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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Access of the Leaders of the Opposition Parties to the
Head of the Civil Service

The Prime Minister instructed me to tell the Leader of the Opposition and the Leaders of the Alliance that if they wished, during the General Election period, to talk to the Head of the Civil Service on a contingency basis on questions (particularly of structure and machinery of Government) which they would wish to raise if they were to form the next Government, she was agreeable to their doing so.

I have conveyed this message to the Offices of Mr. Foot, Mr. Steel and Mr. Jenkins and have suggested that if they wished to take advantage of the Prime Minister's offer they should approach your office. I have also said that, if there is any matter on which I can help, I am at their service.

I see that in 1979 my predecessor circulated a note on the attached lines to Permanent Secretaries. Would you like me to circulate a note on these lines, referring to the Leaders of the Alliance as well as to the Leader of the Opposition?

E.E.R. BUTLER

9 May 1983



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

11 May, 1983

MEETINGS BETWEEN THE OPPOSITION AND SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS
IN A PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD

As you know, Governments of both Parties have allowed some contact between senior civil servants and Opposition leaders in the period of a run-up to a General Election. In practice this has been interpreted as after an election has been called or within six months of the end of a Parliament, whichever is the earlier.

One main purpose of such contacts is if the Opposition wish to inform themselves on factual questions of departmental organisation and structure or to keep senior civil servants abreast of organisational changes which might be contemplated. Equally, discussion of policies which the Opposition might wish to introduce immediately is permissible: but clearly there should be no discussion of the Government-of-the-day's policies. Thus the objective is to enable the Opposition to let senior civil servants have some idea of their plans so as to enable any early changes to be made as smoothly as possible if the election results in a change of government.

In the nature of things the number of people concerned in such matters, both within the Opposition itself and within the Civil Service, is extremely limited. The initiative for arranging such contacts lies with the leaders of the Opposition parties to approach the Prime Minister on the general issue either directly or through your office. The Prime Minister has sent a message through me to the Leader of the Opposition and the Leaders of the Alliance parties that they are welcome to make such an approach if they wish. Thereafter "Shadow" Ministers should approach Permanent Secretaries only with the knowledge of the Leaders of their parties.

E. E. R. BUTLER

Sir Robert Armstrong, GCB CVO

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