

PRIME MINISTER

Leave it as it is.
But I thought the whole box 1
matter was subsumed in the previous
CABLE SYSTEMS *phrase which*
refers to the public interest

You had a query on the draft terms of reference proposed by the Home Secretary and Mr. Jenkin for the inquiry into the broadcasting policy issues involved in an expansion of cable systems. The draft is at A. You asked whether the phrase that suggests that the inquiry should take into account "the safeguarding of public service broadcasting" was really necessary.

I have spoken to the Home Secretary's Office about this. They feel this phrase is a crucial part of the terms of reference. The first paragraph of the terms of reference sets the Government's preferred framework for the inquiry, and the Home Office feel that it should contain some reference to the preservation of public service broadcasting.

The Home Office have been unable to consult the Home Secretary about this today. They will of course put to him your view that this phrase should not appear in the terms of reference. They will however suggest to him that a possible compromise would be to end the paragraph as follows:

"..... but in a way consistent with the wider public interest and the continued existence of public service broadcasting".

This would make it clear that the Government acknowledged that the continued existence of public service broadcasting was something that the inquiry should take into account, while avoiding any suggestion that the inquiry should safe-guard public service broadcasting. Would you be content with this wording?

/Sir Robert Armstrong

No
Sir Robert Armstrong has suggested that the first paragraph of the terms of reference go too far in committing the Government to facilitating the expansion of cable systems. He suggests that until a proper evaluation has been made, the Government cannot be committed to any of the policies recommended, and that the inquiry team should be asked to consider what the appropriate supervisory framework should be if the Government were to decide to facilitate the expansion of cable systems. This is a step backwards from the position adopted by the Home Secretary and Mr. Jenkin. Their terms of reference for the inquiry start from the position that the Government intends to facilitate cable systems, and that the question is "how", and not "whether". I think you will wish to stick with the wording suggested by Mr. Jenkin and Mr. Whitelaw. Agree?

WR

17 February 1982