



File JH

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

I had yet another telephone call with Sir Alan Walters, this time about an article in today's Daily Mail which reports an interview with him. A copy of the article is attached for reference.

Alan was somewhat hazy about whether he had spoken to the author of the article, Geoffrey Levy, though he recalls speaking to someone from the Daily Mail. He said that the discussion was entirely about his personal life. I pointed out the sentence in the first column:

"I'm a great admirer of Mr. Lawson, I mean, next Geoffrey Ho... er, well, I think he's done wonders."

I said that surely the conclusion meant to be drawn from this was that Chancellor Lawson was not as good a Chancellor as Chancellor Howe. I went on to say that even if Alan was to give an interview about chrysanthemums, there would be those in the media who would twist his words. His behaviour should be likened to that of a Trappist monk - absolute silence. I had to say that if he gave any further interviews, his return to No. 10 would be in serious doubt. And that would be a great pity.

Alan said that journalists would write stories even if he said nothing, and what they would write would be inaccurate. He merely wanted to put them right on the facts of his life. I said that even in such circumstances he should decline to talk to them. If he spoke to them, the "Walters story" would run. That was in nobody's interest. He should tell journalists that he had nothing to say and he could not help them. He agreed to do so.

At the end of the conversation Alan said that he had written a book review on privatisation which he thought would cause no problems. He was sending me a copy in the bag. We will look at it most carefully when it arrives.

N.L.W.

(N. L. WICKS)  
28 July 1988