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Co-ordination of Maritime Affairs

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Stuart  
Hampson

21 February 1980

Thank you for your letter of 15 February,  
about the Co-ordination of Maritime Policy.

We are grateful to be kept informed of any  
discussion on the machinery of Government matters,  
even though no new ground was covered in this case.

I am sending copies of this letter to the  
recipients of yours.

Stuart Hampson Esq  
Department of Trade

Re



NJS has seen

From the Secretary of State

Nick Sanders Esq  
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London, SW1

15 February 1980

Dear Nick

## CO-ORDINATION OF MARITIME POLICY

You will recall that in July the Prime Minister decided that my Secretary of State should be responsible for the co-ordination of the Government's interests in marine affairs on a "lead Department" basis. The arrangement was announced in the Lords on 20 November in reply to a Question from Lord Kennet who with his wife (the journalist Elizabeth Young) has a long standing interest in marine affairs. Lord Kennet is understood to have  
.... been dissatisfied with the reply (a copy of which is attached) and has tabled the following motion for debate on 20 February:

"To call attention to the arrangements for co-ordinating the responsibilities of Ministers and their Departments so that this country may have an effective maritime policy, and for keeping this policy up-to-date in a changing world; and to move for Papers".

.... The Lord Advocate will be the Government spokesman in the debate, and I attach the speaking notes on Government co-ordination prepared for his use. They have been agreed with officials in the Civil Service Department (MG Division) and the Cabinet Office. I do not think they say anything new, but you will wish to be aware of them since they touch machinery of Government matters.

You will be aware that Frank Hooley has put down a Question for Written Answer by the Prime Minister on Tuesday 19 February on government organisation for dealing with marine affairs. The draft reply which we shall submit to you will of course take this same line.

Copies of this letter go to Miss Howat (Lord Advocate's Office), Wenban-Smith (Cabinet Office) and Abbot (MG Division, CSD).

Yours sincerely,  
S Stuart Hampson

S HAMPSON  
Private Secretary



HOUSE OF LORDS  
CO-ORDINATION OF MARITIME POLICY

Debate on Lord Kennet's motion: 20 February 1980

SPEAKING NOTE: THE CO-ORDINATION OF MARINE AFFAIRS

My Lords, we are indebted to the Noble Lord, Lord Kennet, for initiating this debate. The Government's interest in marine affairs is a wide one touching to some degree most aspects of marine activity - shipping and navigation, offshore exploration, fisheries, pollution, territorial limits, sea-bed mining - many of which have been referred to this afternoon. This involves an exceptionally wide range of government departments and other interests and I very much agree that effective co-ordination in this area is essential.

2 The way this Government has sought to deal with it I announced in my reply to the Noble Lord, Lord Kennet's Question on 20 November last. Briefly, the arrangement is that the Department of Trade has the lead role in co-ordinating policy on marine matters. Other departments retain their primary roles in specific fields, for example the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides the lead and the legal expertise on negotiations at the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference; the security of offshore oil rigs is primarily the concern of the Department of Energy; and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have the main interest in the enforcement of fisheries regulations. I give these examples in illustration. What this means is that each department will continue to exercise its own responsibilities -



whether they are statutory, financial, regulatory or whatever - but where there is a need for co-ordination, because a number of different departments' interests are involved, for example safety and pollution at sea, then the Secretary of State for Trade will take the lead where necessary in co-ordinating government policy. A great deal of work has already been done by Officials identifying the relevant responsibilities of departments: a guide was prepared and published in 1977 by the Interdepartmental Committee on Marine Safety, itself under the chairmanship of the Department of Trade.

3 This arrangement differs from that of the previous Administration under which the Lord Privy Seal was responsible for co-ordination centrally: he himself had no marine responsibilities. We take the view that where there is a need for co-ordination it is better to build on the wide marine interests of the Department of Trade with the Secretary of State for Trade in the lead.

4 We believe that the current arrangements are sensible; they are working satisfactorily. We are not dogmatic or complacent. We recognise that this is a difficult area and I have listened carefully to the many points made in debate; but I am bound to say that I doubt whether changing the present arrangements would be the right course. Unfortunately such problems as these rarely present themselves in administratively tidy packages; and more rarely still do the solutions become clearer or easier by adding new



administrative structures.

