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Minister of State

Civil Service Department  
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ  
Telephone 01-273 3000

13 March 1980

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP  
Secretary of State for the Home Department  
Home Office  
Queen Anne's Gate  
LONDON SW1H 9AT

*Dear Willie,*

## CITIZENS BAND RADIO

Thank you for your letter of 8 March about the question of legalising the introduction of citizens' band (CB) radio into this country. I have also just received your letter of 12 March, in reply to mine of 7 March, about Civil Service pay and cash limits.

I am pleased that you have been able to confirm that in 1980-81 you will be able to make a 2½% reduction in the cost of your Department's staff, other than prison outstations staff. I am also most grateful to you for saying that you could manage a small increase in this reduction, amounting to perhaps 60 posts, if this would be helpful.

I should very much like to help you on citizens' band radio, and it would be very churlish of me not to do so in view of your offer on manpower reductions! I note from your letter of 8 March that you have examined the possibility of exempting CB equipment from licensing, and have considered the options for raising revenue by other means, but that you consider a system of renewable licences to be essential to control. This would, of course, offer little control over unlicensed users, who are, perhaps, likely to form the bulk of offenders. Similar licences for other radio facilities were criticised in the Rayner project on the Home Office Radio Regulatory Department. In addition to this, a licensing system will, as you say, generate increasing demands for staff as use of the CB facility grows. For these reasons I would ask you to consider very carefully whether such a system will make the best use of limited manpower resources.

Subject to this, however, I should be entirely content for you to employ up to 20 staff on CB, provided their cost (and any Post Office administration charges) was covered in 1980-81 by part of the reductions over and above the 2½% manpower squeeze on non-prison outstations staff which you offered in your letter of 12 March. I should also have to ask you to ensure that any future growth in CB staff demands would, similarly, be absorbed.

I hope that, on the basis of this letter, you will now feel able to take the policy issue to H Committee, after any discussion of the details with my officials that is necessary. Of course, if you wish us to meet as you proposed, I should be very happy to do so.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and Sir Robert Armstrong as they have seen the earlier correspondence about Civil Service Pay and Cash Limits.

PAUL CHANNON

*Yours,*

*Paul*

**SECRET**



**SECRET**