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file
economic/doctors
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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

8 February 1990

JUNIOR HOSPITAL DOCTORS

The Prime Minister asked your Secretary of State this morning about the present position over the hours of junior hospital doctors.

Your Secretary of State said that the Minister for Health had been looking into this and was now seeking to get the BMA and Royal Colleges to face up to their responsibilities for the present position. The fact that junior hospital doctors were on duty for very long periods was not primarily of the Government's making. Often it was the attitude of consultants and the training requirements laid down by the Royal Colleges that were the cause. And, even though they blamed the Government for the position, the junior doctors themselves often preferred very long shifts, so that they had longer periods off-duty in between. The position varied a good deal from area to area, but the worst cases were usually those where consultants were not prepared to do more than observe 9.00 to 5.00 hours and left junior doctors to cover for all other periods.

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The Prime Minister said it would be helpful if Department of Health Ministers could let her have details of any cases of this sort which she could quote publicly if challenged over junior hospital doctors' hours at Prime Minister's Question Time.

PAUL GRAY

Andy McKeon, Esq.,
Department of Health

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