

*File*  
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*BM*

MR. INGHAM

WESTLAND - IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

We discussed this afternoon your minute of today which sets out your proposed line at the 11 a.m. lobby tomorrow. On the basis of the discussion, I suggest that your response should be as follows:

You could use paragraph 1 and the first sentence of paragraph 2 of your minute. But I would not say that the Prime Minister might give an "initial reaction" during Question Time. This might build up expectations undesirably.

On paragraphs 3 and 4 you should not draw attention to the Written Question down to the Attorney General (there will not be a Written Question down to the Prime Minister).

The point in paragraph 5 is fine.

Though the TCSC report might be mentioned in passing, you should be wary of putting too much weight on the point in paragraph 6, since this might suggest to some that you had advance copy of the Report (which is the case).

Paragraph 7 will not arise since you will not be trailing the Prime Minister's reply in the afternoon.

I think you can certainly use paragraphs 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13.

Paragraph 10 falls since you will not be trailing the Attorney General's Question. If asked about it, I suggest that you say "We'll have to wait and see what he says".

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If any of this gives you any difficulty, please have a word.

NLW

23 July, 1986.

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*Prime Minister*

*This looks* CONFIDENTIAL

MR WICKS

*fine, except §§ 3 and 4.*

cc: Chief Whip  
Sir Robert Armstrong  
Sir Brian Hayes  
Attorney General's Office

*N.L.W*

*23.7*

WESTLAND - IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

This note sets out the line which, subject to agreement, and checking of the facts, I propose to take at the 11am Lobby tomorrow:

1. The Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet are not aware of the contents of the report since Cabinet began at 10.30 before publication (and receipt, by those named in the report, of advance copies).
2. Obviously officials will be reading the report and preparing briefing for the Prime Minister when she is in the House for Questions this afternoon. She would hope to give an initial reaction then; this is all that the time factor allows.
3. There are also two Written Questions down - one to the Prime Minister and the other to the Attorney General - and it is hoped the Prime Minister and the Attorney General will be able to set out briefly in writing their initial reaction to points some time after 3.30pm.
4. I would not expect either Written Answer to go much beyond what the Prime Minister would be prepared to say, if asked, at 3.15pm; after all the Government will want to give the two reports of the Defence Select Committee careful consideration.

*Best not to trail the PQs, I think.*

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2.

5. The Government will of course reply formally to the reports in due course - ie in a few months' time.
6. In the meantime, I should draw attention to the Government's response to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report published at 11am which in particular deals with the combined post of Head of the Civil Service and Cabinet Secretary (paras 41-42).

In answer to questions, I would make the following points:

7. Why is the Prime Minister prepared to answer questions so quickly?

I think she will wish to answer a number of points immediately since the report refers to particular individuals.

8. Is your or any other official's job in danger?

May I remind you that there have of course been previous expressions of confidence in the officials concerned. I have no reason to believe you will see any change of personnel.

9. Has any official offered to resign?

Not that I'm aware of.

10. Will the Attorney General's Answer deal with the suggestion he knew who had authorised the leak when he offered immunity?

It could well do so.

11. Will any Minister be giving interviews on the report?

No.

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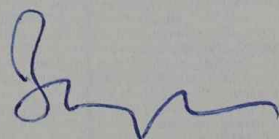
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3.

12. Doesn't this report come as a further blow to the Government?

My clear impression is that outside the Palace of Wesminster the public were massively bored by the whole esoteric Westland affair as long ago as last January and perhaps even before that - as I believe I told you then.

13. In answer to all other questions - eg how does Prime Minister/Ministers/Officials/you feel about the report? How can you stay in your job etc, I shall offer no comment.



BERNARD INGHAM

23 July 1986

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