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C(82) 22

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CABINET

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 1982-83

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the
Home Department

1. On 22 April the Cabinet considered the recommendations of The Queen's Speeches and Future Legislation Committee (QL) on the legislative programme for 1982-83, and invited me to arrange for the proposed programme to be reviewed by the Committee in the light of the points made in discussion (C(82) 19th Conclusions, Minute 6). The Committee met on 4 May, and their revised recommendations are set out in the Annexes to this Memorandum.
2. The Committee decided to recommend that the Data Protection Bill should not be included in the programme. They took into account the industrial and commercial arguments put forward by the Secretaries of State for Trade and for Industry for legislating next Session, but noted that it was highly improbable that a Bill could be ready for Second Reading before Christmas. It would give rise to discussion of highly controversial related matters such as freedom of information, and, given the likely attitude of the Opposition during the last full Session of this Parliament, there could be no guarantee that the Bill could be passed by the Summer Recess in 1983. It would be damaging in both political and industrial terms to introduce the Bill and then fail to carry it before the General Election.
3. The Committee were told that the measures on gas safety which are a necessary preliminary to the disposal of the retailing interests of the British Gas Corporation could almost certainly be covered by regulations under the Health and Safety at Work Act, though with a rather smaller saving in Civil Service manpower than if the changes were made by means of primary legislation. They therefore recommend the deletion of the Gas Safety Bill from the proposed programme.
4. The main purpose of the Dock Work Regulation Bill would be to relieve the Secretary of State for Employment of the statutory requirement to bring forward a new dock labour scheme. The current threat of industrial action by the Transport and General Workers Union in support of an extension of the existing scheme raises the question whether it would now be wise to risk a further confrontation by introducing the Bill in the last full Session of this Parliament. Its inclusion in the programme may need to be considered later in the light of the situation at the time.

5. The Secretary of State for Education and Science has not yet resolved his policy differences with the Treasury on the content of the Further Education Bill. The matter is to be considered again by the Home and Social Affairs Committee in the near future. QL recommend that the Bill should remain in the programme for the moment, but that it should be dropped if policy agreement cannot be reached at the next meeting of H Committee.
6. The policy on the Telecommunications Bill is still far from settled, but the Bill would be by far the most important privatisation measure in the next programme, and the Committee recommend that it should stay in the programme on condition that it is ready for introduction at the beginning of the Session.
7. The Committee agree that the actual or potential savings which they have identified give greater scope for the inclusion of a wider Water Bill which would deal both with the borrowing limits of the industry and with the abolition of the National Water Council and changes in the membership of the regional water authorities. They were grateful to the Secretary of State for the Environment for his suggestion that room might be made for the extended Bill by combining his Mobile Homes Bill and Housing and Building Control Bill, but took the view that this would not lead to a significant saving in Parliamentary time and that it would be better to keep the two Bills separate. They recommend, however, that his offer to delete from the latter Bill the proposed provisions on assignment of local authority mortgages to the private sector, housing association rent phasing arrangements, and minor changes in housing law should be accepted; the Bill would then be confined to extension of the right to buy and the building control provisions.
8. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is now willing to agree to the addition to the Scottish programme of the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Bill on the condition, which the Secretary of State for Scotland accepts, that no announcement will be made of our intentions in advance of The Queen's Speech. This will help him to resist pressure from the Country Landowners' Association and the National Farmers Union to give a commitment to bring forward early legislation on agricultural tenure in England and Wales.
9. The Cabinet agreed that the Health and Social Services Bill should include provisions to withdraw supplementary benefit from 16 year olds and to abolish child dependency additions. This would mean that the Bill would no longer be the generally welcome social measure originally envisaged by QL and would not be suitable for Lords introduction. After further consideration, QL now recommend that the additional provisions should go into a short separate (but highly controversial) Social Security Bill.

10. Since C.I. made their initial recommendations, it has emerged that legislation will be needed to implement the announced decision to write down the National Voluntary Severance Scheme (NVSS) debt of £22 million. The Secretary of State for Transport would be prepared to see the necessary provisions added to any Bill which it is decided to bring forward on transport finance. There is no firm place in the proposed programme for such a Bill at the moment (though I have added it to the contingent list), and if for any reason it failed to materialise some other way of dealing with the NVSS debt would have to be found.

11. The Committee do not consider that the arguments for the Royal Ordnance Factories Bill are sufficiently strong to justify its inclusion as an addition to the programme, but they recommend that its position might be considered if further time unexpectedly becomes available at a later stage.

12. I invite colleagues to approve the revised recommendations for the legislative programme for 1982-83 as set out in the attached Annexes.

W W

Home Office

6 May 1982

BILLS RECOMMENDED FOR INCLUSION
IN THE MAIN LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME
1982-83

Essential (3)

Mobile Homes (L)

Water*

Carriage by Railway (L)

Programme (15)

Agriculture (L)

Museums Etc (L)

Further Education (L)

Dock Work Regulation

Electricity and Nuclear Installations

Housing and Building Control

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Health and Social Services (L)

Social Security

Police and Criminal Procedure

Telecommunications

Shipbuilding Industry (Disposals)

Conwy Tunnel

* To include abolition of NWC and changes in regional authority membership

CONTINGENT BILLS RECOMMENDED FOR
INCLUSION IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME
1982-83

Contingent (7)

Agriculture (Levies on Livestock Producers)

Milk

Equal Pay Amendment

European Communities (Portuguese and Spanish Accession)

Law of the Sea Convention

Channel Link

Transport Finance

BILLS RECOMMENDED FOR INCLUSION IN THE
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 1982-83 ONLY IF SUITABLE FOR
SECOND READING COMMITTEE PROCEDURE

Second Reading Committee (10)

- Plant Varieties and Seeds Act 1964 (Amendment) (L)
- Dental (L)
- Civil Aviation (Eurocontrol) (L)
- Registration of Yachts (L)
- Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (L)
- Marriage (Invalids and Detained Persons) (L)
- Rights of Reverter (L)
- Currency and Banking (L)
- Miscellaneous Financial Provisions (L)
- National Savings (L)

SCOTTISH BILLS RECOMMENDED FOR INCLUSION IN THE
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 1982-83

Scottish (4)

Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland)

Mental Health (Scotland) (L)

Divorce (Jurisdiction) and Legal Aid (Scotland) (L)

Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) (L)