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30th May 1980

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seen.

Dear Geoffrey,

ZIMBABWE DEBT

You copied to me your letter to Peter Carrington of 27th May and I have seen his reply of 29th May.

My interest in the outstanding debts is small - a matter of some £800,000 - and I understand Mr Mugabe's attitude towards repaying it. On the other hand, it would be more than a little difficult for my Department to justify writing off the debt as irrecoverable, particularly if the new government were to continue to operate the Hunter aircraft and to buy new spares from us.

The reason for the proposed write-off is essentially political and it would therefore seem to me to be preferable, and proper, for this small sum to be borne by FCO as part of the overall aid package rather than left as a specific administrative act calling for a defence justification.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary; and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours etc
Francis Pym

Francis Pym

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP