

O/C

Govt. info



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

21 December 1983

pa
Dms
22/12

M. Bowden.

Mr. Ingham

No, but I don't
know original
announcement

Has this already been
cleared with the PM?

J 23
12

Dear David,

Dms
22/12

PRESENTATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

Lord Diamond has tabled a Parliamentary Question for oral answer on 24 January asking the Lord President about his new responsibilities in connection with Government information.

I enclose for your information a copy of the Answer and notes for supplementaries which Bernard Ingham has prepared, and with which the Lord President is entirely content.

I am sending copies of this letter to David Heyhoe, David Beamish and Bernard Ingham.

Yours sincerely,
Janet.

JANET A LEWIS-JONES
Private Secretary

David Barclay Esq

QUESTION:

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will make a statement on the Lord President of the Council's responsibilities in connection with Government information.

DRAFT REPLY:

The Prime Minister has asked me to take responsibility for co-ordinating the presentation of Government policy in addition to my duties in this House. My aim is to support the already substantial co-ordination effort at official level. My work in this House has not been, and will not be, affected.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Q: Why has the Prime Minister asked you to take on the work?

A: Because of the importance she attaches to the public explanation of Government policies and measures, she feels that I, as her most senior colleague and deputy, should have the responsibility.

Q: Doesn't this show that the Government has got off to a bad start in its second Parliament?

A: No. The Government has got through an enormous amount of work since the election. This has involved a lot of hard, courageous decisions.

Q: Why couldn't the responsibility remain with the Leader of the Commons?

A: The Prime Minister thinks it would be more appropriate if I, as her most senior colleague and deputy, should be in the lead.

Q: So Mr Biffen was sacked?

A: No. He very much welcomed the idea that I should take responsibility for co-ordinating the presentation of Government policy.

Q: How can the Lord President be sure his duties here will not be affected?

A: Because I do not intend that they should be. And my early experience of the work has given me every cause for confidence that there will be no problem.

Q: And no conflict either?

A: I cannot see any possibility of a conflict arising.

Q: Will the Lord President acquire any additional staff?

A: No. I shall have the services and advice of the Prime Minister's Chief Press Secretary at No 10 who is responsible for co-ordinating the information effort at official level.

22 DEC 1983



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MR INGHAM

PRESENTATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

Lord Diamond has today tabled a Parliamentary Question for oral answer on the second Tuesday after the Christmas Recess. It is "to ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will make a statement on the Lord President of the Council's responsibilities in connection with Government information."

I would be grateful for your advice on how the Lord President might reply. He will wish to make it clear that his new responsibilities will in no way detract from his work as Leader of the House of Lords. He explained that privately to Lord Cledwyn last week; I suppose Lord Diamond may be aiming on behalf of the Alliance parties to secure a similar assurance.

I am sending a copy of this to Tim Flesher.

Janet Lewis-Jones

JANET A LEWIS-JONES

Privy Council Office
7 December 1983