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15 November 1979

My dear Prime Minister

TENTH REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONALISED INDUSTRIES

The Tenth Report of the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries, which dealt with the Independent Broadcasting Authority, was published last year. We have now prepared a response to the Report which I propose to publish in advance of the forthcoming Broadcasting Bill. The response is in two parts. The first part contains the Government's response to those recommendations which are for me to consider. The Independent Broadcasting Authority's comments on these recommendations and others for which they have exclusive responsibility are contained in Part II.

The Select Committee was somewhat critical of the co-operation they received during the lifetime of the last administration and much of their report has now been overtaken by events. There is little which is controversial in the response I would propose to make, but I should draw attention to two points. First, the Select Committee recommended (Recommendation 6) that "the body responsible for examining and advising upon the machinery of Government should consider the desirability of bringing together within a single Department, responsibility for broadcasting and for all associated aspects and functions of this important area of communication and technology". I believe that the present distribution of responsibility is right. However, the reply to the recommendation, which has been cleared at official level with the Civil Service Department, recognises the need to keep all departmental responsibilities under review.

Secondly, in my reply to Recommendations 1 and 9, I have said something about my intentions in the forthcoming Broadcasting Bill as approved by H Committee.

I am copying the draft reply to colleagues on the H Committee, the Secretaries of State for Industry and Trade and to Sir Robert Armstrong. Subject to any comments, I propose to publish the response as a White Paper in December. I would be grateful if any comments could reach me by 23rd November.

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