



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

6 June 1984

Dear Hugh,

AS 7/6

There have recently been a number of instances of applications for emergency debates being made under Standing Order No 10 without a Minister from the relevant Government Department being present. These have given rise to points of order alleging discourtesy to the House.

Notice of an S.O. No 10 application is, strictly speaking, confidential between the Member concerned and the Chair; and it is right that this should be so, because a Member may give the Speaker notice of an application before midday (as required by S.O. No 10), and later decide not to proceed with it.

In practice, however, the Clerk's Department in the House normally advises the relevant Government Department when notice of an application has been received before 12 noon in order to ascertain the facts (though in cases of extreme urgency, an application under S.O. No 10 can be made much later, and then the Clerks will not have this opportunity).

The Lord Privy Seal feels that (except in such cases of extreme urgency) offence is likely to be given if the relevant departmental Minister is not present and listening to the case which is being made in the application. He would therefore be grateful if, whenever a Department has been informed of an impending S.O. No 10 application, a Minister is present on the bench to hear it. If this is not possible, then the Lord Privy Seal would wish to be informed.

I should emphasise that nothing in this letter is intended to disturb the existing arrangements under which S.O. No 10 applications are confidential to the Chair and are made known to Departments on an informal and voluntary basis. Departments should not therefore approach the House authorities in the first instance with regard to possible S.O. No 10 applications.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, to all members of the Cabinet, to the Chief Whip and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours sincerely,
David Morris*

D R MORRIS
Private Secretary

Hugh Taylor Esq
PS/Home Secretary

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