

Ref. A082/0430

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MR BUTLER

As you probably know, Sir John Hoskyns gave an interview to David Dimbleby, which was broadcast on BBC 1 late yesterday evening. In the course of the interview, Sir John Hoskyns suggested (at Mr Dimbleby's prompting) that, if he was asked to choose one single reform, it would be that all top civil servants over 50 should be dismissed, with generous compensation, and there should be a fresh start with the next lot down.

No

2. I detect a slight disposition to wonder whether Sir John Hoskyns was in some sense reflecting the views of the Prime Minister, given the fact that until early this year he was one of her advisers. If the Prime Minister were to be asked about this in the course of her Questions tomorrow, I think that it would be very useful if she could make it clear that what Sir John Hoskyns said in no way represented her views, and that she had no plans for a wholesale purge of top civil servants over 50.

3. She could go on to say that we are on course for the reduction of the Civil Service from 730,000 to 630,000 by 1 April 1984; that the reduction is going forward at the top of the Service in the same proportion as lower down; and that a great deal is being done to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Civil Service as described in the Government's reply on this subject to the Select Committee on the Treasury and the Civil Service, published in September.

R. H. H. H.
Approved by
ROBERT ARMSTRONG
and signed in his absence.

8 December 1982



Civil Service Hll

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Thank you for your minute of 8 December (A082/0430), which I showed to the Prime Minister, about the interview given by Sir John Hoskyns to David Dimbleby. The Prime Minister does not share the views expressed by Sir John Hoskyns in this interview and would have been ready to say this in the House of Commons today if the question had been asked. The point did not come up, but she has let it be known through the Press Secretary that Sir John Hoskyns's views are not hers.

FERRIS

9 December 1982