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The Rt Hon Viscount Whitelaw CH MC
Lord President of the Council
68 Whitehall
London
SW1

28 February 1986

Billie

We spoke about the handling of the Gas Bill in the House of Lords. As you know, we will end the Committee Stage of the Gas Bill next Thursday and as you know the Report and Third Reading will be completed before Easter.

I am very anxious to give a briefing to those who are handling the legislation in the House of Lords and I would also like to take up Bertie Denham's offer to speak to Conservative Peers prior to the legislation commencing in your House.

We have had a very successful Committee Stage. The trouble that we took with the drafting has meant that there have been hardly any Government amendments and I am determined to see that there will be no Government amendments in the House of Lords. If therefore the Bill can be handled well in the House there is no reason why there should be any amendments to come back to the Commons.

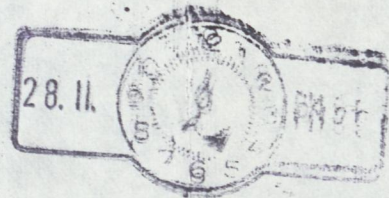
I would be very grateful for anything you can do to bring the consideration of this legislation to the House of Lords as speedily as possible, for any extra time that we can obtain between the Bill reaching the Statute Book and the placing of the offer itself will be a time of immense value to the successful flotation.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, John Biffen and Nigel Lawson.

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Deas

PETER WALKER

P.S. my name is Billie thanks for your help





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cc 7/3

FROM THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE
HOUSE OF LORDS

6 March 1986

Dear Peter

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Thank you for your letter of 28 February about the handling of the Gas Bill in the House of Lords.

I am so glad that you are prepared to speak to Conservative Peers about the Bill before we reach the Committee Stage, and I gather that John Belstead is getting in touch with John Boyd-Carpenter about this.

It will be very helpful and will save time if there are, as you suggest, no Government amendments in the Lords. But Bertie Denham, with whom I have discussed your letter, is very anxious that we should not be precluded from making concessions, if this proves necessary, during the Bill's passage, in order to keep the goodwill of our own supporters in the Lords and the Crossbenchers. Experience shows that the handling of a Bill can be very much more difficult if it is thought that the Government are unwilling to accept any amendments. This may mean that the Bill will have to go back to the Commons, but I believe that the slight delay involved at that stage will be well worth while in terms of the ease of handling the Bill if we are seen as ready to make changes wherever possible in response to points made in Committee. I am sure there is nothing between us on this, but I did want to avoid any possible scope for misunderstanding at a later stage.

As regards the timetable for the Bill, I fully recognise the importance of early Royal Assent and am arranging for the Bill to be given priority. I am hopeful that we shall be able to take the Second Reading during the first week after the Easter Recess.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, John Biffen and Nigel Lawson.

The Rt Hon Peter Walker MP
Secretary of State for Energy

Parliament: Legislation Pt 14

