

S+P 2779

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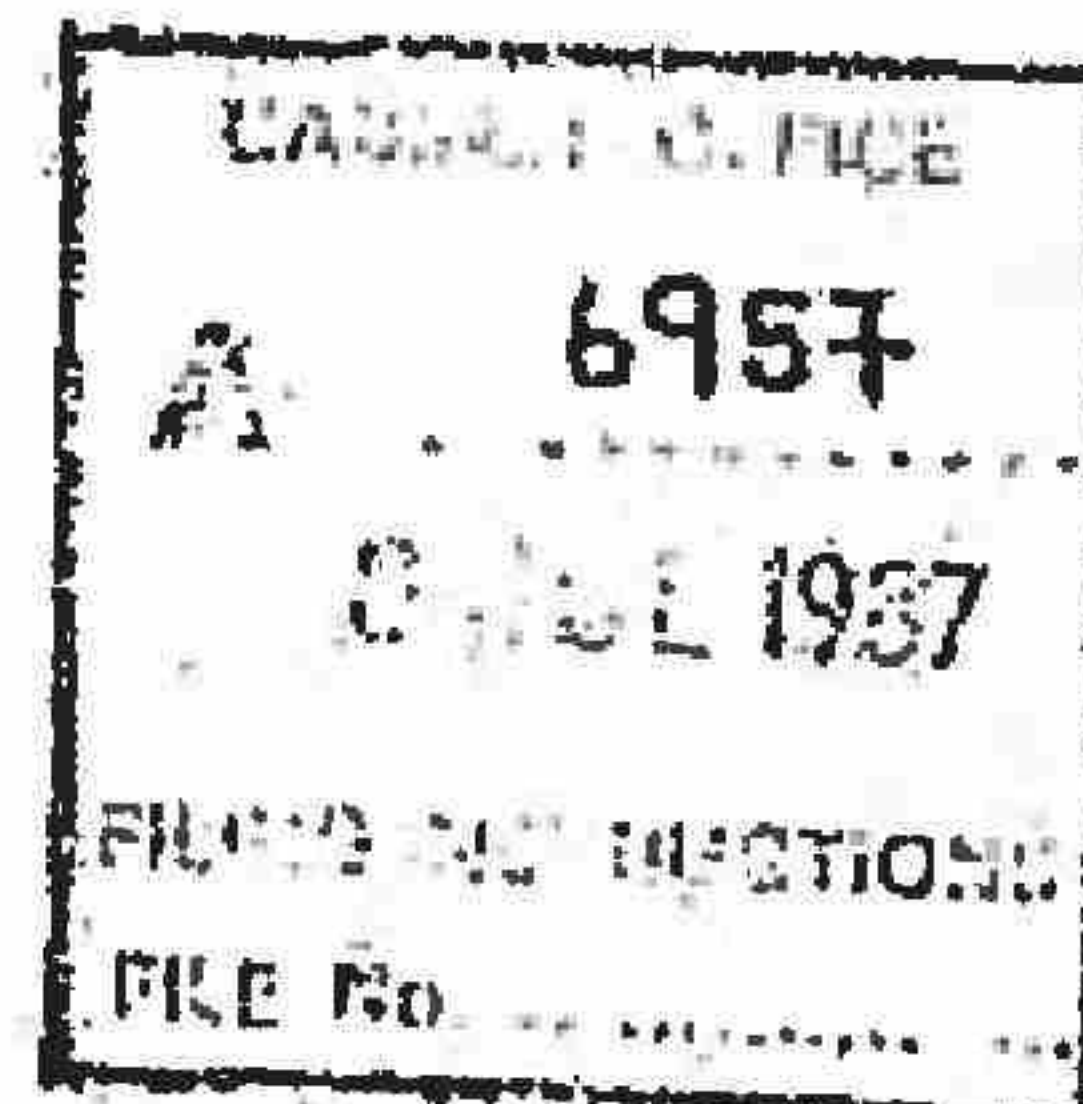
PO Box 500



7 July 1987

RA

Dear Robert,



On 19 June in connection with the briefing of new Ministers, you told me of the concern expressed to you by Peter MORRISON, Minister of State at the Department of Energy, about a number of unpleasant rumours that had circulated about him in recent years.

2. On 2 July [redacted], saw MORRISON in his office to give him the normal security briefing. After the briefing MORRISON, without prompting, raised the subject of the rumours mentioning his discussion with you and with Peter Gregson. He then gave an account of what he described as the unfounded and malicious allegations of homosexuality that had been made against him. These had begun in January 1982 when he was Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department of Employment. Norman Tebbit, then Secretary of State, had said that he had heard that the police were investigating MORRISON "as a queer". MORRISON denied that he was a homosexual and had so informed Tebbit. He had also spoken to the Chief Whip.

3. The next "whisperings" took place in 1983 after the Cecil Parkinson affair. On that occasion he had spoken to the Deputy Chief Whip. In 1984 and 1985 he was conscious of press interest in him but this died down and the stories did not revive until September 1986 in the aftermath of the Jeffrey Archer episode. Again the rumours were imprecise and unpleasant. He had taken legal advice and was told that, unless something more tangible appeared, he should let the matter rest.

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Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO  
Cabinet Office





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4. In October/November 1986 events took a turn for the worse. Two Mirror Group journalists had hired a private aircraft, flown from Glasgow to his country home on the Isle of Islay and camped on his doorstep for two or three days. He refused to see them and in November and December various attempts were made to telephone him: the journalists left messages saying they were about to publish stories. Acting on legal advice he had refused to rise to the bait and had said nothing that was news-worthy to anyone.

5. MORRISON then mentioned the stories about his alleged homosexual behaviour which surfaced in his Chester constituency during the General Election. Unfortunately his election agent, in a well-meaning but clumsy attempt to spare MORRISON embarrassment, had spoken without MORRISON's authority or knowledge to the Labour candidate. She chose to do so in a back street of all places. MORRISON feared that if his agent's approach reached the wrong ears it could be misrepresented as an attempted cover-up.

6. In answer to a question MORRISON said that he did not know who was behind the stories. In his view the Mirror Group were simply out to get copy. He thought however that the rumours might have been inspired by a fellow Conservative: he based this assumption on a cryptic comment by a Senior Press Officer in the Conservative Central Office who had warned him that one's real enemies are often on one's own side.

7. MORRISON did not ask for advice but was reminded by [redacted] of the need to be on his guard both in this country and abroad against behaviour which, however innocent, could be misrepresented. As a public figure he needed to choose his friends with care. MORRISON was grateful for this advice and said that he already took care but from now on would take even more precautions.

*John [redacted]*

**DPA**

P J Walker