

BG
166/11.**PRIME MINISTER****ACADEMIC TENURE: COMMISSIONERS**

1. As you know, the Education Reform Bill contains provisions (clauses 130-136 and schedule 9) which will remove academic tenure in the universities. This will be achieved by modifications to the statutes of each institution undertaken by a group of Commissioners. These "University Commissioners" fall to be appointed by me. The purpose of this letter is to seek your agreement and that of colleagues immediately concerned both to the types of people we should be appointing and to possible appointees. Our intention is to announce the names of the intended Commissioners while the Bill is in the Commons: my intention is to have a group of people who are so obviously eminent, disinterested, and expert in relevant matters that any criticisms that we intend to appoint government puppets will be disarmed.

Composition

2. This will be a complex operation which is both highly technical and politically sensitive. I now think that we will need a team of five people to provide all the skills needed. The Bill as introduced provides for there to be four (schedule 9 (1)1). We shall therefore need an amendment to cover this.
3. As the first Commissioner and Chairman of the group we shall need a very distinguished practitioner of the law. This points to a retired senior judge as I am sure that a serving judge could not make the necessary time available.
4. Secondly, because of the particular complexities of universities' internal laws we will need an academic specialist in that field.

APPOINTMENTS IN CONFIDENCE

5. Thirdly, we will need someone with extensive experience and knowledge of the operation of universities, which could best be provided by a recently retired Vice-Chancellor.
6. Fourthly, the Scottish universities have many technical complexities of their own in their statutes and practices and, political factors aside, there must be a Commissioner who has knowledge of that world.
7. Finally, I think that the group as a whole would benefit from having someone from the business world with experience at putting academic questions in a wider context.

Candidates

8. For each of these categories I propose the following first choices and reserves:

1. Practising lawyer and Chairman

Lord Brightman
Reserve - Lord Roskill

2. Academic lawyer

Professor Sir David Williams of Wolfson College, Cambridge
Professor Peter Bromley of Manchester

3. University member

Sir Albert Sloman
Lord Butterworth

4. Scotland

Sir Kenneth Alexander, ex-Principal of Stirling

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APPOINTMENTS IN CONFIDENCE

5. Businessman

Mr Hamish Orr-Ewing, Chairman Rank Xerox - retiring soon

9. My Department has of course made no approach yet to those mentioned. This can be put in hand quickly if you and colleagues are content with the approach I am indicating.

10. I am copying this to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Lord Chancellor, the Secretaries of State for Wales, Employment, Northern Ireland, Industry, Scotland and the Lord President.

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K.V.

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Department of Education and Science

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