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Prime Minister

Content to proceed  
as suggested by the  
Home Secretary at X. ?

PRIME MINISTER

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 1983/84

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The Queen's Speeches and Future Legislation Committee (QL) will shortly be asking Departments for their bids for the legislative programme for 1983/84. These bids will form the basis of QL's subsequent recommendations to the Cabinet.

Since a General Election must be held in or before the Spring of 1984, I think that Departments will have to be asked to frame their proposals in a way that will enable us to plan for two possible situations:

- (a) an election in the Spring of 1984, which would mean-
  - (i) a short Session of up to six months starting in October/November 1983, followed by
  - (ii) the first Session of a new Parliament, starting in the Spring of 1984 and presumably continuing until July 1985; and
- (b) an election in or before the autumn of 1983, followed by the first Session of a new Parliament starting in October/November 1983.

(it would be possible for the 1982/83 Session to be prolonged, but that would not affect the basis on which Departments should put in their bids for 1983/84).

If the Session beginning in October /November 1983 turns out to be the first Session of a new Parliament, we shall need a normal number of Bills for early introduction. Parliamentary Counsel clearly cannot draft a second and different set of Bills for a possible short Session starting in October/November 1983, and so I think that Departments should be asked to divide their proposals into the following categories:

- A. Bills considered suitable for a Session starting in October/November 1983, whether this turns out to be a short or a normal Session;
- B. Additional Bills considered suitable for a Session starting in October/November 1983 if this turns out to be a normal Session (i.e. the first Session of a new Parliament);

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- C. Bills not included in category A or B which are considered suitable for a long Session starting in the Spring of 1984.

If the election is not held until the Spring of 1984, we could then reconsider the position and draw up, on the basis of the proposals in categories B and C, a programme for the long first Session of the new Parliament which would follow the election. This would doubtless include a fair number of Bills in category B on which work would have begun and which should, therefore, be ready for introduction at the beginning of the long first Session.

It may be difficult for some Departments to identify Bills in category C, and until the Manifesto is produced there must be some uncertainty about the priorities for legislation in the next Parliament. But we cannot afford to let the summer of 1983 go by without preparing some major Bills for that Parliament.

All proposals should, of course, assume an outright Conservative win at the election.

I am sending copies of this minute to other members of the Cabinet, the Law Officers, the Chief Whip and the Chief Whip, Lords, and to First Parliamentary Counsel and Sir Robert Armstrong.

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25 October 1982



Leg. Prog

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

28 October 1982

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 1983/84

The Prime Minister was grateful for the Home Secretary's minute of 25 October. She agrees that departments should be asked to divide their proposals for the 1983/84 programme in the way suggested in the third paragraph of his minute.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

W.F.S. RICKETT

John Halliday, Esq.,  
Home Office.

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