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Prime Minister. <sup>E</sup>

I agree with

F.E.R.B. that Sir Geoffrey  
Hittler is the best choice.

But you can discuss with  
Economic Summit: Sherpa Robin or Fredy  
W.C.U.

Ref. A088/64

MR WICKS

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One of the matters I should like to discuss with the Prime Minister on Friday is the identity of our Sherpa. We need to settle this because we are now getting near to the next meeting on 27-29 February and Whitehall and the other Sherpas are asking. 12-1

2. These Sherpas' meetings have got out of hand. Four meetings plus the Economic Summit itself are excessive. The contribution the Sherpas make to the Summit does not justify this effort. We ought to try to get the number of meetings down, but this is not of course in our sole power.

3. The Personal Representative needs to be sufficiently aware of the nuances of the Government's stance on a wide range of subjects and sufficiently close to the Prime Minister to be able to speak with authority and to be accepted by the other Sherpas as doing so. He also needs to be sufficiently switched into Whitehall to be able to organise the briefing effort.

4. It has been my impression - and closer acquaintance reinforces this view - that the work does not fall naturally out of the Cabinet Secretary's other work. Sir Robert Armstrong made a major personal contribution because of his standing and his drafting skills. But the Cabinet Secretary does not deal with international economic business continuously enough or in sufficient depth to make the subject matter come naturally to him without substantial preparation.



5. Given that it is an Economic Summit, the person whose normal work fits with it best is Sir Geoffrey Littler. He also has long experience of Sherpas' meetings, which he has attended as our economic "expert"; and so the role would not be a substantial extra call on his time. Sir Geoffrey Littler himself may only have a year to go, and in some ways that is an advantage because we could review the arrangement before his successor took over.

6. An alternative - if I am not to do it myself - is one the two Deputy Secretaries in the Cabinet Office, either Mr Richard Wilson or Sir Christopher Mallaby (though in practice it would be the latter's successor, Mr Weston). Either could do it very acceptably. From the point of view of the distribution of work in the Cabinet Office, it would be better if it were Mr Weston, since Mr Wilson is very heavily stretched with a wide range of issues in the Government's domestic programme. Given the amount of overseas visits which the role demands I doubt whether it is practicable or sensible that someone from your office should take it on. *Why not?*

7. If the Prime Minister wishes me to do so, I will of course take it on myself. Left to myself I should prefer not to do so because I believe I could use the time more productively for other purposes. There is little enough time when I can get away from the office and I think that a higher priority is representational work as Head of the Home Civil Service, through which I can also help to put over the message of "Next Steps".

8. I do not think that it would work for me to be the nominal Sherpa but in practice to send a deputy. That would simply mean that the deputy did not carry enough authority to influence events.

9. My recommendation is that the Prime Minister could safely rely on Sir Geoffrey Littler to take on this job. If she were

*I never see him and he knows does not know my views.*



not happy with the way this worked, we could take the opportunity to re-think when Sir Geoffrey retires. If the Prime Minister preferred someone from "the centre" it could be Sir Christopher Mallaby's successor or, less ideally, Mr Wilson or myself.

fr. R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

11 January 1988

CONQUEROR