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Ref. A09136

PRIME MINISTER

Labour Party Discussion Document on the Security Services

--- I attach a short article reporting the conclusions of a Discussion Document on the Security Services, prepared by a Study Group of the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC), which appeared in "The Labour Weekly" dated 25 June. We have since had unofficial access to the full Discussion Document and it is clear that the article accurately describes the report and its conclusions. The document has not yet been published; we understand that the NEC fully intend to publish it but no date has been fixed.

2. The Discussion Document includes a comprehensive description of what the Group has been able to piece together about each of the institutions concerned with security and intelligence. It acknowledges that much of the basis of the Study is provided by the recent Bills sponsored by Labour MPs such as Robin Cook (Security Services), Bob Cryer (Interception of Communications) and Frank Hooley (Freedom of Information), together with the written works of journalists such as Duncan Campbell. Much of the substance of the Report is based on misunderstandings about the security and intelligence machinery and there are a number of factual inaccuracies.

3. Many of the misconceptions and inaccuracies occur in the section concerned with the organisation and function of each of the institutions responsible for Security and Intelligence; for example the Cabinet Office and/or the "Co-ordinator of Security and Intelligence" are described as being "in control" of the Security Service, SIS, DIS and GCHQ; the Director GCHQ is described as being "nominally responsible to the Foreign Office but is in fact at least equally responsible to the Cabinet Office and American control".

4. The publication of this document will no doubt lead to further comment and questions about the security and intelligence services.

5. I am copying this minute and the annex to the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Defence.

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

27 July 1982

## The Security Services

The next Labour government will ensure through a series of measures that our Security Services become accountable to democratic institutions. There is a need to strike a balance between the undoubted security requirements of a country and its individual and collective rights. In the absence of a clear framework of duties, the Security Services have drifted into practices which undermine the very freedoms they are supposed to defend. Arising out of a consultative paper and a National Executive Committee Study, we will shortly publish a Discussion Document on the Security Services. This suggests lines of action for the next Labour government which will bring the Security Services within a constitutional framework. We set out below the basic outlines of our approach.

We believe that Labour should, for the first time, legally establish the Security Services through an Act of Parliament which will have to be renewed annually.

This Security Act could:

- define powers and terms under which the Security Services operate and provide comprehensive definitions of presently ambiguous terms such as 'subversion';
- in the context of our determination to introduce a Freedom of Information Act, replace the all embracing and outdated espionage sections of the Official Secrets Act with provisions which relate strictly to wilful espionage;
- ensure that an annual Security Services Report is compiled by the relevant ministers and debated by parliament;
- abolish 'D' notices which act as devices for unofficial censorship.

Parliamentary accountability, which in reality is almost non-existent, must also be extended by a further series of measures. Among the proposals to be included in the Discussion Document are the following:

- the establishment of a Parliamentary Select Committee on Security Services whose comments would accompany the Annual Report to Parliament and which would oversee the issue of interception warrants;
- extending the rights of MPs to receive answers to parliamentary questions relating to the Security Services which presently are blocked;
- bringing security services expenditure, like the expenditure of all other public services, under scrutiny by clarifying the public accounts available to parliament.

The rights of the individual citizen will be reinforced by our commitments to the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act mentioned earlier. The Labour party will control the interception of mail and telephone tapping. We are therefore considering the introduction of an Interception of Communications Act. This would permit only in certain clearly defined circumstances, and regulate both the issuing of warrants and the informing of those who have been under surveillance.

Equally as important as national accountability will be the local accountability of the Security Services. This particularly applies to the activities of the Special Branch. We believe that Special Branch officers like all other police ranks should be enabled to join the trade union of their choice. We would suggest that the Special Branch sections of chief constables' annual reports which are at present optional should become mandatory so that local Police Authorities are fully aware of the local security presence. Such mandatory reports could then be collated by the Home Secretary to give a national picture of the strength and scope of the Special Branch.

Apart from regaining control of the public sector security services, we believe that proper regulation of the private sector is also essential. Hence the next Labour government must seriously consider establishing a Private Security Registration Council to oversee and licence private security companies.

It is our belief that only by establishing clear lines of accountability will those who are charged with the difficult and sensitive task of protecting our freedom be able to enjoy greater public acceptance and respect than is now the case.

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*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

LABOUR PARTY DISCUSSION  
DOCUMENT ON THE SECURITY SERVICES

The Prime Minister has seen and noted your minute A09136 of 27 July 1982 about the Discussion Document on the Security Services which has been prepared by a Study Group of the Labour Party National Executive Committee. She is grateful for this early warning.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mr Halliday (Home Office), Mr Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), and Mr Omand (Ministry of Defence).

JAW.

28 July 1982

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