



From the Secretary of State

The Rt Hon Baroness Young
Lord Privy Seal
Management and Personnel Office
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AZ

19th
January 1983

Dear Janet,

GAS AND ELECTRICITY LEGAL METROLOGY WORK

PH6 I have now received and considered the further report on this subject which I commissioned in the Autumn for the reason set out in my letter of 24 August to you. I understand that your officials and Nigel Lawson's have already seen a copy.

It is clear from this report that the issues involved are less simple than appeared to be the case during the preliminary examination by the inter-Departmental Working Group which reported earlier in the year on such a possible transfer in the context of the gas safety considerations.

There may be some theoretical advantage in the idea of bringing together in one Department the legal metrology work of the National Weights and Measures Laboratory and of the Gas Standards Branch and the Electricity Meter Examining Service. But there will unquestionably be no operational or cost advantage from such a move. There are also continuing management problems associated with the work which make the transfer of departmental responsibility so soon after major reductions in the complement - of the Gas Standards Branch in particular - unattractive. Those problems were clearly set out in David Howell's paper to E(EA) in June 1981 (E(EA)(81)24) when his proposal was to transfer the work to a new non-departmental body and are covered again by the report I commissioned.

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From the Secretary of State

Because of these factors I do not accept that there would be any net benefit from the proposed change. Although I fully appreciate Nigel Lawson's position I do not therefore think it would be appropriate to have this work transferred to my Department. Reorganisation for its own sake, or simply to satisfy theoretical concepts of tidiness, always proves in practice to be wrong.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Nigel Lawson, Norman Tebbit, Patrick Jenkin and Nicholas Ridley.

LORD COCKFIELD

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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE
TRADE DEPARTMENT
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LONDON SW1H 0ET

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MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

The Rt Hon the Lord Cockfield, PC
Secretary of State for Trade
Department of Trade
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

15th February 1983

Dear Secretary of State

GAS AND ELECTRICITY LEGAL METROLOGY WORK

I have seen your letter of 19 January to Janet Young on this subject and also the Private Secretary letter of 31 January from the Prime Minister.

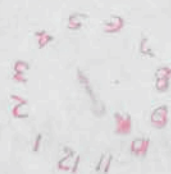
I do not wish to dispute that the metrology work of the Gas Standards Branch and the Electricity Meter Examining Service can perfectly well remain with my Department, although I believe that transfer to yours would have brought some real advantages. However I remain of the view that the Health and Safety Executive should assume the responsibilities for gas safety, including the regime for gas installers, as proposed in my letter of 4 August last. The Prime Minister has now agreed that this change should be made. Work on this is proceeding accordingly.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Janet Young, Norman Tebbit, Patrick Jenkin and Nicholas Ridley.

Yours sincerely
Nigel Lawson

pp NIGEL LAWSON
(Approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his absence)

Next End,
Gen - Elect, P 7



15 JAN 1983



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EM

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

31 January, 1983

Deen Corbett,

The Prime Minister has seen a copy of your Secretary of State's letter of 11 October to the Lord Privy Seal, which records Ministers' agreement, subject to her approval, that the responsibilities at present exercised by the Department's Gas Safety Branch should be transferred to the Health and Safety Executive.

The Prime Minister agrees that this change should be made. She understands that the Health and Safety Commission and its Executive will report to your Secretary of State on the discharge of these responsibilities. She also believes that the new function of controlling gas appliance installers should be discharged by the HSE on the same basis.

The Prime Minister notes that the question what form the controls should take is still unresolved. She agrees with your Secretary of State that it is presentationally important to demonstrate that the Government is introducing an adequate safety regime to maintain and perhaps improve gas safety standards when the arrangements for gas appliance retailing are liberalised. But she does not think that demonstration of this fact necessarily rests upon the introduction of an exhaustive licensing system. She believes that the aim should be to ensure a control regime that is as unbureaucratic, cheap and unburdensome to industry as is commensurate with effective regulation; the views of the Health and Safety Commission and its Executive, as the experts in the operation of such controls, should be given due weight.

The Prime Minister also notes that the question of a transfer of responsibilities for some aspects of legal metrology from the Secretary of State for Energy to the Secretary of State for Trade is outstanding. She believes that, in principle, such a transfer is desirable, and that bringing together the main responsibilities for legal metrology in the National Weights and Measures Laboratory should benefit the services offered and lead to a more economical use of resources in the longer term. She hopes that the outstanding

/points

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points of detail can be settled quickly, so that work on re-allocating your Department's Gas Safety Branch and Electricity Metering Examination Service can proceed.

I am copying this letter to Felicity Everiss (Department of Employment), John Whitlock (Department of Trade), Caroline Varley (Department of Industry), Paul Cann (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Jane Swift (Chief Secretary's Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Y
ours ever,
Tim Flesher.

(Timothy Flesher)

Miss C.E. Brooks,
Department of Energy

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