

2080

[Redacted]

cc

[Redacted]
Mr Partridge
[Redacted]
Mr Hilary
Mr Rhodes
[Redacted]

*Meeting - 3PM
Fri 7 Dec.
meeting in suggested
in consultation with [Redacted]*

[Redacted]

Mr Harrington

2 Dec [Redacted]

*I agree as proposed
[Redacted] thinks
[Redacted]*

HOME AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE ENQUIRY INTO SPECIAL BRANCHES

I understand from Mr Rhodes in Parliamentary Section that when the Home Affairs Committee meets on 14 November it will settle its programme for the completion of its enquiry into Special Branches.

2. Mr Rhodes has learnt from the clerk of the Committee that the Committee is likely to hear evidence (separately) on 21 November from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and from the Association of County Councils. The former is, of course, likely to provide ammunition for questions to police and government witnesses on accountability, and I had it in mind to attend the session to make a note of the points raised.

*Y
12 pl.*

3. Police witnesses are, apparently, to be called later, and the Home Secretary will probably not be called to give evidence until near the end of the enquiry, some time in the New Year. Although Mr Oxford says in his letter of 1 November to Mr Morrissey that he expects himself, Mr Imbert, Mr Buck and Mr Hewett to be the ACPO witnesses, we have as yet no indication of whom they will in fact call, or as to whether, as Mr Oxford appears to assume, they will allow ACPO a free choice of representatives. We ought however to have an early meeting of those mentioned above, plus the Security Service, to concert tactics and agree on lines to take, as proposed in your letter of 8 November to Mr Oxford.

4. The need for this is reinforced by the difficulty caused by the way in which Mr Oxford prepared ACPO's written evidence without consulting us, nor indeed MPSB. I was, as you know, able with Mr Rhodes' help to have put right two of the points in Mr Oxford's paper. The clerk of the Committee accepted from me corrections to the references to subversion and to MPSB's responsibilities on Irish matters, after Mr Oxford (after some persuasion) agreed that we might seek the corrections on behalf of ACPO. I did not however feel that we could do anything about the references to Security Service training, or to information about pickets, where we would have had to seek the suppression of references that were factually

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[REDACTED]

correct, but which we simply did not want to see made for one reason or another. There was too much of a danger (particularly when dealing with the Committee's new clerk) that making a fuss would simply draw attention to the points which we wanted to cover up.

5. The fact that the Home Secretary will not give evidence until the end of the enquiry will affect the tactics for making the guidelines available to the Committee. We had I think envisaged that the Home Secretary might be called fairly early on, and that the guidelines might be made available at that stage to inform the remainder of the enquiry. The options would now appear to be:

- i) to volunteer the guidelines early on as a supplement to our written evidence;
- ii) for the Home Secretary to offer, or agree, to make them available when he gives oral evidence;
- iii) to note any request for the guidelines that is made when the Home Secretary gives oral evidence, and to send them in later, perhaps as part of the Home Office response to the Committee's report.

The last possibility may have some advantages. In particular, it would give us something positive to offer in response to the Committee's report. I am not sure that there is anything to be gained from making the guidelines available before we are asked to do so, and it may therefore be better to wait until we come under pressure. Indeed it is conceivable (though not perhaps very likely) that the Committee will not ask to see the guidelines at all, so enabling us to keep their publication in reserve for the next crisis. The options for publication of the guidelines will have to be put to Ministers when we submit them for approval, and you may wish to discuss them before I prepare the submission.

6. We are almost ready to go on the guidelines. I have asked IND to check (in the light of comments from [REDACTED] and Mr Hilary) the references to Special Branch work on their behalf. As soon as we have these (early next week, I hope) we can submit the guidelines for Ministerial approval. Thankfully, and in contrast to the surveillance guidelines, there are no problems on the ACPO side. The Crime Committee has endorsed the guidelines with only a couple of minor comments which can be incorporated without difficulty.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

7. On timing for a meeting with the police and Security Service, perhaps the week beginning 26 November would be best. By then we should have a better idea of the thrust of the enquiry, particularly in the light of the AMA's oral evidence on the 21st. [REDACTED] and I will set our minds to some draft lines to take on likely issues (such as accountability) and causes celebres, to be considered at the meeting. If you agree to this course of action, perhaps [REDACTED] could start setting something up.

[REDACTED]

F4 Division
8 November 1984

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in CC list
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Oxford
Bude
Inch
Hewitt
Harmington

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(Box 500)

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(Scotland) } but
(N10) } not
essential

[REDACTED]