

PRIME MINISTER

cc Mr. Hamilton

MEETING WITH THE CHIEF WHIP

The Chief Whip has asked to see you for a general discussion about the state of the Parliamentary Party.

I do not think the Chief will come with any message of difficulty or problem. But he has been turning his mind to possibilities for nipping in the bud, before they arise, future backbench rebellions. I expect the Chief to say that there are incorrigible rebels on the backbenches who, given the occasion, will always vote against the Government. But there are other members who, while given to bouts of difficulty, might be prevailed upon to vote for the Government in difficult divisions. The Chief may air with you some tactics for achieving this aim.

The Chief can, of course, use all the normal battery of arguments and appeals to loyalty in trying to persuade errant backbenchers to vote in the Government lobbies. But nowadays his powers of patronage are limited among backbenchers, many of whom already have knighthoods, or who, as former Ministers, have no expectation of office, or who, as long serving backbenchers, may feel that they have been irretrievably passed over for Ministerial office.

I do not know whether he will want to discuss further carrots to persuade backbenchers to vote for the Government, but some possibilities are:

- extending occasional Privy Counsellorships to long serving backbenchers pour encourager les autres;
- bringing into the Government some of the older Members who may have felt that they have been passed over.

(N.L. WICKS)

6 May 1988