



*From the Secretary of State*

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP  
Department of the Environment  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 3EB

25 June 1982

*Dear Michael,*

STANDARDS

My letter of 27 May <sup>requested</sup> 1982 to Geoffrey Howe set out the background to my Statement in the House of Lords on 7 June announcing an initiative by the Government to enhance the status of standards in the UK with the objective of improving the competitiveness of British goods. In that statement I gave a commitment that part of the Government's efforts towards giving greater status to standards would be to make greater use of existing standards and codes of practice in their regulatory activities. I also said that the Government would urge the regulatory bodies it sponsors to give their full support to the standards system and ask them to consider whether more of their standards requirements could not be met within the national standards-making process. This will be a central feature of the consultative document I intend to publish shortly. In this context, I believe it is vitally important that the Government lead by example.

This is not a new departure. In May 1980 the Sub-Committee on Economic Affairs of the Ministerial Committee on Economic Strategy (E(EA)) agreed that such a policy should be pursued. Since then, however, there has been little concrete evidence that significant changes in attitudes have taken place. I am therefore writing to remind you of the E(EA) commitment and to draw attention to this aspect of my statement on 7 June.

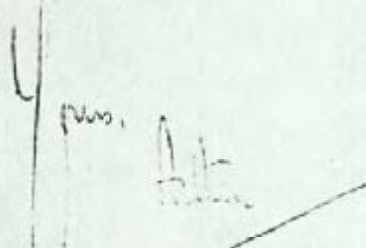


*From the Secretary of State*

I recognise that within the Department of Environment there are already proposals to move in this direction. I welcome these. I know also that this is a point that Norman Tebbit has taken up with the Health and Safety Commission. Nevertheless, the point is worth repeating and I should be grateful if you and colleagues to whom I am copying this letter would ensure that this aspect of the new initiative is indeed followed up. This is one of the matters where speed is of the essence.

There is also a related proposal made in the report by the officials for the MISC 14 Committee (the 'Gray' report - Action 3) that regulatory bodies that make informal use of standards should be asked to consider publishing a list of the standards concerned. The aim would be to emphasise the increasing general reliance on standards and when a producer meets a standard on the list to make it clearer where he stands. Again, I know that Norman Tebbit has already raised this with the Health and Safety Commission. I should be grateful if your Department and those of colleagues to whom I am copying this letter would enquire of the regulatory bodies within your responsibility what informal use is made of standards and whether it would be possible to publish a list of such standards. I should like the results of these enquiries to be available in a timescale that would enable me to include a positive statement in the consultative document on standards at the end of July.

I am sending copies of this letter to Willie Whitelaw, Geoffrey Howe, Keith Joseph, Jim Prior, John Nott, Peter Walker, George Younger, Nicholas Edwards, Patrick Jenkin, David Howell, Norman Fowler, Nigel Lawson, Norman Tebbit, and Sir Robert Armstrong and John Sparrow.. + PM

  
LORD COCKFIELD



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