



10 DOWNING STREET
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24th November, 1987

Dear Pete

I thought it would be helpful to do you a note following our discussion last Friday about how best to establish a system whereby the Area Offices or constituencies can be notified about Ministerial visits.

One of the possibilities you raised was that Ministers might send details of visits to No. 10 (ie. me) and I would then simply forward them to Central Office. I discussed this with Nigel Wicks here and believe that such a system has a number of drawbacks.

- (i) It would create an unnecessarily complicated chain of communication: Minister - No. 10 - Central Office - local party.
- (ii) Moreover, written notification of visits would often be followed by telephoned changes involving further consequential telephone calls.
- (iii) Given that there are about a hundred Ministers, all of this would impose an impossible burden on the Political Office: Archie and I have only one secretary each, both of whom already work extremely long hours.

The proposal I would put forward is therefore as follows. As Chairman, you should write to each Cabinet Minister asking if, on a monthly basis, they would provide Central Office with details about the visits of all their Ministers. This should be done by them designating a particular person - ideally, their special adviser, but otherwise a junior minister or perhaps their PPS or "whoever is appropriate" (I don't think you could ask them to designate a civil servant) - whose specific responsibility it would be.

Subsequently, this letter would be sent to every Minister appointed to a new job, whether entering the Government for the first time or simply being re-shuffled. You may also want to issue the letter afresh every year to all Ministers in order to maintain the system.

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In the case of certain Ministers, there would obviously be security considerations eg: the Northern Ireland Secretary or the Home Secretary, and the system would have to accommodate this factor.

Once such a letter is received by Ministers, you will be asked about the reasons for it and how the information will be used. I strongly recommend therefore that, before any letter goes out, you are satisfied that there is an effective system established at Central Office for receiving and utilising this information.

In this letter, I have confined myself to the question of how to ensure that local parties are notified of visits by Ministers. I have not touched on the separate question of ensuring that Ministers offer sufficient time in their diaries for Party engagements.

I am copying this letter for information to Peter Morrison.

*Yours
Stephen.*

STEPHEN SHERBOURNE

The Hon. Peter Brooke, MP