FOOT NOTE: In the context of this debate the Government spokesman might like to be reminded of the words of Alexander Pope:

"For forms of government let fools contest,  
Whate'er is best administered is best".

However, that is rather extreme. It is important to construct a workable framework for taking policy decisions. This the Government have done.



HOUSE OF LORDS  
CO-ORDINATION OF MARITIME POLICY

Debate on Lord Kennet's motion: 20 February 1980

DEFENSIVE SPEAKING NOTE: A "MINISTER FOR MARINE AFFAIRS"

I have observed that it is not unusual for those who have an interest in a particular aspect of our national life to argue sooner or later that there should be a minister appointed to advance their cause within government. This is understandable; and at first sight the proposal appears to have some attraction in bringing together under the responsibility of one minister all those activities, currently carried out by the various departments, which have a bearing on the sea and its uses. But to do so would mean breaking the existing important functional linkages in the wide range of departments whose responsibilities have significant marine aspects - for example in the formulation of energy or defence policies as a whole, irrespective of whether resources are found or deployed on land or at sea. My Rt. Hon Friend the Prime Minister, who is responsible for the allocation of ministerial responsibilities, takes the view that the benefits of retaining the existing linkages within the



departments concerned outweighs any advantages to be gained from creating a new department concerned solely with marine affairs.

2. The Government believes that the better course is to leave the present departmental responsibilities undisturbed but to ensure that there is effective inter-departmental co-ordination. The current arrangements are as set out in my reply to the Noble Lord, Lord Kennet, on 20 November.

Department of Trade

February, 1980.



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for completion by the nearest relative and mental welfare officer respectively. The presence of a physical handicap can have no bearing on the decision as to whether a mentally disordered person should be subject to compulsory powers under the Mental Health Act.

#### MOTORWAY INQUIRIES: AUTHORITY

Lord AVEBURY asked Her Majesty's Government:

To whom inspectors on motorway inquiries should address themselves if they are in any doubt as to the interpretation of their powers or terms of reference.

The PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (Lord Bellwin): In such circumstances inspectors address themselves to the Minister or Ministers who have appointed them to hold the inquiry. For motorway and other trunk road inquiries in England the Ministers concerned are my right honourable friends the Minister of Transport and the Secretary of State for the Environment acting jointly.

#### CIGARETTES: LOW TAR YIELD

Lord WALLACE of COSLANY asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether it is their policy to encourage those people who continue to smoke to switch to cigarettes with a low tar yield.

Lord CULLEN of ASHBOURNE: Yes; but the first objective of policy remains to persuade cigarette smokers to give up the habit. There are several ways in which those who wish to smoke may reduce the risk; one way is to smoke cigarettes with a low tar yield.

#### BLACKHEATH VILLAGE PARKING SCHEME

Lord VAIZEY asked Her Majesty's Government:

What were the objections of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan

Police to the parking scheme proposed for Blackheath Village by the London Borough of Lewisham in 1975, and whether those objections still hold in whole or in part.

Lord BELSTEAD: The objections of the then Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis to the proposed parking scheme in Blackheath Village were based on the shortage of traffic wardens to enforce it. The shortage of wardens today is even more serious than it was in 1975 and in these circumstances the Commissioner does not feel able to withdraw his objections.

#### MARITIME POLICY: CO-ORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS

Lord KENNET asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the arrangements for the co-ordination of Government maritime policy, at both ministerial and official level, are still the same as they were under the last Government, and if not, how they have been changed.

Lord TREFGARNE: The Department of Trade has the lead role in co-ordinating policy on maritime matters, although other departments, for example the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Energy and the fisheries departments have the primary role in some specific fields.

#### SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL: FUNDING

Lord VAIZEY asked Her Majesty's Government:

On what date they propose to cease funding the Social Science Research Council.

Baroness YOUNG: There are no proposals to cease funding the Social Science Research council.

18 FEB 1970



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MR. VILE  
CABINET OFFICE

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The Prime Minister has seen Sir John Hunt's minute (A09884) of 2 July about the handling of maritime affairs.

She is content with the arrangements proposed in that minute. She would be grateful if Sir John Hunt would now put them in hand.

