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14 JUN 1984

DOCK WORK REGULATION BILL

When Cabinet considered the legislative programme in April, it was decided that the Dock Work Regulation Bill would be held in reserve for a normal 1983/84 session, to be introduced if Parliamentary time became available.

I reluctantly accepted this in the circumstances prevailing at the time. I have, however, now reconsidered the position. We have always recognised that this Bill will be opposed by the dockers' union (TGWU) and that the timing of its introduction would, therefore, need to be carefully judged. I am firmly convinced that there could be no better time to introduce the Bill than during the first session of a new Parliament when I think the risk of provoking a dock strike would be minimised. We would, of course, still need to consider the precise timing of its introduction in the light of circumstances in the industry at the time.

The Bill has policy clearance, is already drafted and although the discussions will be contentious it is only two clauses long. It would repeal the provisions in the Dock Work Regulation Act 1976 which require the Secretary of State to bring forward a new Dock Labour Scheme which might be extended to cover new areas of work.

I should, therefore be grateful if you and colleagues to whom I am copying this letter would give the Bill a place in the programme for the coming session. I do not though think that any mention of it should be made in the Queen's Speech. I am sending copies of this letter to members of QL, Tom King, and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*[Handwritten signature]*

20 JUN 1985

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