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MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

PRIME MINISTER

29 September 1986

DEFENCE COMMITTEE: WESTLAND PLC

at Nap.
Sir Robert Armstrong sent me copies of his minutes to you of 19, 23 and 25 September enclosing drafts of the replies to the Defence Committee's Reports on Westland. *on file.*

in mtg folders

2. Although most of the responses are concerned with specific matters relating to the Westland affair, pages 15 to 18 of the reply to the Fourth Report deal with some important issues that are of wider relevance to the management of the Civil Service. I was very concerned earlier this year that the approach of certain Select Committees, in wanting to summon and question individual civil servants on matters that were more properly for Ministers to answer, could be damaging to the whole basis on which we ask officials to give evidence to Select Committees. I therefore strongly welcome the restatement in this reply of the principle of Ministerial accountability, reinforcing what we said in the reply to the Seventh Report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee.

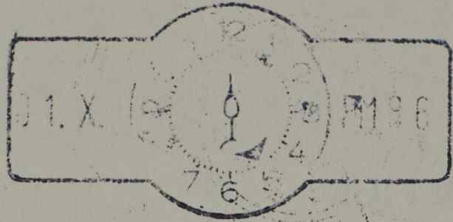
3. The proposition (in paragraph 45 of the draft) that civil servants should be instructed not to answer a Select Committee's questions directed at the conduct of named individual civil servants may not be welcome to the Committee, but it is a step that I support. If we are to expect civil servants to give evidence to Committees on behalf of their Ministers and subject to the constraints that that properly implies, we must be seen to be matching that by giving them the proper protection which can only be given by a Minister.

4. I am copying this minute to Sir Robert Armstrong and to copy recipients of his minute.

RICHARD LUCE

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AEROSPACE : Westlands Pt 6



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