

Confidential filing

The proposed creation of a new Ministry for
the Arts, Heritage and Tourism; by the Select
Committee on Education.

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MACHINERY.

December 1982.

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

You had a brief exchange with the Prime Minister this morning about the recommendation of the Select Committee on Education that a new Ministry for the Arts, Heritage and Tourism should be created, and the Prime Minister confirmed her opposition to this recommendation.

F.R.B.

10 December 1982

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Thank you for your minute of 3 December (A082/0376) about the recent recommendation by the Select Committee on Education that a new Ministry for the Arts, Heritage and Tourism should be created.

X | I have shown your minute to the Prime Minister whose immediate reaction is that the case for this change is no stronger than that of many other proposals for new ministeries and that she is very much against it. I suggest that we might take the opportunity of the business meeting on Friday for you to have a word with the Prime Minister about the recommendation.

F.F.R.B.

7 December 1982

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Prime Minister

Shall I tell Sir Robert

Armstrong that you will be glad to have a word with him about this — perhaps at the Business Meeting on Friday?

PERB 6.12.

Ref. A082/0376

MR BUTLER

I expect that you saw that the Select Committee on Education, in its recent report on funding of the arts, recommended the creation of a new Ministry for the Arts, Heritage and Tourism, to absorb the work of the Office of Arts and Libraries and to concentrate in the hands of one Minister of Cabinet rank all central Government responsibility for the arts, libraries, film, broadcasting (other than the medium by which programmes are broadcast), heritage and tourism.

2. Work is going forward on the preparation of the Government response to the report. I should be grateful for a steer from the Prime Minister on her political reactions to the proposal for a new Ministry.

I have conveyed this comment to Sir R. Armstrong.

3. My own immediate reaction is not to favour any change in Ministerial responsibility for broadcasting or tourism. Responsibility for film is at present divided between the Minister for the Arts (who sponsors the British Film Institute and the National Film Theatre, and the education and training of film makers), the Department of Trade (who look after the industry, including the National Film Finance Corporation) and the Home Office (which is responsible for cinema licensing). There would be something to be said for bringing these responsibilities together under one roof. As to heritage, the Office of Arts and Libraries is responsible for the artistic patrimony, but other aspects are the responsibility of the Department of the Environment (and the Scottish and Welsh Offices). It would be for detailed discussion how much of the Department of the Environment responsibility should be transferred to a new Ministry for the Arts.

Very much against proposals for new ministries. There are already

4. However the split went, the resulting Department would be a small one, and the resolution of some of the anomalies would be offset by the creation of others.

5. The Minister for the Arts has been attached to the Department of Education and Science ever since such a Minister was first appointed in 1964. For many years the Office of Arts and Libraries was to all intents and purposes separate from the Department of Education and Science for all save administrative purposes; but in the mid-1970s, under the Labour Government, the Office of Arts and Libraries was moved out of its separate quarters in Belgrave Square and into the main Department of Education and Science building. At official level the Office is run by an Assistant Secretary, Mr M W Hodges.

6. Those now in the Office of Arts and Libraries are inclined to feel that they are very much the Cinderella in the Department of Education and Science, and would probably welcome returning to some more near-independent status. The arts world in general would certainly welcome that; there is a general feeling that the result of the change in the mid-1970s has been to their disadvantage.

7. Unless the OAL were to become a small free-standing Department, there is no obvious other Department to brigade it with. I am sure that the Treasury would not welcome the idea of taking back the responsibility for the arts and libraries which they discharged until 1964. I suppose that it would be possible to bring the Office of Arts and Libraries into the central federation alongside the Cabinet Office and the Management and Personnel Office, separate the Paymaster General from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and put the Paymaster General in charge of the new Office. The Paymaster General need not be a member of the Cabinet; he could be either in or out of it, as the Prime Minister wishes. But there is no very obvious logic about that, unless the Prime Minister wishes herself to accept some degree of responsibility for and involvement in Government support of the arts and libraries.

8. Perhaps I could have an opportunity of discussing this with the Prime Minister.

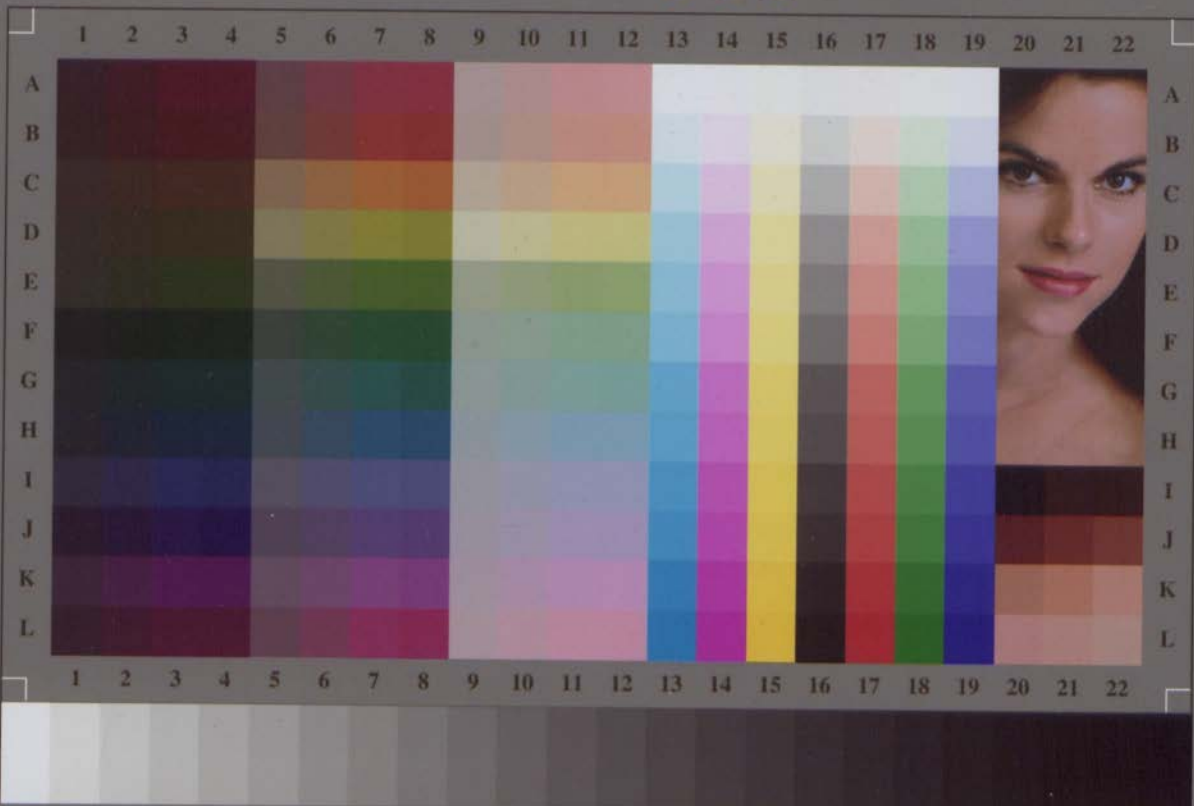
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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

3 December 1982

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