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My ref:

Your ref:

The Rt Hon John Wakeham MP
Department of Energy
Thames House South
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20 October 1989

Dear Secretary of State

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE ENERGY SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE POLICY
IMPLICATIONS OF THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

Thank you for your letter of 6 October which covered your proposed response to the Select Committee.

My first concern is over timing. My Private Secretary has already told yours that, despite the normal rules for responding to Select Committees, I think it would be a mistake for your response to issue before the Prime Minister addresses the UN General Assembly on 8 November. I am also concerned that your response should not issue before the forthcoming meeting of Environment Ministers in Noordwijk on 6/7 November.

My second concern is that the draft response does not do enough to reflect the lead which the Government has given to international efforts in this field. I attach some specific drafting suggestions to strengthen this aspect of the response.

Para 1.9 of your draft addresses the question of targets for the control of greenhouse gas emissions. We are absolutely right to resist arbitrary reductions targets in advance of the delivery of the scientific evidence to support them. But surely we cannot be so coy as to leave open still the question of whether targets will ultimately be necessary. All of our pronouncements on the Greenhouse problem have indicated that we regard it as a serious matter calling for urgent international action. It seems inconceivable that any international agreement will not in future be based on some global target - probably expressed - in relation to emissions and that signatories to any agreement will have to make undertakings in relation to their contribution to meeting such a target. To refuse to recognise that reality undermines the credibility of our rejection of the arbitrary targets which are being urged on us.



I suggest that the word "yet" should be added to the end of the 2nd sentence in para 1.9 and that the 3rd sentence should be replaced with, "Once the IPCC has reported we hope to have a firmer basis on which to determine appropriate global measures which may well include targets for greenhouse gases and the way in which individual countries should contribute to their achievement."

Finally, I think the tone of the section on energy efficiency needs further consideration if it is not to draw renewed criticism from the Committee. In particular it seems to be insufficient (para 4-7) to respond to the Committee's proposals by the restatement of an argument which they have explicitly rejected. I would prefer to take a more open attitude to their general proposition on the Government's stance on energy efficiency to keep open options for the discussions in MISC 141 and for next year's Environment White Paper.

Detailed drafting points are attached.

I am copying this to members of the Cabinet and Sir Robin Butler.

Chris Patten

PP CHRIS PATTEN

(approved by the Secretary
of State and signed in his
absence)



Drafting suggestions

Introduction

Para 1. Replace 2nd sentence with:

"The Government has been at the forefront of those who have identified global warming, and associated climate changes as one of the most important issues facing the world today."

Para 3. Replace middle section of first sentence:

"...and the need to develop responses having the support of nations all round the world,..."

(It is of course possible for countries to take helpful initiatives unilaterally where they make economic sense in their own right and we are committed to doing so: see comment on line 9).

in line 6: delete "resolve", insert "reduce".

in line 9: replace existing with "...in the UK's own energy sector, the immediate pursuit of policies which are already justified in their own right and which contribute to an amelioration of the Greenhouse effect." The Government is already committed to taking these steps and to supporting research etc....."

Para 4, last line: delete "preparation" insert "in this work".

(There is some sensitivity internationally to suggestions that the UK is secretly preparing a draft convention to pre-empt discussions. We are not).

Para 5, third indent: insert "more efficient" after "cleaner".

Last sentence to read:

"In addition the Government will continue to press for the pricing of fuels to reflect their full economic and environmental costs and for amendments to the Montreal Protocol to secure the full phasing out of CFC's as quickly as practicable."

Background

Para 1.1 line 6: delete "but" and start a new sentence.

Para 1.2 The first sentence does not fairly reflect the Committee's view, it should be redrafted:

"The Government endorse the Committee's view that the UK is in no sense particularly to blame and that effective action will need to be coordinated internationally."



*Earl Adams, A.D. 0
Ra PA*

Para 1.5 Second sentence add after "council," who have a large and growing commitment to research in this area. In addition the Department of"

delete 3rd sentence.

Para 1.8 delete 3rd sentence.

(It does not help our case which has to be based on the 2nd sentence.)

