

Polanski

PRIME MINISTER

House of Commons Procedure

You asked the Chancellor of the Duchy to let you see in draft his Cabinet paper on the recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure. That draft is attached at Flag A. I have also attached, at Flag B, a note of your meeting with Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas last Monday.

The draft paper discusses the options, as you asked that it should. It does not do so in the most economical way possible, and it does not pretend to be a neutral presentation of alternatives. But the Chancellor of the Duchy finds it difficult to put forward in any detail a middle way between the existing system and the recommendations of the Select Committee, for obvious reasons.

Are you content that he should circulate his paper in this form, and that it will give sufficient opportunity for discussion of the options in respect both of the structure of committees and their powers? Or do you want fundamental changes made to it before next Thursday's Cabinet?

MS

I have indicated the minimum changes in the paper.

7 June 1979

There must at least be an alternative of powers. Otherwise the paper gives no options - it is not merely a refusal to debate the alternative because it is easier to surrender.  
MS

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

8 June 1979

House of Commons Procedure: Cabinet Paper

The Prime Minister has seen the draft Cabinet Paper attached to your letter to me of 7 June. She has made a number of drafting suggestions, which I have already given to you. She has also added the more general comment that the changes she has suggested are to be regarded as the minimum. In her view, the paper should set out alternatives at least on powers. She is not content that the paper should give no options, since she regards that as being merely a refusal to debate the alternatives because it is easier to accept the Procedure Committee's recommendations in full.

I asked you earlier today to set in hand urgently the revision of the paper to meet the Prime Minister's wishes.

I am copying this letter to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

N. J. SANDERS

Miss C.M. Egerton,  
Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

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NICK SANDERS ESQ  
10 DOWNING STREET

*Dear Nick,*

As requested in Mike Pattison's letter to John Stevens of 5 June, I am attaching a draft of the paper on House of Commons Procedure which the Chancellor of the Duchy proposes to circulate to Cabinet tomorrow.

It would be most helpful if you can let me know the Prime Minister's views in the course of the morning, so that the paper may be circulated in good time.

I am copying this to Martin Vile.

*Yours sincerely  
Charlotte Egerton*

CHARLOTTE EGERTON  
Assistant Private Secretary  
7 June 1979

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## HOUSE OF COMMONS PROCEDURE

Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

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1. We must decide our attitude to the changes in the procedure of the House of Commons which were proposed in the first report from the Select Committee on Procedure for Session 1977/78. In our election manifesto we ~~made a clear and unequivocal commitment about the Procedure Committee's proposals~~ <sup>committed ourselves to give</sup> namely that of giving the new House of Commons an early chance of coming to a decision on these proposals." We promised in The Queen's Speech that members of the House of Commons would be given an opportunity to discuss and amend their procedures, particularly as they relate to the scrutiny of the work of Government. Since then a Motion urging me to ensure that the House has an early opportunity to take decisions on the proposals of the Procedure Committee has attracted over 250 signatures; and a debate has been promised shortly after the Whitsun Recess. There can be no doubt of the determination of the House to have an opportunity to decide on the proposals of the Procedure Committee.

The Procedure Committee's Recommendations

2. The Report dealt with public bills, subordinate legislation, European legislation, Select Committees, financial control and the organisation of sessions and

/sittings.