

PRIME MINISTER

ELECTION CONTINGENCY PLANS

This note reminds you of some things which would have to be done if you were to have an election on 23 June.

Dissolution Audience

Subject to the Chief Whip's advice about the time needed to complete essential Parliamentary business, I assume that an announcement would have to be made on about Tuesday 24 May and that the House would be dissolved on Wednesday 1 June. The most convenient time to make the request to The Queen for dissolution would be at the Audience on Tuesday 17 May - The Queen is due to be abroad from 21 to 28 May.

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Election Cabinet

On the assumption that you want to tell the Cabinet formally, the best course will probably be to call a special meeting just before the announcement. The convening of the Cabinet on a day other than Thursday is, of course, a signal to the world that the announcement is coming but, provided that it happens only ^{just} before the announcement, this probably does not matter. An alternative would be to tell the Cabinet your intentions at the normal meeting on the previous Thursday, 19 May, but it would certainly leak and so I have assumed that this course is ruled out.

Notice to the Opposition parties

The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party are normally told by a letter from you two or three hours before announcement. Advance notice to the Speaker and the leaders of the minor parties is normally conveyed by the Chief

- 2 -

Whip.

Advance notice to others

In past elections, advance notice has been given to the President of the United States on account of your joint nuclear responsibilities (although this is not really necessary since announcement of the Election makes no sudden change in your responsibilities as Prime Minister). You will probably want to maintain the tradition.

On some past occasions the Chancellor has been authorised to give advance notice to the Governor of the Bank in case the announcement affects sterling. It would be as well to do this.

Other matters to be decided

The Press Notice from No 10 usually gives the date on which Parliament will meet again and of the State Opening. I gather that the Chief Whip has in mind this time that the new House would meet for electing the Speaker and swearing in Members at the beginning of July and that the State Opening would be in October: the date of the latter will need to be negotiated with the Palace.

It will also need to be decided whether the House should be prorogued before being dissolved. In recent years there has been no prorogation in order to avoid the need for a pro-rogation speech.

Things which I need to do

If your discussions over the weekend point to a June Election, may I please have your authority for two pieces of consultation which have been carried out on previous occasions on a strictly confidential basis:-

- i) with First Parliamentary Counsel to establish that nothing has been overlooked in working out the timetable between Dissolution and Polling Day required by the Representation of the People Acts;

- 3 -

ii) with the Clerk of the Privy Council and with the Crown Office that they can carry out the arrangements for the printing of proclamations and writs within the timetable you have in mind.

May I go ahead with these ?

6 May 1983

6/5/83