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PRIME MINISTER

*whpm sub gm*

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON ACID RAIN

Patrick Jenkin's minute to you of 2 November invited comments on his draft response to the Report on Acid Rain.

*with DB?*

I agree with him on the importance of adhering to the robust stand which we agreed in June. With this in mind, I should like to suggest some changes to the drafting and order of the Introduction. I attach a revised version. As you will see, I am suggesting that this should end on the very positive points about the durability of Government policy and about our record of achievement.

I should also prefer to omit the first sentence of paragraph 94, which would then begin:

"When the time comes to build new fossil-fuelled power station plant, it will be for decision .... "

There are also a number of important technical points, particularly on control costs, which I am asking my officials to pursue urgently with their Department of Environment counterparts. I should however make it clear that the £150m figure given in paragraph 27 for the costs of installing FGD plant refers to one power station only, and I would prefer that the global cost of meeting the EC directive, ie £1.5 billion, should be quoted instead.

I am copying this to the recipients of Patrick Jenkin's minute.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY

5 November 1984



I. INTRODUCTION

- (i) The Government welcomes the Environment Committee's timely Report on the important subject of Acid Rain. As the Committee rightly note, a term which had a single meaning when first devised has now been extended to cover a variety of forms of air pollution arising from a number of emissions and from chemical interactions of those emissions in the atmosphere. The Government considers that this process of broadening has also blurred important issues which need to be disentangled if effective solutions are to be found.
- (ii) The Government acknowledges that this is an area of wide concern. It recognises in particular that a number of European countries are sustaining damage which they attribute in whole or part to acid deposition. This damage is far more extensive than we appear to be experiencing in the United Kingdom. Some countries can point to evidence that pollutants emitted in neighbouring countries, including our own, are contributing to their damage - and consider that concerted international action is needed. The Government has on a number of occasions expressed its willingness to develop environmentally effective and economically feasible policies. It will continue to play a full and positive part in international discussions and research programmes designed to identify the cause of damage and to provide solutions.
- (iii) Building on the nearly 40% reduction in SO<sub>2</sub> emissions achieved since 1970, the Government aims to achieve a further reduction of 30% from 1980 levels of SO<sub>2</sub> emissions by the end of the 1990s and a similar reduction in levels of NO<sub>x</sub> emissions. It also intends to support stricter emission standards for petrol engined cars, by development of lean-burn engines. It does not believe that the very substantial expenditure (running into hundreds of millions of pounds) which would be required to install flue-gas desulphurization plant at existing power stations can be justified while scientific knowledge is developing and the environmental benefit remains uncertain. It will, however, continue to encourage the development of new combustion technologies which offer the prospect of emission control at relatively low cost .



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(iv) Pollution is dealt with by political action, but it is explained by science. Science is dynamic, and the policies of this and other Governments must evolve to meet new evidence about the environmental situation. What is durable within this framework of change is the Government's overall policy: that action against pollution shall rest on the best scientific evidence, the best technical and economic analysis, and the best possible assessment of priorities. The UK has a proud record of achievement in tackling the massive legacy of pollution inherited from the era of our industrial expansion and the Government firmly intends to sustain that record.



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