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Env Affairs

## 10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

28 November 1980

Dear Professor Kornberg

Thank you for your letter of 11 November about the proposal to transfer financial responsibility for the Royal Commission to the Department of the Environment.

I recognise your concern at the proposed change, as I realise how important it is that the Royal Commission should be recognised as impartial and independent. I do not believe however that the standing of the Commission should be affected by the change.

The change which is contemplated is one of Vote responsibility only. There is no intention of changing the status of your Commission. Royal Commissions enjoy, and will continue to enjoy, the independence from direct Ministerial control which is conferred by their Royal Warrants. The question of which Department accounts for spending does not therefore affect your independence nor need it in any way inhibit your freedom to comment on the activities of that Department.

The reason for the proposed change is the Government's policy of putting accountability with responsibility. It has always been something of an anomaly that the Civil Service Department should have Vote responsibility for Royal Commissions. The Department

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is not well placed to discharge the function effectively and, as you will recall, when non-departmental bodies were reviewed last year your Commission was looked at by the Department of the Environment as having general responsibility for the interests in this area.

But I do want to emphasise that there is no question whatever of proposals to change the terms of your Royal Warrant and the status and powers of the Commission will remain unchanged.

The Secretary of State for the Environment has been consulted about the proposed change and I am sure he would always be ready to see you at any time to make sure that the change of Vote responsibility has no adverse effect on your Commission and its work.

I am sending a copy of this to the Lord President of the Council and to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Yours sincerely

MT

Professor Sir Hans Kornberg, FRS

From the Private Secretary



**Civil Service Department**

Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ

01-273 4400

26 November 1980

Mike Pattison Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

G.R.  
Type/AM, etc.

MA

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 12 November.  
... Here is a draft reply for the Prime Minister  
to send to the Chairman of the Royal Commission  
on Environmental Pollution. It has been agreed  
with Environment; and I am copying this to  
Jeff Jacobs (Department of the Environment).

Yours sincerely,  
Jim Buckley.

J BUCKLEY

DRAFT LETTER

Professor Sir Hans L Kornberg  
Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution  
Church House  
Great Smith Street  
LONDON SW1P 3BL

Thank you for your letter of 11 November about the proposal to transfer financial responsibility for the Royal Commission to the Department of the Environment.

I recognise your concern at the proposed change, as I realise how important it is that the Royal Commission should be recognised as impartial and independent. I do not believe however that the standing of the Commission should be affected by the change.

The change which is contemplated is one of Vote responsibility only. There is no intention of changing the status of your Commission. Royal Commissions enjoy, and will continue to enjoy, the independence from direct Ministerial control which is conferred by their Royal Warrants. The question of which Department accounts for spending does not therefore affect your independence nor need it in any way inhibit your freedom to comment on the activities of that Department.

The reason for the proposed change is the Government's policy of putting accountability with responsibility. It has always been something of an anomaly that the Civil Service Department should have Vote responsibility for Royal Commissions. The Department is not well placed to discharge the function effectively and, as you will recall, when non-departmental bodies were reviewed last year your Commission was looked at by the Department of the Environment as having general responsibility for the interests in this area.

But I do want to emphasise that there is no question whatever of proposals to change the terms of your Royal Warrant and the status and powers of the Commission will remain unchanged.

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

12 November, 1980.

The Chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has written to the Prime Minister about the proposed change of financial responsibility for the Commission.

I should be grateful if you could let me have a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send. It would be helpful if this could reach me by 25 November.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to Jeff Jacobs (Department of the Environment).

M. A. PATTISON

Jim Buckley, Esq.,  
Civil Service Department.

*RH*

x 3030

12 November, 1980.

I write to thank you for your letter  
of 11 November.

I will place thks before the Prime  
Minister, and a reply will be sent to you  
as soon as possible.

M. A. PATTISON

Professor Sir Hans Kornberg, F.R.S.



From: Professor Sir Hans Kornberg, F.R.S.

Chairman



**Royal Commission  
on Environmental Pollution**

Church House  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BL

Your reference

Our reference

Direct line 01-212  
Switchboard 01-212 3434

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher, M.P.  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1

*HR*  
11 November 1980

*Dear Prime Minister,*

I learnt only today of a proposal to transfer financial responsibility for Royal Commissions from the Civil Service Department to the Departments that have functional responsibility for their work; in the case of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, the Department concerned would, I presume, be the Department of the Environment.

I feel strongly that this proposal may lead to a weakening of the Royal Commission's independence from any Departmental affiliations, which distinguishes it from other advisory bodies and which is its greatest strength. At present, the Commission is as free to comment on the activities of the Department of the Environment as it is on those of others, and has done so in several of its Reports.

I believe it to be most important that the Royal Commission should not only continue to be unlinked to the Department, but be clearly seen to be separate from it. I, therefore, very much hope that the Commission's functional independence will continue to be publicly asserted, whatever new financial arrangements may be envisaged for its financial control.

*Kind regards*

*Sincerely yours*

*Hans L. Kornberg*