

PRIME MINISTER

The Select Committee on Energy have come back asking you and Sir Alan Cottrell to reconsider your decision not to make available to them your exchange of correspondence on reactor safety. The Committee Clerk's letter is at Flag A.

Without consulting us, Sir Alan Cottrell wrote back by return of post (Flag B), agreeing to release his letter to the Committee.

see Energy (Ding) 4/3 }

In the circumstances, it seems to me that you have little alternative but to do the same. Your letter, which is at Flag C, is, of course, capable of being published without embarrassment.

Are you content for me to write back saying that you are willing to release your own letter to the Committee?

Yes not. MS

31 March 1980

FILE
SECRET

1.

31 March 1980

On 25 March I sent you a copy of correspondence the Prime Minister had received from the Clerk to the Select Committee on Energy about her exchange of letters with Sir Alan Cottrell.

I now attach a letter Sir Alan Cottrell wrote to the Clerk of the Committee, without consulting us, agreeing that his letter could go to them.

In these new circumstances, I propose to advise the Prime Minister that she has little alternative but to make her reply available.

I am copying this letter and its enclosure to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

N. J. SANDERS

John W Stevens, Esq
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's
Office

SECRET

TW



Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

PA
MS

31 March 1980

Dear Nick

Thank you for your letter of 25 March enclosing a further letter from the Select Committee on Energy about the letter which the Prime Minister had received from Sir Alan Cottrell. I notice, incidentally, that this further letter refers only to the letter which the Prime Minister received and not to her reply.

I have shown the papers to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and he does not think that this further approach alters the balance of the argument. In particular, he does not think that the offer by the Select Committee not to give Sir Alan's letter wider publication affects the general issue of principle that a member of the public who writes to the Prime Minister is entitled to expect that his letter will not be made available to anyone outside the Government service without his consent.

You might perhaps have a word with Sir Alan and confirm in the first place that he himself still does not want to supply copies of the correspondence to the Select Committee. On that assumption, and if the Prime Minister agrees, you might then tell him that she is disposed to continue to decline to make the letter available to the Select Committee on the basis that it was written as a private letter and in accordance with the general principle summarised in the previous paragraph.

J W STEVENS
Private Secretary

N Sanders Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London
SW1

CONFIDENTIAL



RM
File cc HMT

✓ B Ingham

10 DOWNING STREET

31 March 1980

From the Private Secretary

Dear Petra

Select Committees: Advance copies of Command Papers

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to John Chilcot of 28 March and Toni Robson's letter to David Omand of 26 March. She has also seen David Omand's letter of 25 March to John Chilcot.

As Toni Robson said in her letter, the Prime Minister has agreed that confidential final revises of Command Papers should go only to Chairmen of Select Committees and not to members of those committees. Distribution of CFRs to Chairmen of Select Committees in this way is, of course, at the discretion of the department concerned and not automatic.

As I have already told David Omand, the Prime Minister is content that this general principle should be applied to the Defence White Paper. She would be glad to know how the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee reacts.

I am copying this letter to John Chilcot (Home Office), John Stevens (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Richard Prescott (Paymaster General's Office), David Omand (Defence Department) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

You are

Nick Sados

Miss Petra Laidlaw
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office

CONFIDENTIAL

FK