

010

Pashment

CONFIDENTIAL



Prime Minister

1.

When you first saw Mr Pym's proposals, you felt that he might be too restrictive. The Home Sec now proposes that he, + Mr Pym and Lady Young, should have a word with you. Would you like to do this as part of Monday morning's business - the presence of Messrs Jorling & Parkinson could be useful. Lady Young is already invited to lunch, and could therefore join your regular meeting at 12.45?

Yes Mr

PRIME MINISTER

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 1982-83

1. The Queen's Speeches and Future Legislation Committee (QL) discussed the legislative programme for 1982-83 on 3 March on the basis of the proposals put forward by the Lord President in QL(82)2. We reached provisional agreement on a main programme of the bills listed in the Annex to this minute, together with perhaps one other to be selected later. I shall be writing soon to all Ministers who put in bids for legislative time to let them know of QL's initial reactions, but before I do so I think that it would be helpful if the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and I could discuss the size and balance of the proposed programme with you. A further meeting of QL, to which Departmental Ministers will be invited as necessary, has been arranged for 23 March.

*MA
5/3*

2. 1982-83 will be the last full Session of the present Parliament, and our next legislative programme will clearly have an important bearing on our preparations for the General Election. If the possibility of an Election in the autumn of 1983 is to be kept open, we need to be quite sure that we are in a position to complete the programme before the Summer Recess of that year. It is already clear that a substantial spillover will be necessary in the House of Lords this Session, even though the programme is considerably lighter than in 1980-81, and the Committee agreed that we could not, without running an unacceptable risk, accommodate a main programme (excluding Scottish and contingent bills) of more than 15 bills; that was the number agreed by the Cabinet at the beginning of the present Session. The timing of the legislation is also important, particularly in relation to the organisation of business in the Lords, and QL agreed that we should only select bills which could confidently be expected to be ready for introduction at the beginning of the Session or, exceptionally, by the end of November at the very latest.

3. As to the overall balance of the programme, the Committee recognised the political importance of pressing ahead with legislation to promote our main strategic objectives, particularly in the field of privatisation. At the same time, they noted that there was a limit to the amount of controversial legislation which could be handled without the risk of serious mishap at a time when most of our supporters will want to be able to devote a greater proportion of their time to constituency duties. This will be particularly relevant in the case of those Conservative Members most affected by the recommendations of the Boundary Commission.

4. Taking all these factors into account, the Committee agreed that a place would have to be found for the three essential bills (Mobile Homes, Water and Carriage by Railway). They noted, however, that it was only the proposed increase in the borrowing limits of the water authorities which justified putting the Water Bill into this category. The remaining items should not be included unless a convincing case could be made out for them in their own right in competition with the other bids for programme bills.

5. The Committee endorsed the Lord President's recommendation that the four major strategic bills covered by paragraph 6 of QL(82)2 (Dock Work Regulation, Gas Safety; Electricity and Nuclear Installations (Amendment), and Shipbuilding Industry (Disposals)) should be included, subject to confirmation that it was still the intention to begin the disposal of the gas showrooms, once the Gas Safety Bill had been passed, in the lifetime of the present Parliament. The Committee noted that the Bill, and the Dock Work Regulation Bill, could well lead to industrial action.

6. The six bills listed in paragraph 7 of QL(82)2 come into the third order or priority. The Committee agreed that there was a strong objective case for including the Agriculture Bill, but feared that this would lead to pressure for legislation on agricultural tenure, on which the Party is deeply divided. Even if the scope of the Bill could be restricted so as to preclude amendments about tenure, we should be hard put to it to explain why we could not find time for separate legislation on this subject when we were able to fit in a long bill on other, arguably less important, agricultural subjects. The Committee therefore concluded that it would be better not to proceed with the Agriculture Bill as at present proposed, though it might be necessary to accommodate a shorter bill confined to provisions enabling us to ratify the Convention on Protection for New Varieties of Plants.

7. The Chief Whip's researches suggest that there may be much less enthusiasm among our own supporters than was originally supposed about extending the right to buy tenants of properties held on leasehold or belonging to housing trusts. The Committee agreed that the Housing and Building Control Bill should accordingly not be added to the list for the moment, but should be considered together with the other bills in the supplementary list in paragraph 8 of the Lord President's memorandum.

8. The Committee accepted the case for including the Further Education Bill (provided that the timetable for its preparation can be improved), the Commonwealth Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill (one-clause, and not controversial), the Conwy Tunnel (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (which seems essential for the roads programme), and my own Police and Criminal Procedure Bill (which will be needed at least for provisions dealing with the police complaints procedure).

