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Home Affairs ^{to}

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

23 July 1979

The Prime Minister has seen your Minister's minute of 20 July about the Government's attitude to animal welfare. She is pleased to note that Ministers have concluded that there is no need to create a new body with very broad powers.

The Prime Minister approves the proposal to invite Professor R.J. Harrison to chair the Farm Animal Welfare Council and she is content that this should be announced through the written question and answer enclosed with Mr. Walker's minute.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Chilcot (Home Office), Kenneth MacKenzie (Scottish Office), George Craig (Welsh Office), Mike Hopkins (Northern Ireland Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office), Martin Vile (Cabinet Office) and David Laughrin (Civil Service Department).

MAP.

Miss F.H. Thompson,
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

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PRIME MINISTER

Good ✓
Mr. Whitelaw and Mr. Walker have been considering the Government's attitude to animal welfare. This minute from Mr. Walker reports their conclusions. They do not propose to adopt the previous Government's policy of appointing an animal welfare council with very broad powers. Instead they propose to strengthen the existing advisory bodies and to extend the coverage to include the transport of farm animals.

Mr. Walker proposes to invite Professor R. J. Harrison, Professor of Anatomy at Cambridge, to chair the Farm Animal Welfare Council, replacing the Farm Animal Advisory Committee.

Do you agree:

1. With the policy decision; Yes
2. With the appointment of Professor Harrison; Yes
3. With the proposal to announce this through the Written Answer enclosed with Mr. Walker's minute? Yes

MAP

Ans

20 July 1979



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD
WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON SW1A 2HH

From the Minister

Prime Minister

ANIMAL WELFARE

The Home Secretary and I have been giving detailed consideration to the Government's attitude to animal welfare, bearing in mind the previous administration's proposals and the undertakings given in our election manifesto.

We are agreed that we should not adopt the previous Government's proposal to appoint an Animal Welfare Council with power to consider any welfare issue it thought fit. A QUANGO of that type would not accord with our policy. Instead, we propose to strengthen the existing advisory bodies and to extend the coverage to include the transport of farm animals (a subject about which there has been some public concern).

A draft of the statement, which the Home Secretary agrees that I should make, is attached. It meets all of our manifesto undertakings and should receive a welcome from the agricultural industry and from responsible opinion in animal welfare circles. I propose to issue the statement in reply to a written question on Wednesday, 25 July and to hold a press conference.

As you will see, I propose to invite Professor R J Harrison, Professor of Anatomy at Cambridge University, to chair the Farm Animal Welfare Council. The Head of the Civil Service and the Chief Whip have been informed and are content. The appointment calls for a person of high intellectual capability and firmness who will command the respect both of the animal welfare interests and of the farmers and the trade. As chairman of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (which the new Council is to replace) Professor Harrison has already demonstrated that he possesses all of the required qualities.

We should be grateful if you would approve the statement and the proposal to make it in reply to a written question.

Copies of this minute go to the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Chief Whip and to Sir Ian Bancroft and Sir John Hunt.

PETER WALKER
20 July 1979

DRAFT STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES
AND FOOD

Miss Janet Fookes:

To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made with the Government's review of its animal welfare policy, and if he will make a statement.

Minister:

The Government is anxious to increase its impact on matters concerning the welfare of animals.

For this purpose we have decided to appoint a Farm Animal Welfare Council which will have the broadest possible remit. Its terms of reference will be "to keep under review the welfare of farm animals

- (a) on agricultural land;
- (b) at markets;
- (c) in transit,

and to advise the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales of any legislative or other changes that may be necessary".

I am pleased that Professor R J Harrison, who has since May 1974 been Chairman of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, has agreed to chair the Council. I will be announcing the full membership of the Council within the next few days but I am pleased to announce already that amongst other members will be Mr R J Hopkins, the Executive Director of the RSPCA; Mr P L Brown, Chief Veterinary Officer of the RSPCA; Mr S Burgess, a Director

of a firm prominent in livestock exports who will be able to provide the Council with considerable knowledge as to the welfare problems involved in sending animals abroad; Professor J O L King, Professor of Animal Husbandry at the University of Liverpool and Mr D McCaskie, past President of the Institute of Auctioneers and Appraisers in Scotland, who will be able to provide the Council with specialist knowledge of livestock markets. Members of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee who have given valuable advice in the past will also be invited to serve on the Council. Organisations and members of the public will, of course, be free to provide the Council with information or views that they believe the Council should consider.

The Government have also decided to introduce added legal safeguards for animals being exported and to update some of the legislation for the protection of farm animals.

We intend to press vigorously for the introduction of an EEC requirement that the actual journey of farm animals to the slaughterhouse should not last more than 12 hours and for this requirement to apply domestically in each country as well as in intra-Community trade. We shall amend our legislation specifically to prohibit the export of farm animals that have given birth in the previous 48 hours.

We intend to see that the revision of the welfare codes which was being undertaken by the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee will now be conducted as speedily as possible by the new Council. We intend to see that these revised codes will reflect advances of knowledge since the Brambell Committee reported in 1965.

We are already pledged to bring up to date legislation on experiments on live animals. In consultation both with the animal welfare organisations and with research and professional interests we are playing a full part in the current preparation of a Council of Europe convention on the protection of laboratory animals. We intend that our legislation should take account of the provisions of the convention in due course. Meanwhile my rt hon Friend the Home Secretary is reconstituting his Advisory Committee on the Administration of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 on the retirement of the present chairman, Lord Cross. It will be renamed the Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments and will have the following terms of reference:

"1. It shall be the duty of the Committee to consider from time to time, in consultation with such bodies or after hearing such witnesses as they may think appropriate, such matters arising out of the administration of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 as may be referred to them by the Secretary of State, including in particular -

- (a) specific proposals for experiments on living animals intended to be carried out under the authority of the Act;
- (b) trends in such experimental work;
- (c) questions of policy, procedure or practice;
- (d) proposals for revision of the law.

2. It shall be open to the Committee to propose to the Secretary of State at their discretion matters arising under (b), (c) or (d) above which in their opinion might usefully be referred to them for their consideration.

3. In considering the matters referred to them the Committee shall have regard on the one hand to the legitimate requirements of science and industry and on the other to the protection of animals against avoidable suffering."

[We are pleased that Mrs Warnock, who has been a member of the existing Committee since 1975, has agreed to chair the new Committee.] Consultations are taking place about the appointment of the other members to be drawn from scientific, professional, animal welfare and lay backgrounds and my rt hon Friend will announce the full membership as soon as possible.

The Government believes that the Farm Animal Welfare Council and the Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments will be more effective in tackling the problems of animal welfare than a super-imposed all-purpose body which could be cumbersome and wasteful of resources. The actions the Government intends to take will provide a more efficient and effective means of furthering the interests of Animal Welfare.