



CCRB
cc Michael Stark
(to ensure you have a copy)

PRIME MINISTER

UNIFIED POLLUTION INSPECTORATE

I have received a copy of Sir Robert Armstrong's recommendations for machinery of government changes following the report of the MPO study team on the establishment of a unified Pollution Inspectorate.

I am pleased to see that the efficiency scrutiny you initiated supports our view that there is a strong case on efficiency grounds for bringing together the various inspectorates concerned with environmental protection. Certainly the CBI and Chemical Industries Association believe that industry would benefit from the greater coherence that a unified Pollution Inspectorate located in the Department of the Environment would be able to bring to the control of industrial pollution. William Waldegrave has received substantial support from concerned industrialists as well as serious environmentalists on this issue over the last eighteen months or so.

I endorse William's view that the Government's credibility as guardians of environmental quality depends on the public's view of the Secretary of State for the Environment's role. I believe that this is particularly important in the case of radioactivity in the environment, where the Radiochemical Inspectorate act on my behalf.

In addition to my responsibilities for policy development on water and air pollution, waste disposal and radioactive waste management, I have a direct responsibility, with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, for authorising radioactive discharges into the environment. In purely practical terms it is essential for me to have direct access to those with the professional expertise and technical understanding of practical problems in all these areas and to be able to draw together those



experiences. The problems of conflict between those responsible for safety at work and those responsible for effects on the environment may be eased by better co-ordination. We have willingly undertaken to follow-up the Scrutiny's recommendations in relation to co-ordination between the Radiochemical Inspectorate and the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.

In political terms it is essential for me to be seen to have direct and clear control over the Radiochemical Inspectorate's nuclear work. As the report implies, a wide-ranging "Nuclear Regulation Agency/Inspectorate" would be fully accountable to no-one and therefore unlikely to reassure the public. Legislation would of course be needed to remove from those of us currently responsible our various statutory functions. A decision as to whether we need one "nuclear Minister", responsible for everything from safety at work to transport of nuclear waste and medical research, should surely come before any radical re-ordering of the executive. As Sir Robert says, you may wish to look at nuclear functions in a year or two, but I hope that you will agree now that the whole of the Radiochemical Inspectorate should remain within DOE, as has been recommended.

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution first proposed a unified Pollution Inspectorate in 1976. I believe that by endorsing Sir Robert's proposals and creating a unified Pollution Inspectorate in DOE we would demonstrate a commitment to strong, practical policies for environmental protection which will commend widespread support. I hope that we will be able to announce such a decision very soon.

I am sending copies of this minute to those who received a copy of Sir Robert Armstrong's recommendations.

N R

18 July 1986

ENV. AFFAIRS
ACID RAIN
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