

Parliament



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

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-5 APR 1982

Dear Janet

COMMENCEMENT OF STATUTES

*will request if required*

Thank you for your letter of 23rd March.

I agree with you that, while it is sometimes necessary for legislation to come into force on Royal Assent, if possible there should be an interval, set out in the Statute, between enactment and commencement. For Home Office Legislation it has been customary for some years to provide in Bills for the Act to come into force one month after Royal Assent unless there is some good reason for making other provision. The one month was intended to allow time for the Act to be published and put on sale and for people affected to assimilate its effect before it comes into operation. I agree with you that, in general, it would be worth having a longer interval, but I think six weeks could prove unsatisfactory. One would need a calendar to discover the actual date which, of course, unlike the date of Royal Assent, cannot appear in the Act because no one knows while the Bill is in passage quite when Royal Assent will be.

I would be in favour of extending the one month period of three months as the standard interval to be employed. This seems to be the interval now used in Consolidation Acts and an Act which makes a change in the law should, I think, allow at least as long a period for assimilation.

I agree with you also that there should be as few commencement orders as circumstances permit.

I have sent copies of this letter to Ministers in charge of Departments, Sir Robert Armstrong, First Parliamentary Counsel and First Parliamentary Draftsman in the Lord Advocate's Department.

*Baroness Young*

The Rt. Hon. Baroness Young.