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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

9 February 1982

Disposal of Amersham International Ltd.

Thank you for your letter of 8 February.

As discussed on the telephone, it is not possible to answer a Question early on the basis outlined in your letter. This is the result of Mr. Speaker's ruling shortly before Christmas.

The Lord President is now considering ways in which it might be possible to release Answers early in the day, in exceptional circumstances, in the future, but for the reasons which I explained to you, this would be inappropriate in the present case.

In view of the stories on the front and back pages of today's Financial Times, it seems that your hopes of avoiding leaks have already come to nothing. But if this still makes it impossible for you to answer an ordinary Written Question at 3.30 tomorrow, we suggest that you proceed on the basis of releasing the Answer as late in the day tomorrow as suits your purpose.

I am sending copies of this letter to David Heyhoe (Lord President's Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Bernard Ingham (No. 10 Press Office).

M. A. PATTISON

D.J. Watts, Esq.,
Department of Energy.

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