

SRWBKI

PRIME MINISTER

BROADCASTING: ADDITIONAL PROGRAMME SERVICES: VHF BANDS

Two meetings of MISC 128 are planned on the major issue of additional programme services - the first a presentation that DTI will be giving you on 21 April. You have already seen some of the papers, and I will be putting them to you again before the presentation.

However DTI and the Home Office are agreed in wanting to clear one particular issue out of the way before 21 April. This is whether VHF could be used to provide a further channel. Lord Young is facing strong pressure from the Mobile Radio Industry who say their investment planning is being damaged by the continuing uncertainty about the VHF option for additional broadcasting. They are pressing him to make an early announcement.

All the technical studies suggest that VHF is not a viable option for an extra broadcasting channel. In particular, there is possible interference with aircraft navigation aids and communication systems. The argument is spelled out in the highlighted passage of Lord Young's letter of 12 April attached.

Given that all concerned are agreed that the VHF possibility should not be pursued further, are you content for Lord Young to make an announcement to this effect as he proposes before the hearing of the Home Affairs Select Committee on 20 April?

Suzanne

(PAUL GRAY)

14 April 1988

Yes not

pp