

Miss C Bowe
Inf

cc. PS/Secretary of State

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY PRESENTATION

1. I have seen your note with attached briefs for Ministers and backbenchers, prepared by the No 10 Press Office.
2. The briefs themselves are perfectly good. However, briefs of this kind are already produced at regular intervals and circulated to all Conservative Members, as well as other party luminaries, by the Conservative Research Department, I attach one such brief on the NHS as an example. As well as this, MPs receive a weekly Briefing Note, the monthly publication 'Politics Today' and briefs for every whipped debate. Each year, CRD also produces a publication entitled: "Three/Four/Five etc Years' Work" which is a compendium of Government achievements.
3. We have always found the major problem with our MPs is not that they do not have the information but rather that they do not read or do not use it. Thus, I am not sure that this exercise will achieve anything. In any case, surely this is something which is more appropriate for Central Office to handle rather than the No 10 Press Office (especially in relation to briefing Conservative backbenchers)?
4. Not only am I concerned about the propriety of this exercise, it is also likely to annoy Central Office intensely as it implies that they are not doing their job properly. In addition, Conservative backbenchers are happy to take briefing from Central Office, as they regard it as being principally there to serve them; they are likely to take less kindly to being fed an official Government line from No 10.

John Whittingdale

JOHN WHITTINGDALE
Special Adviser
V/820
215-3508

6 December 1984