDAY, 2 DECEMBER

The Prime Minister has asked Lord Whitelaw to take responsibility for co-ordinating the presentation of Government policy in addition to his duties as Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Lords.

Because of the importance she attaches to the public explanation of Government policies and measures, she has asked her most senior colleague - her deputy Lord Whitelaw - to take on this responsibility.

If asked

Q. Does this mean that Mr. Biffen is being sacked?

No.

A. It is simply a matter of involving her most senior colleague. Mr. Biffen will continue to hold the Thursday lobby. He welcomed the plan for Lord Whitelaw to concern himself with presentation.

Q. Will Lord Whitelaw acquire any additional staff?

A. No. He will be serviced by the No.10 Press Office.

R. E. R. BUTLER

1 December, 1983

PRIME MINISTER

LORD WHITELAW

I suggest that

- (a) you refrain from informing the Cabinet tomorrow of the move; and
- (b) I announce your decision at the Friday morning Lobby in the following unattributable terms:

MR. INGHAM

SPEAKING NOTE FOR THE LOBBY: FRIDAY 2 DECEMBER

"The Prime Minister has asked Lord Whitelaw to take responsibility for co-ordinating the presentation of Government policy in addition to his duties as Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Lords.

~~Her decision to ask Lord Whitelaw, her deputy, to concern himself with the presentation of Government policy reflects her concern to improve the public explanation of Government policies and measures, she has asked her most senior colleague - her deputy Lord Whitelaw - to take on this responsibility.~~  
Because of the importance she attaches to

If asked

Q. Does this mean that Mr Biffen is being sacked?

It is simply a matter of involving her most senior colleague. A. No. Mr Biffen, will, continue to hold the ~~Saturday~~ Thursday hobby while technically responsible for co-ordinating presentation, has not found it possible to take a close interest in the subject because of his heavy responsibilities as Leader of the House of Commons. He welcomed the plan for Lord Whitelaw to concern himself with presentation.

Q. Will Lord Whitelaw acquire any additional staff?

A. No. He will be serviced by the No 10 Press Office.

J Wallace

MP

BERNARD INGHAM

# LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 11 am date: 2, 12, 83

DF  
2/12

We told the Lobby that the PM would make a statement on her return from Athens.

## LORD WHITELOW

We told the Lobby that the Prime Minister has asked Lord Whitelaw to take responsibility for co-ordinating the presentation of Government policy in addition to his duties as Lord President and Leader of the House of Lords. Because of the importance she attached to the public explanation of Government policies and measures she has asked her most senior colleague and Deputy to take on this responsibility. We confirmed that the Lord Privy Seal will continue to take the Thursday Lobby on Business. We confirmed that the new role for Lord Whitelaw would have no staffing implications. The No 10 Press Secretary expected to see Lord Whitelaw regularly. The Lobby asked why the change was being made and whether there were any particular issues which had persuaded the Prime Minister to act. We denied that the move had anything to do with the Lord Privy Seal's views on Government economic policy or with recent criticism in the popular press from erstwhile supporters like Paul Johnson and Rupert Murdoch. We confirmed that the Lord Privy Seal had few regular meetings with senior information staff from Departments. We saw no reason why Lord Whitelaw would wish to meet regularly with senior information staff. We would expect that the main channel of communication would continue to be through the No 10 Press Secretary. We saw Lord Whitelaw's new role as more of a backroom job rather than as an up-front figure for the presentation of Government policy. We said that we understood that the Lord Privy Seal had greatly welcomed the idea of Lord Whitelaw taking on the responsibility.

We were asked when the Prime Minister had decided to make the change: we said it was before the CHOGM in Delhi. Asked about computer-based information systems in relation to the new functions, we said there were none but that we remained very much in favour of developing such a system which would undoubtedly speed up information transfer between Departments. We denied that Lord Whitelaw's new role was a deliberate attempt by the PM to bring him back into the limelight and we strenuously denied the suggestion that this was a public acknowledgement that things were not going well in a presentational sense for the Government. We were asked about various issues on which there had been presentational problems over the past few months - Heath Service cuts; the Hanging Debate; MPs' Pay; Lawson cuts; the PM's eye; Cecil Parkinson; Grenada; and denied that there had been any miscalculation in the way they had been handled. Indeed we suggested that MPs' pay was handled remarkably well and, with the benefit of hindsight, the Lawson cuts could be seen to have been very well timed. On Grenada we felt that the PM was being criticised because she had not acted in the manner in which Fleet Street thought she should. She had shown that she was not Mr Reagan's poodle. The mixed reaction in the Tory Party was no more than a reflection of concern which was widely expressed in other quarters. Asked whether Lord Whitelaw would be advising all Ministers on their TV and radio performances, we said that we expected Departments to continue to inform No 10.

## NGA

We said that the PM's reaction to the Shah photo had been very light-hearted. We said that we were glad to hear this morning's news that talks aimed at settling the dispute are to go on.

## ATHENS

We said that the PM would be returning late on Tuesday from the Europe Council meeting.