

Prime Minister

I have consulted Bernard Ingham.

He thinks that this is unexceptionable when there are no security considerations against it, and that Departments in any case usually announce such appointments.

Ref. A083/2745

MR BUTLER

But he thinks (and I agree) that Peter Hennessy is behind it and wants to keep his list of contacts up to date.
Publicity for Open Structure Appointments

The Executive Editor of The Times has written to me and to a number of other Permanent Secretaries, saying that The Times would like to print in its appointments column all promotions into and within the Open Structure at Under Secretary level and above. The Times is asking to be supplied with the information on a regular basis for this purpose.

2. I have consulted my Permanent Secretary colleagues. None of us can see any objection to this, and indeed we are in favour of it, subject only to one exception: for security reasons we should prefer not to make public announcements about senior appointments in the Northern Ireland Office.

3. I hope that the Prime Minister will see no objection to my writing to The Times to say that we are glad to see them announce appointments at Deputy and Under Secretary levels (subject to the one exception of the Northern Ireland Office), and undertaking to provide them with the information required for this purpose.

What about certain appointments which come under (MO)?

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

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4 October 1983

Should we make it easy for him by giving The Times a central list? I have the feeling that it might be better to say to The Times that Departments normally announce senior appointments and The Times should get the information in that way.

Yes no. Agree?

FERS 20.10



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

PUBLICITY FOR OPEN STRUCTURE APPOINTMENTS

I am sorry you have not had a reply to your minute of 4 October (A083/2745).

The Prime Minister sees no objection in principle to the publication in The Times of all promotions into and within the Open Structure at Under Secretary level and above, although she believes that there need to be other exceptions on security grounds in addition to appointments in the Northern Ireland Office.

However, the Prime Minister does not think that we should provide The Times with a consolidated list of appointments. There is some reason for thinking that the moving force behind this suggestion may be Mr. Peter Hennessy and that we would simply be making easier his role of writing gossipy pieces about appointments or making direct contacts with senior civil servants. The Prime Minister suggests that the answer to The Times might be that departments normally announce appointments at this level already and that you are ready to encourage them to do so, but that it would be better for The Times to obtain these announcements from departments themselves rather than from a central source.

F.R.B.

20 October, 1983

MR BUTLER

PUBLICITY FOR OPEN STRUCTURE APPOINTMENTS

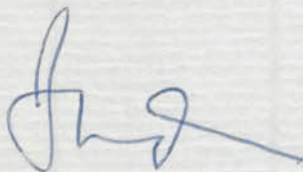
I am sorry you seem not to have got my advice on this.

First, as a matter of principle, I think it is right that appointments at this level should be announced publicly. Private sector and other appointments at far lower levels of responsibility are published daily in City pages for example.

But in practice agreement to The Times' proposal would only formalise what to some extent is already done. Deputy Secretary posts are generally announced by Departments and Under Secretary posts may secure publicity, depending on the nature of the job. In any case, they can generally be picked up post hoc from the Civil Service List.

I imagine however that the exceptions will go wider than Northern Ireland - for example, security posts, at least in the sense of identifying precisely the area of responsibility.

Finally, it is interesting that The Times is seeking to secure systematic information about top level promotions. I suspect that Mr Hennessey is behind this and that those promoted will receive an early call from him for a variety of purposes. Should they be warned?



B. INGHAM

19 October 1983