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MR. ALISON

MA 8/2

LUNCHES FOR CABINET COLLEAGUES

Thank you for your minute of 3 February about Monday lunches.

As you know, I have no direct experience of these lunches, but my impression is that they serve a very useful purpose in allowing the Prime Minister to try out on her Cabinet colleagues in a relaxed and sociable atmosphere whatever is on her mind.

I suspect that what is needed is not a change in the format, but a more deliberate choice of additional guests (on top of the regulars) and perhaps a general note to the Prime Minister suggesting that she takes the opportunity of these lunches to get "additional" Cabinet Ministers to talk about their preoccupations, together with perhaps a note on Fridays suggesting particular topics which she might pursue with the "additional" Ministers attending on each occasion. I hope that this would help us to get the best of both worlds.

I do not think that we should exclude the other senior colleagues (Lord Whitelaw, the Chief Whip or the Chairman of the Party) in order to include more junior Ministers or officials. I think that the Lord President, Chief Whip and Chairman will benefit from hearing the preoccupations of the "extra" Cabinet Ministers attending as well as those of the Prime Minister and my impression is that their presence makes the occasion a much more relaxed and enjoyable one for the Prime Minister.

F.R.B.

8 February 1984