

PRIME MINISTER

PRESENTATION OF CONSTITUTION ACTS

There is to be an OD on Tuesday to look at the question whether we should let Australia - and other Commonwealth countries - have one of the original copies of their Constitution.

The attached paper by the Lord Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary sets out the arguments fairly. It is clear that a short enabling Bill will be required if we decide to hand over the Constitutions.

Historical and archival arguments are against handing them over. The two crucial questions are:

- do the political benefits of offering Australia and other Commonwealth countries their Constitutions outweigh the arguments against breaking up the archive?
- what will be the reaction in Parliament to this proposal? Is there likely to be a strong historical/academic/parliamentary lobby opposed to it (particularly within the Government's own ranks)?

If it is agreed that we should go ahead with legislation, the meeting will need to decide what can be said to the Australians at the time of your visit.

C.D.P.

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Charles Powell

15 July 1988