

TOP COPY WITH
QUESTIONS.



Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG
01-233 3000

CC PS1CS1
PS1FST
PS1MSTC
PS1MSTL
SIR D WYSS
SIR L. AIREY
MR LITTLE
MR LOVELL
MR CORLETT
MR CROPPER
+5

MAP has seen.

PRIME MINISTER

RIGHTS OF ENTRY TO BUSINESS PREMISES

I understand that you have been in touch with Keith Joseph about a Question from Richard Alexander down for answer by you on Thursday next, 6th December. A draft Answer supplied by DOI would commit the Government to an urgent enquiry into all Inspectorates of central and local government and nationalised industries and seems to point to its being centred on a DOI Minister who would report back to you.

2. I do recognise that there is public concern about the general issue of powers of entry. But in relation to Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue an Answer in those terms would cut across the specific commitment in our manifesto to undertake a thorough enquiry into their enforcement powers. Peter Rees has been making a special study of this. He has had detailed reports from the two Departments, has discussed them with the Chairmen and has reported his conclusions to me. We are awaiting the decision in the Rossminster case - expected on 13th December - before putting proposals into final shape. At that stage I intended to put them to you. The issues are complex, raising as they do both the rights of the individual and the need to prevent large-scale loss of revenue. I have not yet made up my mind precisely how they should be tackled, but they demand consideration on their own merits and should

/not be



not be subsumed into a general review covering a mix of inspectorates. Certainly I should in any case not be content for matters which vitally affect revenue gathering to be left to an enquiry under a Minister from another Department.

..... 3. I understand, of course, that you would like your reply to reflect your general sympathy with the Question. May I suggest that if it were reworded as in the attached draft, it would do that without running the risks I have pointed to.

4. A number of colleagues have an interest in this matter. I am copying this letter to the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Industry, Defence and Employment, the Minister of Agriculture, the Secretaries of State for Environment, Social Services and Trade and Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G.H.' or similar initials.

(G.H.)

3 December, 1979

ORAL

THURSDAY 6 DECEMBER 1979

Con - Newark

MR RICHARD ALEXANDER: To ask the Prime Minister, if she will bring forward legislation setting out the rights and duties of officials from all Government departments who have a right of entry to business premises under existing legislation, together with the practice to be adopted in the exercise of such powers.

DRAFT REPLY

I am asking Ministers in charge of Departments [or responsible for central Government relations with the local authorities and nationalised industries] to review all those categories of inspectors with statutory powers to enter business premises with a view to seeing that there are no more inspectors than are needed, and their powers are no greater than are necessary, for the efficient functioning of the authorities concerned.

I am also asking them to consider whether any further measures are needed to ensure that businessmen and private persons likely to be affected are fully informed as to the rights and duties of these inspectors.