M. A. PATTISON

5 July 1979

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*[Handwritten signature]*

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1.

PRIME MINISTER

Earlier submission  
is at Flag A.

Content with

Sir J Hunt's proposal to  
use Cabinet Office machinery  
reporting to SoTS for Trade?  
Yes OMB. MAD 3/1/79

Ref. A09884

PRIME MINISTER

Handling of Maritime Affairs

In response to my minute of 16th May (your Private Secretary's minute of 18th May) you decided that:-

- (i) you did not want to appoint a co-ordinating Minister for maritime affairs; and
- (ii) you wanted the Department of Trade to do this on a lead Department basis.

2. No problem arises over (i) though there may be protests from the maritime lobby (the Kennets etc.) when the decision becomes known. I have however run into some difficulty in trying to devise arrangements for (ii). This is because there are a number of maritime matters on which the Department of Trade is not in the lead and where it would be very difficult indeed to put it in the lead. Obvious examples are negotiations at the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference and on maritime delimitation, for both of which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provide the lead and the legal expertise, and security of offshore oil rigs which is primarily the concern of the Department of Energy. On these and some other maritime matters, other Departments would be very resistant to seeing the Department of Trade in the lead. I think however we can get round this difficulty if at official level we maintain an existing group under Cabinet Office chairmanship on which all Departmental interests are represented and if we provide that in future this group should report to the Secretary of State for Trade who would call meetings of his colleagues as required. The Cabinet Office would service these meetings. I think this is consistent with your wishes that at Ministerial level there should be a lead Minister: and if so I will make arrangements accordingly.

*JH*

JOHN HUNT

2nd July, 1979

*Govt. Machinery*

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

MARTIN VILE,  
CABINET OFFICE.

Co-ordination of Maritime Affairs

The Prime Minister has considered Sir John Hunt's minute of 16 May about co-ordination of maritime affairs. She would like to make the Department of Trade responsible for these matters, and to ask the Secretary of State for Trade to set up meetings as necessary. He should then report as necessary to "E" Committee.

M. A. PATTISON

18 May 1979

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*SKM*

PRIME MINISTER

4.  
A

Agree that had President should be asked to take in this co-ordination?

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Ref. A09565

PRIME MINISTER

No - make Trade MAP 17/  
the responsible departments - and let John N. & K. do up research as usual. The com. is report to G.

Co-ordination of Maritime Affairs

This minute seeks your instructions on how the co-ordination of maritime affairs should be handled at Ministerial level. This is an area in which many Departments have interests and responsibilities, for example, Department of Trade (shipping and marine pollution), Department of Energy (offshore oil and gas), Department of Industry (deep sea-bed mining), Ministry of Agriculture (fisheries), Ministry of Defence (hydrography, protection), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Law of the Sea negotiations) and several others. Moreover increasingly policy questions have arisen which require a co-ordinated response from Her Majesty's Government, e.g. the European Commission's recommendation that member states consider extending their territorial seas to 12 miles; anti-pollution measures; continental shelf delimitation and the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference. On all these matters there are powerful lobbies in Parliament and elsewhere outside Government.

2. One possible arrangement is co-ordination by a single lead Department, e.g. the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or the Department of Trade. But this would be difficult because departmental interests frequently conflict and no single Department has the expertise to handle the whole range of maritime matters. The alternative of a single Maritime Ministry would pose still more difficulties, since decisions on maritime affairs can not readily be separated from wider aspects of departmental policies.

3. Under the previous Government the Lord Privy Seal was given responsibility for co-ordinating the handling of maritime affairs. This arrangement worked well in practice. It adequately met the need for co-ordination without impinging on the responsibilities of Departments for their own policies. You may therefore wish to consider continuing with it. If so, I suggest you should ask the Lord President of the Council to take on the task. He will need a small committee of Ministers representing the Departments concerned,

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which should report to the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee. The Secretariat would be provided by the Cabinet Office. In view of wide Parliamentary and public interest in this subject, it would probably be advisable to announce the Lord President's appointment, as was done by the previous Government. If you agree, I will consult the Lord President about the way this can best be done and submit a further recommendation to you.

  
(John Hunt)

16th May, 1979

