

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. A084/117

PRIME MINISTER

You may like to take the opportunity of tomorrow's Cabinet meeting to remind your colleagues that, if they have occasion to consult people from the Conservative Central Office or the Conservative Research Department or the Centre for Policy Studies in the course of formulating governmental or departmental policies, they should be scrupulously careful to ensure that those people are not given access to classified information.

2. Clearly people from the party organisations can play a useful part in advising Ministers on the political and presentational aspects of their policies. But they are not employees of the Government, they are not required to sign declarations under the Official Secrets Acts and are not bound by the obligations of confidentiality which bind civil servants, and they may not always be aware of the sensitivity of information entrusted to them. For all these reasons it is advisable not to give them access to classified material. In particular, such material should never be sent to, or allowed to be taken out of the Department by, people employed in the party organisations or the Centre for Policy Studies.

[3. No doubt you will not wish to say so, but your raising this subject arises from the case of Mr Tony Hutt, the Conservative Research Department expert on local government matters who, in the course of advising the Secretary of State for the Environment, acquired a detailed knowledge of the Government's plans for abolishing the Metropolitan Councils, which he has now taken out with him as he goes to join a firm of Parliamentary lobbyists currently retained by the Association of Metropolitan Councils to campaign against those plans.]

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

11 January 1984

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