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10 DOWNING STREET

cc: Mr. Ingham
Mr. Powell
Mr. Fletcher.

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

THE REPORTS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE ON WESTLAND

Further to my minute of earlier today, I enclose a revised draft of the oral reply which was attached to my minute. This reflects the Prime Minister's own comments.

I am copying this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President, Lord Privy Seal, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Chief Whip and to the Legal Secretary to the Attorney General.

N.L.W.

N. L. Wicks

23 July 1986

(REVISED VERSION)

ORAL ANSWER

Question: Will my Rt. Hon. Friend say whether she has any comment on the reports of the Select Committee on Defence published this morning?

Reply: The Government would, of course, respond to these reports in due course. Since they make criticisms of a number of individuals, however, I should like to make two points straight away.

First, the House will already be aware that those responsible for discipline in the Civil Service - not I - have decided that there are no grounds for disciplinary action in this matter. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I have total confidence in our officials referred to in the Report.

Second, I do not agree with the Committee's comments on the role of the Head of the Home Civil Service. He too has the Government's complete confidence.



SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

1. Thank you for your minute of 21 July enclosing a draft of a statement reacting to the Select Committee's Reports on the Westland affair.
2. I think it important that the statement should make it clear that at the time the inquiry was instituted I did not know that the disclosure had been made by Ms Bowe, nor did I know of any authorisation given to her.
3. I am attaching a re-draft of the first part of your paragraph 3, which attempts to make this point and which omits the complaint about the Select Committee's failure to observe the requirements of natural justice. On reflection, I feel that this might be a hostage to fortune and seems to accept that I might, in some way, be to blame.
4. I have no comments on the other parts of your draft.
5. I am copying this minute to the Lord President of the Council, the Lord Privy Seal, the Chief Whip and Mr Wicks.

MH
/

22 July 1986

DRAFT/

3. I should make it absolutely clear first that my Rt.Hon. and Learned Friend the Attorney General did not, at the time when the inquiry was set up on 13 January, know that the disclosure had been made by the official concerned or that it had been authorised by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or at all. Secondly, when my Rt.Hon. and Learned Friend the Attorney General later granted immunity to the official concerned, he was satisfied, by what the Head of the Civil Service was able to tell him, that there was reason to believe that the disclosure had been made by the official concerned and that there was no reason to doubt that that official had acted in complete good faith. But neither he nor the Head of the Home Civil Service knew that the disclosure had been authorised by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.