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NBPM

AT 17/11

13 January 1984

Dear Mr. Colvin,

MINISTERIAL GROUP ON MARITIME AFFAIRS

We spoke yesterday about the proposed reconstitution of MISC 19, and I believe you have also had words with Henry Derwent here.

As you know, the Secretary of State for Trade used to be the Chairman of this Committee because of his responsibility for shipping and marine matters. After the election these responsibilities were transferred to my Secretary of State.

I think that MISC 19 last met in 1982, when it considered the extension of UK territorial sea and the UN Law of the Sea Conference. I understand that its membership varies, but when it last met the Secretary of State for Trade, the Chief Secretary, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate, Ministers of State from MAFF, Scottish Office and Energy, and Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State from FCO, MOD, DOI and DOT were present; the Department of Transport was not represented.

There are several items of business coming up in the near future which would be appropriate for consideration in a Ministerial Group on Maritime Affairs. Ministers will soon need to consider the UK's position at the next session of the Preparatory Commission for UNLOSC - an obvious subject for the Committee. The Committee also receives regular reports from the Official Working Group on wrecks about the dangerous wreck "Sir Richard Montgomery". Wrecks are now, of course, this Department's business. I gather that there may also soon be a need to consider the question of disused gas and oil installations.

My Secretary of State has therefore asked that the Committee should be reconstituted under his Chairmanship, to reflect the change in responsibilities. I would be grateful for your views.

I am copying this to the Private Secretaries of all members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely,
Dinah Nichols

MISS D A NICHOLS,
Private Secretary

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