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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

29 November 1984

*Davis
30/11*

Dear Richard,

H COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE

The arrangement whereby less important items of H Committee business are dealt with by correspondence is a convenient one which should be used to the full. However, the Lord President is anxious to ensure that such business is dealt with expeditiously while giving colleagues an adequate opportunity to consider the acceptability of proposals. He wrote to the Lord Chancellor on 2 November 1983 about this, and this letter repeats and supplements the guidance given then.

Timescale

It is important both that recipients of correspondence are given adequate time to respond, and that Ministers seeking clearance in correspondence are not unreasonably held up by delays in replying. In normal circumstances, therefore, letters seeking policy approval should give at least 10 working days ie (normally two calendar weeks, but longer if there are intervening public holidays and preferably longer during Parliamentary adjournments) for comment. Recipients should aim to reply within this period. The Lord President as chairman will then write with the Committee's overall conclusion as soon as possible after the closing date; his silence should not be taken to imply consent. It may sometimes be necessary to seek approval in less than 10 days - in these cases the reason should be clearly explained. Only in the most exceptional circumstances beyond the Minister's control should approval be sought in five days or less. Where timescales are tight the originating Department should alert the Cabinet Office (Mr Hickson 233 7665), and Departments with a known interest, by telephone when the letter is despatched. Departments who, exceptionally, will be unable to reply by the deadline should inform the Secretariat and the originating Department by telephone.

You may like to ensure that your officials are aware of the "10 working day rule" so that they can make submissions to your Ministers in good time.

Richard Stoate Esq
Private Secretary to the
Lord Chancellor

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Circulation

All H Committee correspondence should, as a matter of course, be addressed to the chairman and copied to all members of the Committee, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Minister without Portfolio, the Paymaster General, and the Secretary of the Cabinet. Care should be taken to ensure that copies also go to other Ministers in charge of departments and to the Law Officers when their interests are concerned or when their advice might be sought. The interest of the Prime Minister in appropriate cases should not be overlooked. Where the content of legislation is concerned, a copy should go to First Parliamentary Counsel or the First Parliamentary Draftsman (Scotland).

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of H Committee, to other Ministers in charge of departments, the Prime Minister, the Minister without Portfolio, the Paymaster General, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate, First Parliamentary Counsel and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours sincerely,
Janet Lewis-Jones.*

JANET A LEWIS-JONES
Private Secretary

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