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Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

12 June 1979

PRIME MINISTER

I would rather discuss
matters with him and have heard of
+ if he is available — you probably
opinion because
he knows what
we do before you.

Dear Nick Are you content with these proposals —
which are as fast as can be achieved?

The question of a free vote to be decided
after Cabinet
on 20 June?

MJS
12/VI

You told me that the Prime Minister had asked for
the Chancellor of the Duchy's views on the
Parliamentary handling of the Boyle Report. The
Chancellor has now discussed the matter with the
Paymaster General <u>and the Chief Whip</u>. Their
unanimous view is that it would be best to try and
settle the whole matter as quickly as possible and
to this end they suggest the following timetable:

- Cabinet to consider on Wednesday 20 June.
  The Civil Service Department are preparing
  a paper which we hope will be ready by
  tomorrow night. We have assumed that the
  Chancellor will present this to Cabinet and
  he would be grateful for an opportunity to
  discuss the draft with the Prime Minister.

- Subject to Cabinet, the debate could take
  place on Monday 2 July. This would be
  opened by the Chancellor of the Duchy - who
  if necessary could also wind up.

- Immediately after Cabinet it would be help-
  ful if the Prime Minister saw the Leader of
  the Opposition to consult him about what the
  Government has in mind. A copy of the
  Report could be handed to him <u>at the meeting</u>
  and also published immediately thereafter.
  All three Ministers were strongly of the view
  that the Report should not be published until
  after the Cabinet had considered it.

He will want
it before

I think it
would be best
to wait
asking the
Opposition's
views.

There were
certain
agreements between
the last 2 chief
whips.

Cont/..

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- The Chancellor of the Duchy could see the leaders of other parties and also offer to meet with back-benchers. A convenient way of doing this would be to ask Mr Edward du Cann if he would suitably re-constitute the joint Conservative/Labour group which in the last Parliament, made a number of representations about Members' pay to the then Leader of the House. This approach would help channel the views of backbenchers and cut down on the number of individuals and miscellaneous groups of Members who might otherwise wish to make repres-entations - not of course that the Chancellor would wish to rule out such representations altogether.

Too soon.

- All the consultations would need to be completed quickly. If the debate is held on 2 July we should table the motions no later than Tuesday 26 June to give Members an opportunity to study them and to table amendments. A debate on the 2 July assumes that nothing emerges from the consultations to warrant further consideration by Cabinet.

Too soon.

If the Prime Minister agreed, it would be very helpful for Mr Jopling to have a private word with the Opposition Chief Whip towards the end of this week to let him know very broadly the sort of timetable the Government has in mind.

While there was no substantive discussion about the recomm-endations in the Report, all three Ministers considered that there was much to be said for sticking as closely as possible to the conclusions in it, ie to meet the recommend-ations in full subject to what was said about phasing. They believe that by so doing, the Government will be best placed to defend its position both in the House and more widely (hopefully this should also make the consultation process relatively straightforward).

The Chancellor and the Chief Whip believe that there is still much support in the House for a linkage between the pay of Members and a Civil Service grade and that this aspect needs to be fully considered and the Cabinet's conclusions on it carefully presented.

There was a brief discussion about whether there should be a free vote. This is a matter which could be considered nearer the time but all three Ministers saw advantage in allowing a free vote - except for all Ministers. Latterly, the previous Government has issued a two line whip for debates on Members' pay, but this was during the period when they operated a pay policy.

Yours ever
John Stevens

J W Stevens
Private Secretary

Nick Sanders Esq
Office of the Prime Minister