



SECRET

FROM THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE
HOUSE OF LORDS

29th February 1980

PRIME MINISTER

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME
THE HOUSE OF LORDS

1. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster wrote to you on 19th February about the legislative programme. I have since discussed with him and with the Chief Whips of both Houses the position in the House of Lords in particular. It is clear that the main problems which will confront the Government in securing the legislative programme will occur in this House. The Lord President drew attention in Cabinet to the difficulties which would arise as a result of the decision not to proceed with the Local Government Planning and Land Bill in the House of Lords. The recent addition of the Social Security (No.2) Bill to the programme will further exacerbate the situation in this House. I felt it right that I should draw your attention and that of colleagues to these difficulties.
2. There are three main points for consideration:
 - (i) The completion of legislation already introduced together with the Social Security (No.2) Bill will cause severe congestion of business in the House of Lords from now on, becoming increasingly serious in the period from Whitsun to the end of the Session. It will not be possible to proceed with Bills which have not yet been introduced (with the exception of the Social Security (No.2) Bill) other than at the expense of progress with Bills which have been started (see below, paragraphs 3-5).
 - (ii) It will be necessary to agree an order of priority for the main Programme Bills, as only some of the important Bills can reach Royal Assent by the summer recess (see below, paragraphs 6-9).
 - (iii) The House of Lords is likely to have to sit for at least 5-6 weeks after the end of July, in order to complete business which is already in progress and the Social Security (No.2) Bill. It is for consideration when this time can be found (see below, paragraph 10).
3. Those Bills which have not been introduced are listed in Annex A. I hope that I may assume that the Petroleum and Submarine Pipelines Bill and the International Organisations Bill will not now proceed this Session.

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4. It is expected that the Films Bill would not require a full day for any of its stages, and it is therefore possible that it could be included alongside major Bills. The same might be true of a very much shortened version of the Energy Conservation Bill.
5. I recognise the importance which both you and the Lord Chancellor attach to the Contempt of Court Bill, but it is bound to take time in the Lords especially, in my judgement, in Committee. I fear that time simply will not be available for it unless other measures are dropped from the programme in order to make room for it, or unless the Session is extended beyond the estimated 5-6 weeks which are already required for sittings of the House of Lords after the end of July.
6. The Bills for which an order of priority must be established are listed in two groups in Annex B. For planning purposes, I am assuming that it will be desirable to secure Royal Assent by the summer recess for the Social Security (No.2) Bill, the Housing Bill and the Employment Bill. I would hope that this will be possible, but this target would mean that it would not be possible to complete the Local Government Planning and Land (No.2) Bill, the Tenants Rights Etc. (Scotland) Bill and the Health Services Bill until the spillover.
7. Bills which are in the second group are unlikely to reach Royal Assent by the summer recess unless they are allowed to delay to some degree the progress of Bills in the first group.
8. It is expected that the Coal Industry Bill and the Port of London (Financial Assistance) Bill will be able to make progress alongside Bills from both groups, without unduly disrupting their progress. It should, therefore, be possible to take them through their stages in the Lords within a reasonable period after their arrival from the House of Commons.
9. I have given an indication in Annex C of the dates by which I would hope to complete the Lords stages of Bills which have already been introduced. These dates are, of course, provisional.
10. It will be possible to find 4 additional weeks if the House of Lords sits in the first week in August and for the last 3 weeks of October (13th to 31st October). If the House of Lords sits until 8th August it is almost certain that the House of Commons would also have to sit in order to consider Lords amendments. Extra time might be found only by sitting during the Party Conferences (there would be strong resistance to sitting during the Liberal and Labour Party Conferences) or in November. I very much doubt whether it would be possible to keep the House later than 8th August or bring it back from the summer recess before October.



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11. Achieving the whole programme will put the House under quite exceptional strain, involving strong Whips and late sittings on almost every Government day from Easter until the end of the Session. As this has never been attempted before, it is not possible to forecast with any confidence to what extent the Whips will be obeyed, particularly in the later part of the Session.
12. Precise sitting dates can be considered in the light of the circumstances prevailing nearer the time. I should be grateful, however, for your agreement that we may proceed on the basis of the priorities which I have indicated above.
13. I am copying this minute to members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, and the Chief Whips in both Houses. I am also sending a copy to First Parliamentary Counsel and Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ferrers', with a horizontal line underneath.

FERRERS

SECRET



House of Lords

ANNEX A

Petroleum and Submarine Pipelines

International Organisations (Amendment)

Films

Energy Conservation

Contempt of Court

Coal Industry

Port of London (Financial Assistance)



House of Lords

ANNEX B

Group 1

Social Security (No.2)

Housing

Employment

Local Government Planning and Land (No.2)

Tenants Rights, etc. (Scotland)

Health Services

Group 2

Broadcasting

Civil Aviation

Highlands and Islands Air Services (Scotland)



House of Lords

ANNEX C

LORDS THIRD READINGS - PROVISIONAL ESTIMATE

Protection of Trading Interests	28th February
Bees	3rd March
National Heritage	14th or 17th March
Competition	17th March
Criminal Justice (Scotland)	27th March
Education (No.2)	31st March
Aerospace	24th April
Social Security	15th May
Industry	19th May
Transport	12th June
Social Security (No.2)	14th July
Employment	31st July
Housing	5th August
Consular Fees	? end of July
Health Services	spillover
Local Government Planning and Land (No.2)	spillover
Tenants Rights, etc. (Scotland)	spillover
Broadcasting	spillover
Civil Aviation	spillover
Air Services (Scotland)	spillover



29 FEB 1980

