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28 January 1983

W Rickett Esq  
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LONDON SW1

Prime Minister

Content to answer the attached  
arranged question on Wednesday?

Dear Willie,

WR  
3/1

ROYAL COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS

It is proposed that the responsibility for the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts be transferred to the Minister for the Arts with effect from 1 April 1983. When the Government Hospitality Fund was transferred to the FCO in April 1982 the Prime Minister took an arranged Written Answer, and if you agree that it would be appropriate for this precedent to be followed, the Prime Minister may wish to take a Written Answer for this transfer too. I am arranging for the Lord Privy Seal to take a parallel Answer in the Lords, as you will see from the attached draft. Unless I hear from you to the contrary, I shall arrange for the Lords Answer to go ahead as planned and drafted. The Lord Privy Seal has now approved the text of the Answer. If these arrangements are agreeable, perhaps you would arrange for the Prime Minister's Answer to issue on 2 February?

Yours sincerely,

P L CANN  
Assistant Private Secretary



Wednesday 2 February 1983

(Answered by the Prime Minister on Wednesday 2 February 1983)

UNSTARRED Dr Keith Hampson:

NO. 154 To ask the Prime Minister, who has Ministerial responsibility for the sponsorship of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts.

I have asked the Minister for the Arts to assume responsibility for the sponsorship of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts with effect from 1 April 1983. Previously I had responsibility, as Minister for the Civil Service, for the Commission's finances. This transfer of responsibility will in no way affect the Commission's independence, and its functions will remain as set out in its Royal Warrant.



## BACKGROUND NOTE

The financial responsibility for the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts has hitherto rested with the Lord Privy Seal and the Management and Personnel Office. This responsibility has not fitted ideally with the other duties of the Office, and there has been consideration of how matters might be more suitably arranged within Government.

The Prime Minister has agreed to the proposition that the full responsibility - both financial and functional - for the Royal Commission should be vested in the Office of Arts and Libraries.

It is important, if the public confidence in the Commission's impartiality is to be retained, that the exercise of its functions under the Royal Warrant should be clearly seen to be unaffected by the transfer of Ministerial sponsorship to a department with other responsibilities in the same field as the Commission's. The Written Answer therefore incorporates a re-affirmation that the Commission's functions remain as defined in its Royal Warrant.