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## 10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 February 1982

CABLE SYSTEMS AND BROADCASTING POLICY

The Prime Minister has seen the Home Secretary's minute of 9 February on this subject enclosing a draft memorandum by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Industry. The Prime Minister has also received the report on cable systems by the Information Technology Advisory Panel which was submitted to her by the Secretary of the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister shares the view of the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Industry on the importance of this subject and agrees that consideration of the issues involved should go forward as quickly as possible. She is therefore asking Sir Robert Armstrong to make arrangements for the publication of the IT Advisers' report and for official consideration under Cabinet Office chairmanship of the issues raised by the report to be put in hand prior to substantive consideration by Ministers later in the year.

The Prime Minister agrees that the joint memorandum by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Industry should be circulated as proposed to members of E Committee and any other Ministers whose interests it concerns. Since the issues are essentially procedural, she thinks that substantive discussion may not be necessary at this stage: the memorandum could invite comments in writing, and indicate that there will be an opportunity to confirm assent or to deal with any serious reservations when the Committee discuss in the near future the paper on direct broadcasting by satellite.

The Prime Minister is content with the Home Secretary's proposal for a small independent inquiry into the broadcasting policy aspects of an expansion of cable systems, but has commented that it is important that the inquiry should be completed by 1 October at the very latest. Its recommendations can then be taken fully into consideration by officials in submitting their conclusions on the wider issues involved soon afterwards.

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I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Secretary of State for Industry and Minister of State for Industry and Information Technology, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

W. F. S. RICKETT

John Halliday, Esq.,  
Home Office.