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PRIME MINISTER

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ENTRY OF FOREIGN SCIENTOLOGISTS TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

We had a full discussion in Home and Social Affairs Committee on Monday, 19 November, on the policy of refusing entry to foreign Scientologists. I referred to your views (Mr Pattison's letter of 19 November 1979) towards the end of the discussion.

The Committee accepted that there is no longer any firm medical or social evidence of harm from the practice of Scientology which we can continue to rely on in public to support the policy of refusing admission to people who wish to study or work for Scientology. There was a good deal of concern about the practical consequences of removing the ban. There are a number of legal proceedings outstanding which we must not prejudice. The effect of a change of policy on public and Parliamentary opinion must be considered. The Committee noted, however, that it would continue to be possible to exclude individual Scientologists whose presence here would be undesirable, for example on account of criminal convictions in other countries. The majority of the Committee took the view that, in the absence of evidence which we could use in public, the ban on entry of foreign Scientologists should be lifted; and this was agreed.

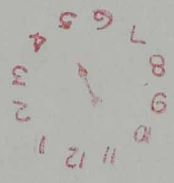
The timing and terms of any announcement of a change in policy and the manner of the announcement will need to be considered very carefully. The Secretary of State for Social Services and I will consult the Solicitor-General, in view of the legal actions which are pending, and the Chief Whip about Parliamentary handling. We will also consult the Secretary of State for Employment, since the Manpower Services Commission is responsible for the issue of work permits which have been tightly restricted in this area.

I am sending a copy of this minute to members of H Committee and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*hsw.*

21 November 1979

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