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10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Private Secretary

Prime Minister

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You should be
aware of this.
C.D.P.

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

I attach a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister from the Leader of the Opposition about Mr. Tam Dalyell's question in the House this afternoon about Westland. As you will see, Mr. Kinnock asks the Prime Minister to give an assurance that neither I nor Mr. Ingham nor anyone else told her about Leon Brittan's role in the matter of the disclosure of the Solicitor General's letter during the Westland affair until the enquiry had reported.

There are two pieces of background. First the speech which Mr. Dalyell made in the House yesterday (Hansard, 28 October, Cols. 377-382), supplemented by the fuller speech which he is apparently intending to make at Oxford of which I have already sent you a copy. In the latter he claims to have new evidence from former Ministers to the effect that I orchestrated the leak of the Solicitor General's letter, keeping the Prime Minister fully informed at each stage. He does not say what the evidence is - indeed there cannot be any - but claims that such material that he has is in a bank vault.

The second piece of background concerns the handling of the matter in the House this afternoon. We were warned in advance that Mr. Dalyell was going to make a demonstration which would take up the whole of Prime Minister's Questions. In the event he did not do so. But once he had asked his question and the Prime Minister had answered, he lent forward and said something to Mr. Kinnock who nodded. It is fairly clear that Mr. Kinnock got Mr. Dalyell to abstain from making a demonstration with a promise to write subsequently to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister's basic answer on the point covered in Mr. Kinnock's letter is given in Hansard for 27 January 1986, Col. 657: "I did not know about the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's own role in the matter of the disclosure until the enquiry had reported". That reply stands.

My own inclination would be to send a very short and sharp reply, as quickly as possible, to the effect that the Prime Minister has absolutely nothing to add to the replies which she has already given in the House. I doubt that Mr. Kinnock - unlike Mr. Dalyell - will wish to pursue the matter further.

C.D. POWELL

29 October 1987