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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

9 January 1985

Dear Nick,

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME: TRUST PORTS

*N 9/1
- will request P. rec.*

I have seen your Private Secretary's letter of 4 January and the Chief Secretary's letter of 8 January urging the need for a decision about legislation on Trust Ports.

I now understand fully the need for urgency as far as a commitment to legislation is concerned and I have considered very carefully the best way of achieving your objective. Taking into account the need to introduce the Public Transport Bill as soon as possible and the very strong advice I have received from First Parliamentary Counsel on the dangers of delaying that Bill if we attempt to add further clauses, it seems to me that the balance of advantage remains as it did when I last considered the matter. I am therefore prepared to agree to the inclusion in this Session's legislative programme of a small single purpose Bill to make the changes which you require in the legislation relating to Trust Ports. I understand that instructions for such a Bill are already with Parliamentary Counsel and I now give my authority for his employment on the drafting of such a Bill. I have no objection to the announcement of such legislation before the publication of the Public Expenditure White Paper, if that is felt to be necessary.

In taking this decision I am conscious that there is some risk that the introduction of a small Bill will give rise to a discussion in Parliament about other aspects of the ports, possibly the Dock Labour Scheme. However, such a debate would strictly be out of order and I believe that, on balance, the risk is worth taking in order to avoid the delay to the Public Transport Bill which could possibly embarrass us much more seriously towards the end of the Session.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of L, members of Misc 19, to Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir George Engle.

*Yours
John Biffen*

JOHN BIFFEN

Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley MP
Secretary of State for Transport

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