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31 October 1984

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE TENTH REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION  
ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

The Tenth Report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution contained 52 recommendations for action across the whole field of environmental pollution. The tone of the Report was generally moderate and reasoned. The Government response therefore provides a rare opportunity to present the more positive stance on environmental pollution which was agreed, for both domestic and international reasons, at the meeting you chaired on 17 May. I strongly criticised an earlier draft of the response because I believed that its style was not consistent with this policy. However, I feel that the present document admirably succeeds in presenting the Government's policy as positive and consistent. It goes a considerable way in accepting the Royal Commission's recommendations, particularly in the areas of access to information, air pollution and coastal water pollution.

2. There is one specific point to which I should draw your attention. You may wish to consider whether the response (page 34) to the Royal Commission's recommendation 7.95, on appraisal of alternative energy scenarios, makes a sufficiently robust statement on the nuclear alternatives to fossil fuels. At the meeting on acid rain which you chaired on 19 June, it was agreed that one constituent of the Government's acid rain policy was to "make it clear to the public that the development of the nuclear component is an important element in our strategy, but that we also seek gains in a variety of other ways". Also, a leader in The Times on 7 September, commenting on the Report on Acid Rain of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment, commented that "Curiously enough, the MPs show no eagerness to see our highly sulphurous home-mined coal replaced by imports or by more nuclear power."

3. This response provides an opportunity for a stronger statement on nuclear power and its place in reducing atmospheric pollution and I have made this point to the Department of Energy. They have, with Ministerial guidance, preferred the present rather weak remarks.

*RBN*

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Chief Scientific Adviser

Cabinet Office  
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