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NBPM

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP
Secretary of State
Home Office
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11 July 1985

Leon Brittan

CONFISCATION OF THE PROFIT OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

I write to follow up your letter of 10 June and the comments of a number of our colleagues, particularly Quintin Hailsham and Michael Havers. *WILKINSON*

The objective of ensuring that drug dealers are deprived of the full profits of their trade and put out of business for good is one with which we all agree wholeheartedly. Nevertheless a number of practical difficulties remain to be resolved and I am concerned that the resource implications of the proposals should be properly considered. I must say that I do not yet share your confidence that the proposals will be "revenue producing overall", given the particularly severe difficulties of tracing assets and of enforcing their freezing and forfeiture, added to the prospect of complex and lengthy litigation in individual cases. I know that your officials have taken on board the interests of the Bank of England, and I trust that you will continue to keep the Bank and my officials fully in touch with discussions.

Given the continuing pressures on resources, it would be unfortunate if proposals of this sort were to require any net increase in expenditure. I would hope that any additional resources Quintin might seek would be offset by a commensurate increase in revenue or savings elsewhere. Particular attention should I suggest, be given to ensuring both that the system by which the assets are gathered in is efficient and that the full costs to the courts and other agencies involved of that system and of the associated court cases can be offset against the assets seized.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of H and L Committees, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate, the First Parliamentary Counsel and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Peter Rees

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