

PRIME MINISTER

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS ON ENERGY

Mr Lankester's minute of 29th October said that you were still not convinced that it was worth continuing with this Committee and that you would like to know what precisely it had achieved.

The re-constituted Committee under John Moore's chairmanship was only set up just before the Summer Recess. The reason I am anxious to retain it is not because of what it has achieved so far - in the time it has been able to do little - but because of the important role it could play in the future. Energy conservation is not an area where we can look for quick results but nonetheless one which is vital if we were to meet successfully our future energy needs. There is an enormous potential for saving energy and for cutting out waste both in the public and private sectors. But we will only realise this potential if we have the commitment and full hearted backing of sponsoring Departments. Frankly, at the moment this commitment is not there. We have had the utmost difficulty in collecting basic and simple data with which to monitor progress. Indeed one major Department is unwilling even to ask its nationalised industries to co-operate in this way. *Why?* *Which? - Industry?*

It would be possible to leave each Department to pursue energy conservation within its own field. I fear, however that without a body to monitor progress and to act from time to time as a goad, energy conservation will inevitably slip down the list of Departmental priorities. There are signs of this happening already. While I generally favour cutting down and restricting, wherever possible, the number of Committees, I believe that in the case of energy conservation which spreads over so many activities and areas there is a need for a Ministerial Committee to give Departments and officials the strong and continuing pressure which is necessary.

Yes. review it in 6 months  
pub.

Prime Minister

In view of his further plea, agree that this Committee should continue?

And will you write as suggested at x? (I can prepare a draft).

12.10.71

X | I very much hope therefore that on further consideration you can agree to the continuation of the Committee of Ministers under John Moore's chairmanship. I also hope that you will be prepared to consider favourably the suggestion in my minute of 25 October of your writing to our colleagues stressing the importance you personally attach to energy conservation.

I am sending a copy of this minute to Sir Robert Armstrong.

D A R HOWELL

14 NOVEMBER 1979

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