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PRIME MINISTER

I have been reflecting further on how we might reply to the letter of 17 April from Mr Ian McColl of Guy's Hospital about the failings of the NHS. You saw this letter last week.

Clearly we can hardly send the letter to DHSS for advice. And the news which Brian Griffiths gave you this morning about relevant developments is a further complication. David Willetts' note suggests two possible ways forward. There may be possibilities here but they would need most careful handling vis-à-vis Mr Fowler.

We need to make progress in this whole area. But I do not think that we can delay a reply to Mr McColl's letter (which we have of course acknowledged) until then. So I suggest that you write to Mr McColl in the terms of the draft attached.

N.L.W.

N.L. Wicks29 April 1986

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PRIME MINISTER

I wonder whether you don't go a little bit too far in your letter to Professor McColl below. The underlining of "in this letter" and the sentence "I am considering how best to take matters forward" would, I think, be interpreted as a strong hint that you were planning to follow up Professor McColl's suggestion that Victor Paige should be sacked and Roy Griffiths appointed in his place. If the latter got out, we would have problems, not only with Mr. Paige, but with Mr. Fowler as well! None of this of course is to argue that Victor Paige should not be replaced.

I therefore attach another copy of the draft. You might want to manuscript in after the first sentence "I found it most interesting and stimulating".

N.L. WICKS

30 April 1986

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