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Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Dear Boyer,

25 July 1979

Debate on Southern Africa: Rhodesian Oil Sanctions

The Prime Minister should know that during this afternoon's debate on Southern Africa questions may be asked about the DPP's investigations into matters revealed by the Bingham report, in particular about the possibility of sanctions breaking by Castrol.

Mr Frank Dobson MP has put down a written Parliamentary Question to the Prime Minister for answer on 26 July, asking in the case of breaches of sanctions by British companies known to the Government, who decided that no prosecutions should be mounted, and for what reason.

Mr Dobson's question is almost certainly linked to a recent article in Private Eye (a copy of which I attach) alleging that Government pressure on the DPP had led to the latter dropping his investigations into the possibility of sanctions breaking by Castrol. In their preface to the Bingham Report, Mr Bingham and Mr Gray had said that they had learned for the first time in March 1978 that Castrol lubricants had been marketed in Rhodesia since 1965. They had taken this up with the company, but without obtaining a clear picture as to how these products reached Rhodesia. They had not felt justified in holding up the Report in order to explore this aspect further.

The Bingham Report was referred to the DPP on 4 September 1978; and Dr Owen told the House on 7 November that, in view of the reference to Castrol in the preface, the DPP would already be considering whether to investigate the matter further. On 12 June the Attorney General answered a written question by saying that the DPP was not making an investigation into any alleged supply of petroleum products to Rhodesia by Castrol. Private Eye claims that this announcement will save the Government considerable embarrassment since Mr Denis Thatcher was a director of Castrol.

The Attorney General's reply does not rule out the possibility that the DPP could subsequently carry out an investigation into Castrol. The DPP's office has informed us that the DPP has been concentrating his investigations into the wider ranging allegations about BP and Shell.

The Attorney General recommends that, if the matter is raised during the debate this afternoon, the Prime Minister

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should say that this is a matter for her Rt Hon and Learned Friend.

I am copying this letter to Bill Beckett (Law Officers' Department) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

*J S Wall*  
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