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MEMBERS OF THE CABINET SECRETARIAT

Attribution of Views to Individuals
In Minutes of Meetings

The general rule on the attribution of views to individuals in minutes of meetings of the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees is set out in paragraphs 15-20 of the Guide to Minute Taking.

2. That lists a number of cogent reasons for minimising the attribution of views to individual persons. In present circumstances the risk of unauthorised disclosures, which may embarrass individual Ministers and impair collective responsibility, constitutes a further powerful reason for limiting attribution as narrowly as possible.

3. Members of the Secretariat are therefore asked, in writing minutes of Cabinet and Cabinet Committee discussions, to interpret the rules as follows:

a. As a general rule the only parts of a minute which should be attributed are the opening statement or statements of the issue by those who have circulated memoranda for discussion and the summing up. The summary of important points made in discussion should be impersonal - ie should not attribute views to persons.

b. When a speaker is not content to accept the decision of a Committee and requires reference to a higher Committee or to the Cabinet, and for this purpose formally reserves his

(or his Minister's or Department's) position, the statement of his position may be attributed. Dissent in Cabinet should not be attributed unless the speaker has asked for it to be registered as a prelude to resignation.

c. It may, very exceptionally, be necessary to attribute views to persons when a specifically departmental view has been put forward, or when a suggestion has been made to safeguard a departmental interest, or when there is a conflict of interest between two Departments; but whenever possible the minutes should record these matters without attribution to persons.

d. Exceptions to the general rule should be made only on the authority of the senior Secretary in a secretariat; and any cases of doubt should be referred for decision to the Secretary of the Cabinet.

4. The Guide to Minute Taking will be amended accordingly in its next revision.

Signed ROBERT ARMSTRONG

12 November 1984

Cabinet May 79

Collective responsibility