I am
pleased
No

9. That would leave room for four more programme bills. The Committee's choice fell on the Health and Social Services (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which has been repeatedly postponed, and which would give a much-needed social dimension to the programme; a bill combining the proposed Museums, Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings, and Royal Botanic Gardens Bills, and taking some 3,000 people out of the Civil Service; the Telecommunications Bill, a major privatisation bill which will be highly controversial and which poses formidable drafting problems; and one further bill to be decided later.

10. The obvious candidate for the final place in the programme is the Data Protection Bill. This is, however, fraught with difficulties. The proposals which we have agreed to include in the White Paper will be immensely controversial, and will certainly not satisfy those who have been leading the current campaign for greater protection of personal data. The whole freedom of information debate could well be reopened. Are we convinced that legislation next Session is essential to protect our international trading interests? We shall be better able to assess the position when we have considered the reaction to the White Paper.

11. Of the remaining bills listed in paragraph 8 of QL(82)2, the Fisheries Bill is desirable in principle, but it does not seem particularly urgent. The Royal Ordnance Factories Bill and the IMS (Financial Provisions) Bill are not of great urgency. Policy decisions on the Pensions (Increase) Bill have yet to be taken. We are agreed that the Duchy of Cornwall Bill should be taken under the Second Reading Committee procedure when the business managers judge that the time is ripe. The Matrimonial Causes Bill would put financial provision after divorce on a more rational basis, but could generate a great deal of emotionally-charged controversy. The Committee did not think that the Social Security Bill or the Development of Inventions Bill needed to be accorded a high priority. My own Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) Bill would enable us to deal more effectively with the problem of radio interference caused by unauthorised broadcasting, though I would concede that it has few political attractions.

12. I should be grateful if you could find time for a short discussion of the Committee's provisional conclusions with the Leaders of both Houses and me in the course of next week.

13. I am copying this Minute to members of QL, to First Parliamentary Counsel, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

WSIW
5 March 1982

BILLS PROVISIONALLY RECOMMENDED BY QL FOR INCLUSION IN LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME
1982-85

Note: Numbering follows schedule attached to QL(82) 1.

ESSENTIAL

1. Mobile Homes
2. Water [borrowing limits only]
3. Carriage by Railway.

PROGRAMME

- 12, 17, 27. Museums, Ancient Monuments and Royal Botanic Gardens [combines original proposals for 3 separate bills.]
16. Further Education
22. Dock Work Regulation.
24. Gas Safety
25. Electricity and Nuclear Installations (Amendment)
30. Commonwealth Development Corporation (Amendment)
32. Health and Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions)
35. Police and Criminal Procedure.
41. Telecommunications.
42. Shipbuilding Industry (Disposals)
55. Conwy Tunnel (Miscellaneous Provisions).

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

5 March 1982

Dear Mike

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 1982-83

I much regret that the Home Secretary's minute, circulated earlier today, contained a typing error in paragraph 11. I am enclosing a re-typed page and I should be grateful if you and those to whom I am copying this note could substitute it for the original.

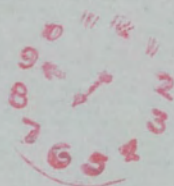
Yours sincerely
C J Walters

C J WALTERS

M A Pattison, Esq.

cc Private Secretaries to members of QL
Private Secretary to Sir Robert Armstrong
First Parliamentary Counsel

MAR 1882



Handwritten mark

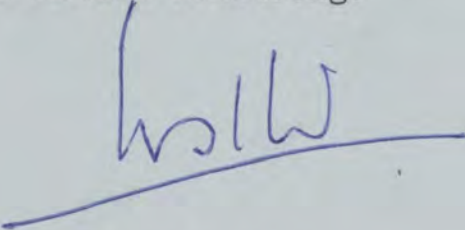
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5 March 1982

15 MAR 1982
19 MAR 1982

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Parliament

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 March 1982

Legislative Programme 1982-83

As I mentioned to you on the telephone, the Prime Minister saw the Lord President's paper QL(82)2, over the weekend.

She has noted that there are a number of important measures in the list contained in paragraph 8 of the paper, and that the Lord President sees scope for only two from this list to be included in the next Session's programme. She has commented that it will be necessary to take more than two from that list if the Government's programme is to have a sense of purpose.

The Lord President will no doubt be seeking an opportunity to set out his thinking to the Prime Minister before too long, but I thought that you would find it helpful to be forewarned of her first reaction to his proposals.

M. A. PATTISON

David Heyhoe, Esq.,
Lord President's Office.

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