

cc: Mr Wicks
Miss Christopherson, DHSS



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Press Secretary

LORD PRESIDENT

AIDS COMMITTEE

I promised you a note on H(A) over which you are to preside. This is because, unusually, a Cabinet sub-committee presents a public relations problem because of its known existence.

Both DHSS and No 10 - and presumably other Departments - have a stream of inquiries about the Committee and this will intensify early next week both in advance and after your first meeting. The media are mildly hysterical about the matter and it is important that the Government gets this under control at the outset. Consequently, you may care to raise at your first meeting the points made below in the form of a speaking note.

Points to Make

Understandably, since the establishment of this Committee has become public knowledge, there is very great media interest in this first meeting, as there will be in subsequent meetings if the media find out when they are being held.

In one sense this media interest is helpful, since public awareness and education are crucial. But I think the level of this interest requires us to consider today how we are to handle the media.

Could I make one thing clear at the outset? I regard myself as chairman-coordinator and in no sense in the lead on the subject. The issue is primarily one for DHSS and the Scottish Office and I would expect Ministers who are in the lead not merely to make announcements which flow from our work, but also to handle the media.

Unusually, I would see some advantage in letting it be known the strength and weight of this Committee and therefore if you agree I would not object to its membership being made known unattributably.

However, having done that, I think we need to make several other things clear through guidance offered by No 10 Press Office and those of our Departments after this meeting.

1. The first meeting of this group does not signal the start of the Government's attack on the AIDS problem; that started many months ago. This first meeting represents a more formal

coordinated approach to the most serious health problem to arise for many years.

2. Action following from its work will be announced by the appropriate Minister, generally through Parliament.
3. Meetings of the group will be held regularly but guidance will not generally be given on its work after them; decisions, as indicated, will be announced by the responsible Ministers as and when appropriate.
4. The machinery for dealing with the AIDS issue is similar to that adopted in the past to cope with very serious and urgent problems confronting the nation. The Government is proceeding to tackle it in a necessary manner which is well tried and which has long served the nation well.

If this line is acceptable, it would be helpful to be able to deploy it immediately after Tuesday's meeting.

S...

BERNARD INGHAM
7 November 1986



file

JA 59

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

H(A) COMMITTEE

The Lord President has asked Bernard Ingham for his advice on the response which should be made to press inquiries about the work of H(A) Committee. You should be aware of Bernard's advice, set out in his minute attached, especially what he says should be said publicly about the existence of the Committee.

You will no doubt let the Lord President's Office and Bernard Ingham have any comments before Tuesday's meeting of the Committee.

I am sending a copy of this minute to Joan MacNaughton (Lord President's Office), Bernard Ingham, and to Romola Christopherson (Department of Health and Social Security).

N.L.W.

N. L. WICKS

7 November 1986

CF file pl.

cc Mr Ingham



Ref. A086/3180

MR ADDISON

Cabinet Committee on AIDS

Please find attached an attributable public line to take on the Cabinet Committee on AIDS which has been agreed with the Department of Health and Social Security following our discussion yesterday. I am copying this minute to the Private Secretaries to members of H(A) (O).

T A WOOLLEY

Private Secretary to
Sir Robert Armstrong

5 November 1986



new

Cabinet Committee (defensive)

X
The threat of AIDS requires a determined and co-ordinated response by Government. We have, of course, ensured that the appropriate machinery is available within Government to enable this effort to be fully co-ordinated among the Departments concerned.



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

AIDS

BP
The first meeting of the new Sub-Committee of H is due to meet on 10 November. We should be able to show you papers next week covering a number of proposals including the leaflet campaign.

ms

PPB

(P. A. BEARPARK)

31 October 1986



✓

CCBG

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

11 November 1986

Dear Bernard,

The Lord President was very grateful for your note on how to deal with press enquiries about the work of H(A) Committee.

As I explained when we spoke last night, the Lord President is generally content with the approach you propose. He has however asked me to stress that he fully supports the proposition that DHSS and the Scottish Office should be in the lead in dealing with enquiries as they are, of course, on the substantive policy. The Lord President himself has made it clear that he is not prepared to give interviews. Generally he would prefer as little as possible to be said publicly about his own role and the work of the Committee. The Lord President would not personally object to your giving unattributable guidance on the membership of the Committee, since much of it seems to be known to the Press already, although in normal circumstances he would much prefer to adhere to the tradition of not briefing on the constitution of Cabinet Committees.

I also mentioned that the Lord President would not like the media to form any expectation that briefing or announcements will follow individual meetings of the Committee, the timing of which should remain confidential. For the present, the line should be that announcements can be expected shortly; but no indication should be given either of likely substance or timing.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Nigel Wicks, to the Private Secretaries to the Secretaries of State for Social Services and Scotland (together with your note), and Sir Robert Armstrong, and to Miss Christopherson in the DHSS.

Yours sincerely
Joan

JOAN MACNAUGHTON
Private Secretary

Bernard Ingham Esq

Mr Beaumont



Mr Wicks

70 WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AS

01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref. A086/3218

MISS MACNAUGHTON

H(A) Committee

I have seen Mr Wicks's minute of 7 November and Mr Ingham's minute of the same date to the Lord President, on the response which should be made to press enquiries about the work of the H(A) Committee.

2. I agree generally with Mr Ingham's minute of 7 November, save on one point: I am sure that it would be better not to make the membership of the Committee known, even unattributably. To do so would lead other Ministers to want to be present or to be represented; and might make it more difficult to operate with substitutes, where it was necessary to do so.

3. I think that we should discourage the press from thinking that the first meeting of the Lord President's Committee is expected to be a major decision-taking meeting. It is likely to be more in the nature of a meeting to take stock of the situation, put work in hand, and lay down timetables and so on.

4. Clearly the Lord President's meeting tomorrow will need to consider, before it breaks, what line is to be taken with the press and who is to be the spokesman for it.

5. I am sending copies of this minute to Mr Wicks, Mr Ingham and Miss Christopherson.

RA

10 November 1986

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