

B

PRIME MINISTER

PROPOSED NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS TO EXPLAIN THE NEW GP
CONTRACT

There was some discussion in Cabinet this morning of the advertisement Mr. Clarke proposes to place in the newspapers.

I have been waiting for the full set of papers before bringing this to your attention. These are now available. They are:

Flag A - Ken Clarke's proposal

Flag B - The advice from Jonathan Spencer in the Cabinet Office, which I understand that Robin Butler strongly endorses

Flag C - Advice from Bernard.

The Cabinet Office and Bernard both strongly feel that the proposed advertisement can not be defended. Bernard suggests the right course is the preparation of a Ministerial Article; which links in with your suggestion in Cabinet this morning of finding other means of putting material into the hands of editors.

John Major has not yet formally responded. But as you will have gathered at Cabinet this morning, he also strongly resists Ken Clarke's proposal.

But I gather from Ken Clarke's Office that he remains unpersuaded by the counter-arguments. Indeed, he was pressing for a meeting with you and the others concerned this afternoon. I said that was not possible, but that you would be considering the papers this evening. Ken Clarke is now pressing for a meeting tomorrow morning. He wants to press ahead quickly with the advert, particularly in the light of

some misleading adverts by the BMA which will come out tomorrow (See Flag D).

You will want to consider how to handle this. The main options seem to be:

- (i) In the light of the firm advice from John Major, Robin Butler and Bernard Ingham, to reject Ken Clarke's proposal and say you see no point in a meeting to discuss it further. You could suggest that Ken Clarke seeks to achieve his objective through the preparation of a Ministerial article and by press briefings.
- (ii) Discuss the issue with Robin Butler at your bilateral meeting with him at 0900 tomorrow morning, and then ask Robin to give Ken Clarke his ruling as Cabinet Secretary.
- (iii) Agree to discuss the issue tomorrow morning with Ken Clarke, Robin Butler and Bernard Ingham (John Major is out of town). This might be arranged at 1100, when it is currently scheduled for you to start your speech writing session.

Which option would you prefer?

PA.CC.

PG

18 May, 1989.