



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

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THE PRIME MINISTER

3 February 1988

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter of 22 January about the Government's proposals for reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Like you I hope that there will be a broad spectrum of support for our proposals in the House of Commons. Indeed, Douglas Hurd and I have made clear that we aim to draw up proposals which are effective, enforceable and reasonable; that there will be ample opportunities for discussion; that we fully recognise the role of Parliament in considering our proposals and the ensuing legislation; and that we believe there will be general public support for our objectives. But I should point out once again - as of course the Home Secretary did in the debate on your Bill - that the issues go to the heart of Government and that our proposals must reflect the view we take, as the government of the day, on what is necessary in the national interest.

It is of course open for you and the co-sponsors of your Bill to let Douglas Hurd know at any time of any views or suggestions which add to what you have already put on the record, and these will be properly considered and taken into account. The right time for full and detailed discussion would, I think, be when we have published our own analysis

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and proposals in a White Paper. There will then be a debate in the House before the recess. I know that in the usual way Douglas Hurd will want to keep in touch at that stage with those who take a constructive interest in the subject.

Yours

Richard
Shepherd

Richard Shepherd, Esq., M.P.