



Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Polaner

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

12th February 1981

VMS

Dear Michael,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 5th February to Christopher Soames about the possibility of general enabling legislation next Session on privatisation.

I would certainly not want to seem too dismissive of anything which could ease the excessive weight of legislation brought forward so far in this Parliament. I am, however, rather doubtful whether your approach will prove to be a practicable one. It might work for the straightforward abolition of a group of quangos, but I think we shall find that the differences between the other types of privatisation measures which we might want to introduce would mean that any general enabling power would have to be in much wider terms than either House would be willing to contemplate, and would create a highly undesirable precedent for future Administrations of different persuasions from our own. Even if the enabling power could eventually be obtained, its exercise on each individual occasion would be a matter of great controversy, which could well occupy as much Parliamentary time as the passing of separate Bills.

I have no objection to a very quick interdepartmental examination at official level of your suggestion being organised if colleagues feel that that would be helpful, but we are already well into the planning of the 1981/1982 legislative programme, and I would not want any uncertainty about what would obviously be a major piece of legislation, with implications for other Bills, to persist for very long.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

*Yours ever
Francis*

FRANCIS PYM

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the
Environment