

Prime Minister (1)

GENO

You agreed that the Government should take a more robust line on nuclear energy in responding to the Royal Commission.

W.0809

7 November 1984

MR BARCLAY, NO 10

Re-draft below. Content, subject to Mr Walker and Mr Jenkin?

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE TENTH REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

DBS
8/11

I think your redraft of the paragraph on nuclear energy in the above response is crisper than my original suggestion. I would like to propose some further alterations which I give below. The only one which I should explain is the re-inclusion of conservation. I'm sure that the Department of Energy will want to preserve this and could reasonably claim that it is part of their appraisal of alternative energy scenarios, which is the basis of the Select Committee's recommendations.

with DB

"The Government accepts that the UK's energy strategy needs to give full weight to the environmental impact of the use of different fuels. Nuclear energy is already the most highly developed alternative to energy derived from fossil fuels, and its further growth offers one of the most effective ways of reducing air pollution associated with electricity generation. Renewable sources of energy also have a contribution to make, but the immediate task here is to establish the technical and economic feasibility of exploitation of the available technologies on a commercial scale. As part of a continuing programme the Department of Energy spent £11 million on such work in 1983-84.

"Current energy projections, published in 1982, included scenarios which suggest that the share of UK energy demand supplied by nuclear and renewable energies in 2010 might be high as 34 per cent. An important complementary approach is energy conservation; the Government already have a substantial programme to encourage the most efficient use of energy. The Government's assessment of future energy requirements and sources will continue to be available to Parliament and the public."

RBN

ROBIN B NICHOLSON
Chief Scientific Adviser

Liz...
mt

ATU



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

6 November 1984

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE TENTH REPORT OF THE ROYAL
COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

Because of her other pre-occupations, the Prime Minister will not be able to consider your minute of 5 November until later in the week.

May I take advantage of the interval to suggest a further re-draft of the paragraph in question:

"The Government accepts that the UK's energy strategy needs to give full weight to the impact of different fuels on the environment. Nuclear energy is already the most highly developed alternative to energy derived from fossil fuels, and its further growth offers one of the most effective ways of reducing air pollution from electricity generation. Renewable technology also has a contribution to make, although in most forms the immediate task is to establish the technical and economic feasibility of exploitation on a commercial scale. As part of the continuing programme, the Department of Energy spent £11 million on such work in 1983/84.

"Current energy projections, published in 1982, included scenarios which suggest that the share of UK energy demand supplied by nuclear and renewable energies in 2010 might be as high as 34 per cent. The Government's assessment of future energy requirements and sources will continue to be available to Parliament and the public."

BF // Could you please let me know as soon as possible whether you would be content with this?

DAVID BARCLAY

Dr. R.B. Nicholson,
Cabinet Office.

PRIME MINISTER

ROYAL COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION: GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TO TENTH REPORT

The DOE minute and draft response to the Royal Commission ~~was~~ circulated very late on Friday. I do not think you can possibly be expected to respond in detail in the time available.

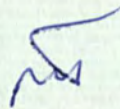
But Dr. Nicholson makes an important point about nuclear power in his minute immediately below.

I think you may well want to press for a firmer reference to the environmental benefits of nuclear power, in terms of reduced emissions of sulphur and nitrogen oxides.

Agree I ask Dr. Nicholson to suggest a redraft of the appropriate passage for your approval?

DWB

Yes please



2 November 1984



W.0807

5 November 1984

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE TENTH REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION
ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

You invited me to suggest a new draft response to recommendation 7.95 of the Royal Commission's Report, with particular reference to the environmental benefits of nuclear energy.

2. A response along the following lines would be consistent with the Government's energy and environmental policies, and would show them in a more positive light than does the draft circulated by the Secretary for the Environment:

"We accept that environmental impact is an important criterion in formulating the UK's energy strategy and that forward planning should take account of the more pessimistic air pollution scenarios. This is already Government policy. Nuclear energy is the most highly developed alternative to energy derived from fossil fuels. It not only makes a large current contribution to the UK's energy supplies but also has the greatest potential for further growth. On the other hand, most forms of renewable energy technology are at the stage where the immediate task is to establish the technical and economic feasibility of exploitation on a commercial scale; as part of a continuing programme, the Department of Energy spent £11m on such work in 1983-84. Current energy projections, published in 1982, include scenarios which suggest that the share of UK energy demand supplied by nuclear and renewable energies in 2010 might reach 21-34 per cent. An important complementary approach is energy conservation; the Government already have a substantial programme to encourage the most efficient use of energy. Our current assessment of future energy requirements and sources will continue to be available to Parliament and the public."

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3. The critical passage in the text of the Royal Commission was:

"We respect the fears that many people continue to express about certain aspects of the nuclear power programme. The safeguards recommended in the Sixth Report have been largely accepted by successive United Kingdom Governments. The United Kingdom nuclear industry has devoted considerable effort and expertise to the reduction of risk and the safety record of British nuclear power stations is good. As the reduction of atmospheric pollution may in the future be seen as imperative we therefore believe that the United Kingdom should retain a wide range of options for achieving that reduction. Until the United Kingdom has a secure and environmentally attractive alternative, it would be wrong to discard the experience and expertise gained from several decades of nuclear power development. We would therefore support a modest increase in nuclear power capacity as part of a strategy for reducing dependence on fossil fuels as a primary energy source and for reducing the polluting effects of their combustion."

And the recommendation is:

"An appraisal of alternative energy scenarios, in preparation for a possible progressive shift away from fossil fuels, should be given the highest priority, and the Government should regularly inform Parliament and the public of its current assessment of future energy requirements and their sources."

4. I am sending a copy of this minute to Robert Armstrong.

RBN,

ROBIN B NICHOLSON
Chief Scientific Adviser

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Cabinet Office
5 November 1984

CONFIDENTIAL

- 5 NOV 1984

