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the department for Enterprise

CCP/11

Eric Forth MP  
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Rt Hon N Lamont MP  
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Our ref AM5  
Your ref  
Date

20 March 1990

*Mr. Lamont  
Dear Sir*

*PL 16 10/1*

*Ja Lamont*

I am writing to inform you that I propose to give consent to the Post Office under Section 7(1)(f) of the Post Office Act 1969 as amended by the British Telecommunications Act 1981 to permit the collection of TV licence fees and the issuing of TV licences by Post Office Counters Limited on behalf of the BBC.

As you will be aware, the Broadcasting Bill contains provision to transfer the responsibility for administering the TV licence system from the Home Office to the BBC with effect from 1 April 1991. Post Office Counters Limited currently sells 9.6 million licences out of a total of 19.5m licences held, and 397m TV licence saving stamps worth £198m. The Post Office is not currently permitted to carry out services for the BBC in post offices other than to sell publications, gifts, stationery products and records. Although in general I have reservations about extending the powers of the Post Office, I am satisfied in this case that the consent which I propose to grant does no more than maintain the status quo in the light of the change in legislation and will not lead to an increase in the size or scope of the public sector.

Since the transfer of responsibility to the BBC is still some way in the future I propose at this stage to indicate to the Post Office that I agree in principle to grant this consent but that I will withhold the formal Letter of Consent until it is required by the Post Office. I hope that you will find these arrangements acceptable.

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I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, David Mellor and to Sir Robin Butler.

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