

**SUBJECT**

*Clarke*



10 DOWNING STREET

cc Cabinet

AG

Chs

Co

Bernard Ingham

cc. Pallant: PMS Questions -  
H/c: July 79

From the Principal Private Secretary

8 January 1982

RESTRICTED

*Dear Private Secretary,*

The Prime Minister is anxious to improve the presentation of the Government's policies. I am therefore writing, on her instructions, to suggest some practical ways in which this might be achieved.

The Prime Minister and the Lord President both like to have the opportunity personally to comment on Parliamentary statements and particularly important Answers. But to do this they need time, and Departments should accordingly aim to get drafts to the No 10 Private and Press Offices and to the Lord President's Office early on the morning of the day before the announcement.

Second, Departments should ensure that when draft statements and Answers are sent to No 10 and the Lord President they are accompanied by background notes which identify the likely points of attack and suggest how those attacks can best be met. It is essential that before any Department makes an announcement, the lines of attack should have been anticipated and a means of securing the most positive presentation should have been devised.

Third - and at a more routine level -, Departments should as a matter of course identify issues which are likely to give rise to problems with the media and should ensure that their Press Offices and the No 10 Press Office are put in the best position to meet the problems and at the same time to exploit any opportunities for presenting matters in a positive and favourable light. For maximum effect, guidance should reach the No 10 Press Office by 10.45 am and 3.45 pm each day. If No 10 learn about a departmental problem for the first time through a press inquiry, we are not best placed to handle it to the Government's advantage.

Finally, it goes without saying that Departments should pay particular attention to items of good news and should see that they are put over with vigour. The Prime Minister is herself ready to give publicity to items of good news, for example, at Question Time and in speeches. She also wants Departments to give her Press Office positive material it can draw on on a day-to-day basis. (I should, however, caution Departments about the practice of early

release of Written Answers. In the light of recent exchanges in the House, new guidance will be circulated shortly).

I should be grateful if you could ensure that the above points are borne constantly in mind in your Department. If there is one aspect of them I would single out for particular mention, it is the importance of giving departmental Press Offices and the No 10 Press Office as much notice of proposed announcements as possible: good presentation needs time for preparation.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to all members of the Cabinet, the Attorney General and the Chief Whip and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Alwi Whitman.*