

CCBG



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

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From the Secretary of State for Social Services

G S Dart Esq
 Private Secretary to
 The Rt Hon Peter Walker MBE MP
 Secretary of State for Energy
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*Waited Pres
 reply.*

16 July 1986

Dear Geoff

COMARE REPORT ON SELLAFIELD

*(see also at flap)
 att.*

The Minister for Health wrote to the Lord President on 14 July proposing that this report should be published on 22 July. Ministers considered that it was most important to publish the report as soon as possible following its receipt so that there could be no accusations of delay. On this basis, the suggested line for the Parliamentary Answer announcing publication was that the Government was considering the report's findings.

However, the report may well attract media interest and the Government cannot remain entirely silent in response to the questions that may ensue. My Secretary of State considers that it is very important that the Government as a whole has an agreed line on the report, that the briefing on it is properly coordinated across Departments and that there are agreed arrangements for handling media enquiries.

Officials here will coordinate the preparation of a brief for this purpose and our Ministers will of course field any questions on the health implications. But the report on the whole is reassuring on the health effects and it seems more likely that attention will focus on issues which are the responsibility of your Secretary of State and of the Secretary of State for the Environment. For example, why environmental monitoring in the 1950s failed to detect the releases and the implications of this for the adequacy of monitoring then and now; why this new information did not come to light earlier and whether confidence can now be placed in the record-keeping and management of Sellafield.

E. R.

My Secretary of State recognises that Ministers in charge of Departments must be prepared to field questions within their area of responsibilities but hopes that, as with the response to the Chernobyl incident, a Minister in charge of one of the Departments most centrally concerned will answer for the Government as a whole.

I am copying this letter to David Norgrove (No 10), Joan MacNaughton (Lord President's office), Robin Young (Department of the Environment), Ivor Llewelyn (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), Robert Gordon (Scottish Office), Colin Williams (Welsh Office), Jim Daniell (Northern Ireland Office), Andrew Lansley (Chancellor of the Duchy's office), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's office), Murdo MacLean (Chief Whip's office) and to Michael Stark (Sir Robert Armstrong's office).

Yours ever

A Laurance

A Laurance
Private Secretary

ENV. AFFAIRS: Leakage at Sellafield.

July 1980

