

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

cc: CO *Govt. Mach* MFJ
CWO
CS, HMT
CDLO
LPO
HMT
FCO
HO
LCO

From the Private Secretary

30 July 1979

Dear Bill

The Prime Minister has seen the Attorney General's minute of 25 July about the Crown Agents Tribunal.

She is pleased to note the potential time saving in the work of the Tribunal which has been identified as a result of the Attorney General's discussion. She is grateful to the Attorney General for his efforts to encourage the Tribunal to tackle its work in the most economical style compatible with its responsibilities.

I am sending copies of this letter to Ian Maxwell (Lord Chancellor's Office), John Chilcot (Home Office), Paul Lever (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Martin Hall (HM Treasury), Jim Buckley (Lord President's Office), John Stevens (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Alistair Pirie (Chief Secretary's Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Mike Pattison

W.C. Beckett, Esq., C.B.
Law Officers' Department.

CONFIDENTIAL

W



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

At the meeting of Ministers which considered the future of the Crown Agents Tribunal, you asked the Attorney General to explore any possible ways of reducing the amount of work before the Tribunal.

Sir Michael Havers' attached minute reports that several months work can probably be saved by abandoning the projected investigation of alleged shortcomings by solicitors acting for the Crown Agents, and that this is not likely to be controversial.

May I say that you are pleased to note this potential time saving, and that you are grateful to the Attorney for his efforts to encourage the Tribunal to tackle their work in the most economical style compatible with their responsibilities?

Yes *sub.* *MAP*

26 July 1979



ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE

LONDON, WC2A 2LL

01-405 7641 Extn 3201

PRIME MINISTER

CROWN AGENTS TRIBUNAL

At the meeting over which you presided on 16 July, it was agreed that I should explore ways in which the proceedings of the Tribunal might be shortened.

I have now discussed this with the leader of the team of Counsel to the Tribunal and with the Treasury Solicitor and we have identified a number of possibilities which they have undertaken to pursue and to put forward to the Tribunal itself. Some of these are purely improvements of procedure but there is at least one area where we thought that the Tribunal could, with advantage, restrict the ambit of its enquiries. This is the projected investigation of some alleged shortcomings by the firm of solicitors which acted for the Crown Agents; it is generally accepted that there is probably not a great deal of substance in this matter and that it has little, if any, bearing on the main issues which the Tribunal was set up to investigate. If the Tribunal decides not to pursue it (or, at any rate, to limit the scope of their investigation of it), that ought not to give grounds for any accusations of a cover-up.

I am hopeful that the outcome of my discussion will be a substantial saving in time and resources. The estimate that I was given was that, if the Tribunal agrees to adopt the various suggestions which we canvassed, it should result in a saving of several months work and will probably enable the Tribunal to complete its task by the end of next year.

I am copying this minute to the Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary, the Foreign & Commonwealth Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Lord President of the Council, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Chief Whip and the Secretary to the Cabinet.

MH.

25 July 1979

CONFIDENTIAL

