



HOUSE OF LORDS,
SW1A 0PW

12 April 1983

Dear Robert.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND ARTS:
INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC RECORDS

Thank you for your letter of ^{will request & required} 30 March about the renewed efforts by Mr Price to secure your appearance before the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. I am sure you are right to seek to resist this if you can, because although Mr Price says that his Committee are concerned to examine the Cabinet Office's own record keeping practices, I am sure they would take the opportunity to question you about the retention by Departments of security related papers, and about your role in this in relation to the Lord Chancellor.

There is however one point in your letter about which I am not very happy. It is certainly correct that the Lord Chancellor is responsible, under Section 3(4) of the Act, for granting approval for the retention of records by Departments. But in the case of the blanket approvals I suggest that the responsibility for deciding whether or not a particular document comes within the terms of a blanket approval must rest with the Department retaining it. I do not see that the Lord Chancellor can or should be responsible for such a decision, since neither he nor his officials will necessarily have ever seen the document concerned. Similar considerations apply in relation to the question of whether a document, although coming within the terms of a blanket approval, may nevertheless be sufficiently antiquated to be capable of release, its sensitivity having evaporated. Again, I do not see how the Lord Chancellor can or should take responsibility for such a decision.

Rather than air all this in a letter to the Committee, my inclination would be to drop lines 10 - 20 from the third paragraph of your draft reply, and to rely on the point that, since the Committee are concerned to examine the Cabinet Office's own record keeping arrangements, your Establishment Officer and your Departmental Record Officer are better placed than you to assist the Committee.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours,
A.D.M.

A.D.M. OULTON

Sir Robert Armstrong, GCB, CVO

4 APR 1988

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HOUSE OF LORDS,
S.W.1

*With the Compliments of the
Permanent Secretary
to the Lord Chancellor*



(ZMZ 4/1)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 April, 1983.

Sir Robert Armstrong, GCB, CVO,
Cabinet Office.

Dear Robert,

Thank you for copying to Antony Acland your letter of 30 March to Oulton and the attached draft.

We are in complete agreement with the line which you propose to take in replying to Christopher Price.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

*Yours
P.R.H. Wright*

(P.R.H. Wright)

cc A.D.M. Oulton, Esq., CB,
Lord Chancellor's Office.
Sir Brian Cubbon, KCB,
Home Office.
F.E.R. Butler, Esq.,
10 Downing St.
D.C.R. Heyhoe, Esq.,
PS/Lord President of the Council.

Palmyra
Hc Proctor
P.S.

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