

PRIME MINISTER

Departmental Responsibility for Standards

You have asked me several times recently how matters stand about changing and sharpening Departmental responsibility for Standards.

The ball is still in Robert Armstrong's court. He is in course of producing a short paper on the arguments for and against transferring responsibility from the Department of Trade to the Department of Industry. This should be available shortly, and he intends to send it to the two Secretaries of State in the hope of securing their agreement without need for a further meeting.

It seems likely, however, that John Biffen will continue to resist this loss of a chunk of his department. In that case, obviously, the matter will come back to you, but advanced from the last time you considered it in that the Secretary of State for Trade and his department will have been softened up to facing this change.

MUS

3 February 1982

Pl by to me

12/2

MUS 5/2