

NFA for
power

~~Talk / write Bi
Poor HW appointment~~

MR SHERBOURNE

SPEAKING NOTES

I promised you a note on this subject.

The history of speaking notes under this Government - other Governments having been keen on them - is that they:

- (i) flourished under Angus Maude when he was Minister with responsibility for presentation;
- (ii) decreased in frequency under Mr Pym and Mr Biffen to a point of virtual extinction; and
- (iii) were killed off as a co-ordinated effort by the withdrawal of circulation machinery by the Lord Privy Seal's office.

However latterly they have made a spontaneous comeback as Departments have come under fire and felt the need for allies in arguing their case. I have warmly welcomed and encouraged this development by:

- (a) making speaking notes a specific subject for my Chief Information Officers' meeting on Monday evening;
- (b) similarly indentifying it as an issue at the Prime Minister's media meetings; and
- (c) asking initiating Departments to be responsible themselves for circulating copies to members of the Cabinet, Parliamentary Private Secretaries and Chief Information Officers.

The fact remains that without the Prime Minister's co-operation or the central responsibility of an interested Minister like Angus Maude, their issue will be erratic and quality variable. We shall most certainly on occasions find we lack a speaking note when we manifestly need one.

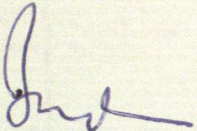
Meanwhile, the CCO systematically produces its own speaking notes which are of consistent quality but perhaps carry less clout than one issued specifically on Ministerial instructions. There is thus duplication.

You and I acting together might prevent that but I doubt whether we have the resources to do so and, for example, vet and approve Departmental texts.

Are we content to persevere with the present system, which shows signs of spontaneous revival, eliminating duplication where possible?

Or should we aim for a much more systematic Governmental effort, with Ministers responsible for quality control?

You may care to discuss?



B. INGHAM

3 November 1983