

file

KK

PROFESSOR GRIFFITHS

MR. INGHAM

MR. GRAY

MR. O'SULLIVAN

REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE: PRESS ARTICLES

As you know, various articles have appeared in the press in recent days about the Government's Review of the National Health Service. The Prime Minister was horrified to read these articles which could only have been prepared with the help of someone who had inside knowledge, and she has considered with Sir Robin Butler what might be done to prevent repetition of such articles. As a result Sir Robin has written to the Treasury, DHSS and myself asking that I convey the following to those who see papers on the Government's Review of the National Health Service. I hasten to add that in minuting you there is no suggestion that we are the source of last week's press reports. Nevertheless Sir Robin, on the Prime Minister's instructions, has asked me to convey the following:

- (i) The timing of future meetings of Ministers must be kept confidential as it seems that the knowledge of the imminence of such meetings stimulates "fishing expeditions" by journalists to their contacts. So please could you ensure that the dates of future meetings on the subject are not made available to the press and are notified only to those within departments who need to know them.
- (ii) We must avoid engaging in sustained conversations with journalists on matters relating to the Review since such conversations may inadvertently enable journalists to try out propositions in order to gauge reactions.

Sir Robin has emphasised that these instructions are particularly important as the Reveiw enters its latter, and most sensitive, stages.

I am sending a copy of this minute to those concerned in No. 10 who are particularly concerned with the National Health Service Review. But if there is anyone else within the Private and Press Offices and Policy Unit who ought to know, please could you draw this minute to their attention.

N.L.U.

N. L. WICKS

14 June 1988

KAYAEZ