

PRIME MINISTER

Here is the letter about Judge Richards to which the Lord Chancellor referred in Cabinet yesterday. I believe he also raised the subject with you today.

He is asking here that Ministers should do something in the Commons to rebut the argument in the EDM.

This is not easy. The Lord President can be briefed on the topic in case it arises on the Business Question, and we can also get a suitable form of words for you. Failing that, there is little that Ministers can do.

I am sure that there have been previous similar motions and that the precedent is to leave them there for some time - and that will be removed when possible. ? Advice please. MJP

22 January, 1982.



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10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

There are only two ways in which the EDM can be removed from the Order Paper: by having it debated and defeated, or by the sponsors withdrawing it. At present, there seems no prospect of taking the latter course, although it might be possible to raise the subject in the future when the current fuss has died away.

26 January, 1982

MA  
M



PS/SNH  
PS/Mr Lykind  
PS/USGS

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

22 January, 1982

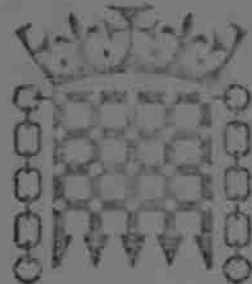
I enclose a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister from Mr. Jack Ashley, M.P. in which Mr. Ashley presses for an investigation into the law relating to rape and its administration.

The Prime Minister is holding a meeting here next week to discuss these matters. I should be grateful if, thereafter, you could arrange for a suitable draft reply for her signature.

I am sending copies of this letter and enclosure to John Halliday (Home Office), Muir Russell (Scottish Office), Christine Duncan (Lord Advocate's Office), and Jim Nursaw (Law Officers' Department).

M. A. PATTISON

M. H. Collon, Esq.,  
Lord Chancellor's Office



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

20th January 1982

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, PM  
10 Downing Street

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*Hon Margaret,*

Public anxiety is mounting as one rape scandal succeeds another. Although Ministers have responded with commendable speed to recent events, an ad hoc approach of this kind is hopelessly inadequate. What is now needed is a comprehensive inquiry. I am writing therefore to ask you to order an investigation by the Lord Chancellor and Home Secretary into the law relating to rape, the operation of the law and the attitude of the police to the victims of this crime.

Among separate and specific complaints voiced recently are the inadequacy of existing law, the evasion of some of the present provisions, inadequate or disparate sentences, the failure of some police to deal properly with women's allegations of rape and to pursue this crime with their usual vigour. These various but related problems can only be effectively dealt with by a full investigation and I hope you will initiate this as soon as possible.

*Yours,  
Jack*