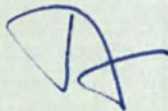


PRIME MINISTER

SWITCH

You queried the proposal to announce the Switch programme on 19 March as part of the Budget. I gather from DES that the Chancellor thought that this would be something positive to improve the public presentation of the Budget. I have conveyed your view to them that it might be better if the announcement were separate in order to avoid being overwhelmed by the rest of the Budget.

Can I take it that you wish to hold a meeting with industrialists at some suitable time in the reasonably near future after the announcement?



Yes

(TIM FLESHER)

4 March 1985

D. R.

PRIME MINISTER

The Switch

You will recall agreeing to Robin Nicholson's proposal that you should meet a number of industrialists to secure the greatest possible industry backing for the programme. Robin originally envisaged that such a meeting would take place before the announcement of the programme. I gather from DES that they now intend this to be on 19 March and it would clearly be impossible to gather together sufficient of the leading industrialists (I enclose a list of the names envisaged by DES) at only a week or ten days' notice. Their diaries will be just as crowded as yours.

I have accordingly explored with DES whether the announcement might be postponed. Unfortunately it cannot because every day counts if we are to have an impact on the next academic year. An alternative proposal which DES have now put forward would be to make the announcement on 19 March as proposed but to have the meeting subsequently to enlist the support of the industrialists in relation not just to this year but to the second and third year as well.

Andrew and I are agreed on the sheer impossibility of setting up a worthwhile meeting before the announcement. Agree therefore to hold the meeting after the announcement as proposed by DES? Robin Nicholson would be content with this.

Tim Flesher  
1 March 1985

That is Budget Day  
∴ There would be no publicity  
whatsoever for this  
announcement no