



Prime Minister <sup>(2)</sup>  
To note, X in  
particulars  
AT

Caxton House Tothill Street London SW1H 9NF

Telephone Direct Line 01-213 6460

Switchboard 01-213 3000

15/2

Andrew Turnbull  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street

*ms*  
15<sup>TH</sup> February 1984

*Dear Andrew,*

Attached is a copy of a statement my Secretary of State released this afternoon, following discussions with TUC representatives, about the political levy. The TUC will not make public their Statement of Guidance about the levy until tomorrow, but I will circulate it then.

Copies of this letter go to the private secretaries to all Cabinet Ministers and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours sincerely,  
Peter Smith*

PETER SMITH  
PRIVATE SECRETARY

STATEMENT BY TOM KING, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT

The Chairman of the TUC's Employment Policy and Organisation Committee, Mr Keys, and the General Secretary of the TUC, Mr Murray came to see me this afternoon on behalf of the Committee to register the TUC's opposition to the Trade Union Bill. I noted their comments but had to advise them that the Government did not propose to make any major changes to the Bill which embodies the commitments in our manifesto.

In that manifesto last year we also said that we would invite the TUC to discuss the steps which the trade unions themselves might take to ensure that their members were freely and effectively able to decide for themselves whether or not to pay the political levy. In accordance with this Manifesto undertaking I met the Employment Policy and Organisation Committee of the TUC last October. I made it clear that if the trade unions were not able to take such steps, the Government would introduce measures to guarantee a free and effective right of choice. This would be by amendment to the Trade Union Bill now before Parliament.

Informal discussions followed with the General Secretary of the TUC and the Chairman of the TUC's Committee and I have met them again today.

They submitted to me a Statement of Guidance which had been considered by the TUC's Employment Policy and Organisation Committee and which sets out clearly and fully the action unions should take to ensure that their members are fully informed about their rights in relation to the political levy and to ensure that they are able to exercise them without difficulty or disadvantage. The Statement describes the obligations of trade unions under the 1913 Act to their members, the ways in which trade unions should ensure that these obligations are fully discharged and provides necessary guidance on information trade unions should provide in their annual returns to the Certification Officer.

The Statement of Guidance clearly recognises the importance of members being aware of their rights and being able to exercise the free and effective choice that the law provides in respect of the political levy.

Mr Murray and Mr Keys told me that the Statement of Guidance would be put to the General Council for adoption at its meeting on 22 February. I welcomed this and said that if the Statement was adopted by the General Council and issued with its committed support, I would not propose to bring forward amendments to the Bill to change the present basis of the law regarding the payment of the political levy.

I should of course make it clear that the Government's decision not to proceed with such changes in the present Bill would rest on the firm expectation that the TUC's action will in practice be effective. If it does not prove effective then, as I have already made clear to the TUC, the Government must, of course, reserve its right to legislate to ensure that union members are fully aware of the choice they have and are readily able to exercise that choice.