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THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Bob,

Thank you for the Group's interim report on the role and scope of the centre, which the Government is publishing today. I am announcing today that the Government is accepting your recommendations on the three senior communications posts at Downing Street and the Cabinet Office. I believe these new arrangements will improve co-ordination across Whitehall and help the Government to communicate better with the public.

Your interim report makes clear that in the next phase of your work you will be taking evidence from the media and considering their role and responsibilities. I think this is desirable as I have always thought that the behaviour of both politicians and the media is a reaction to the particular climate and culture surrounding these relations and that everyone, therefore, shares in the responsibility for improving this culture and enhancing relations to the public's benefit.

In this context, as part of your further work, the Government would particularly value your Group's thoughts on such improvements and in particular the way the current system of daily Government briefings operates. For example:

- would the transparency of Government communications be enhanced by the daily Government briefings being on camera?
- should some or all of these briefings be done by Ministers as democratically-elected representatives rather than by official spokesmen?
- would such steps enhance government communications and help counter the adversarial relationship you refer to between politicians and the media?
- if so, how would we ensure that this happened in a way that did not undermine Parliament?

Obviously your final report will cover a wide range of issues, but it would be helpful too to have the Group's considered thoughts on these specific questions as well as the wider context.

Yours ever,  
Tony

Mr Robert Phillis