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LONDON
SW1

9 May 1985

Miss Roche

*Told HMT
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NR 10/5*

Dear Jim,

TREASURY MINUTE REPLYING TO THE 6TH AND 7TH REPORTS OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE, 1984-85

The Treasury wishes to publish as a Command Paper a Treasury Minute in response to the Public Accounts Committee's 6th and 7th Reports, 1984-85.

2. The text replying to this PAC report has been agreed by the Treasury and departments to whom the PAC's remarks were addressed. The Financial Secretary has approved the Government's reply being presented in his name as is customary.

3. The PAC's 6th Report dealt with the introduction of the Government's housing benefits scheme. It mostly listed the difficulties encountered by DHSS and local authorities in establishing the scheme. The reply acknowledges the transitional difficulties which have now largely been overcome. The reply also refers to the report of the review team (under Mr Jeremy Rowe) which is currently under consideration as part of the social security review. However, both we and DHSS consider the Government reply to the PAC need not be delayed on that account.

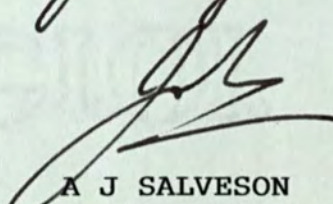
4. The Committee's 7th Report is the annual formal one listing Excess Votes. It requires no more from the Government than the traditional "take note".

5. The Treasury's plans for publishing replies to outstanding PAC reports are complicated by uncertainties over the date of the annual PAC debate. Meantime, the Committee has asked us to reply to its reports as quickly as possible so the Committee can take account of them when the debate is held.

6. We believe we can meet the Committee's wishes in respect of its 6th/7th Reports. Therefore, we propose publication at 3.30pm on Wednesday 22 May. As usual, we should provide pre-publication (ie. CFR) copies prior to publication, including laying the Command Paper before both Houses of Parliament on the previous day (ie. 3.30pm on Tuesday 21 May). Treasury Information Division would supply copies to the Lobby on the usual arrangements. We shall also release copies to DHSS, to PAC members, and to the National Audit Office on 21 May.

7. May we, therefore, have your agreement to these arrangements? The precise reply to the PAC is not controversial or even news-worthy in itself. However, we recognise some of the subject matter could inevitably inspire other questions about the general review of social security.

8. I am sending copies of this letter and enclosure to Murdo Maclean and David Morris.

Yours aye


A J SALVESON
Parliamentary Section

CONQUEROR

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