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cc:

LPSO .

CWO .

Mr. Ingham .

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

30 January, 1984

Water in Wales

Thank you for your letter of 24 January to Robin Butler.

The Prime Minister has noted and is content with your Secretary of State's proposal to publish the Government's response to the Select Committee's Report on "Water in Wales", on Thursday 2 February.

I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of yours.

DAVID BARCLAY

C. L. Jones, Esq.,
Welsh Office

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A large, stylized handwritten signature or set of initials in the bottom right corner of the page.

PRIME MINISTER

ms

To note that the Government's response to the Welsh Committee's report on Water in Wales will be published next Thursday (2 February).

The report itself was not well thought of. The draft response is robust in tone, and repudiates the Select Committee's criticisms of Welsh Office Ministers and civil servants. You may like to glance at Mr. Edwards' covering letter to the new Chairman of the Welsh Select Committee, Mr. Gareth Wardell (Flag A).

Dafydd Wigley has a Question to you about Welsh water rates at No. 4 on the day of publication. Briefing is in hand.

DWB

26 January 1984

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FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR WALES

24 January 1984

Dear Mr Butler,

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE ON WELSH AFFAIRS - WATER IN WALES

My Secretary of State proposes to publish the Government's response to this ... report on Thursday 2 February at 3.30 pm. I enclose a copy of the printers first draft. The contents of the response have been cleared by my Secretary of State with interested ministerial colleagues.

We appreciate that it is usual to avoid Thursdays for publication when possible, but my Secretary of State wishes to publish this response at the earliest opportunity.

As the contents of the response relate in the main to Welsh affairs, we propose to release CFRs on a selective basis to the Parliamentary lobby. This will be done at 9.15 am on 2 February. In addition because of the special requirements of the South Wales based media we propose to make CFR copies available to them on a very selective basis shortly afterwards. A lobby note will accompany the CFR's and will be in identical terms to the eventual press notice.

We have timed the publication to avoid problems with Prime Minister's question time and also so that the publication can be announced by means of an answer to a Parliamentary Question. That answer will include the laying in the library of the House a letter which my Secretary of State intends to send to Mr Gareth Wardell, the Chairman of the Committee on Welsh Affairs. ... I enclose a copy of that draft letter. We have noted that Mr Dafydd Wigley has an oral Question about control of water rates at No 4 to the Prime Minister on that day but do not expect this to cause problems.

We have informally cleared the publication date and time with the No 10 Press Office.

/ I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Lord Privy Seal, Chief Whip and Bernard Ingham.

Yours sincerely
J Roberts

for C L JONES

F E R Butler Esq
Private Secretary to
The Prime Minister

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The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP

January 1984

THE COMMITTEE ON WELSH AFFAIRS - WATER IN WALES

The Government's response to the report by the Committee on Welsh Affairs on Water in Wales will be published on _____ and I enclose a
... copy.

Although you did not, of course, chair the Committee during this enquiry there are a number of matters relating to its conduct that concern me, and since I am anxious to be as helpful as I can to the Committee I am taking this opportunity to write to you about them now.

I have noted that on many of the major issues, the Committee did not come to a unanimous conclusion but divided on political lines. I also note with some concern that it reached sweeping conclusions on the basis of brief oral responses to detailed questions about technically complex issues and events that occurred many months or even years before.

I believe that such responses provide an inadequate basis for some of the conclusions that the Committee reached. By the same token, the Committee appears to have placed a great deal of reliance on the written comments made by the then Water Authority about the evidence given by myself and others and to have taken these comments as weighty evidence to support the conclusions reached, though these comments were not subject to further evidence of examination.

As I have said, I am anxious to be as helpful as I can to the Committee. Nevertheless, if it is to undertake lengthy examinations of complex technical subjects, and if its conclusions are to be fair to individuals and valuable to those to whom they are directed, I do feel that a rather more satisfactory method of considering evidence will have to be devised. Naturally, I should be very willing to consider with the Committee ways of improving the present arrangements.

In the meantime, and notwithstanding that the Government has been able to accept a good many of the Committee's recommendations, I feel bound to put on the record my firm view that some of the conclusions reached by the Committee were unsoundly based for the reasons I have given and that a number of the criticisms directed at Ministers and Civil Servants were not justified. These matters are discussed in more detail in Annex 1 to the response document.

/ I am copying this letter and the enclosure to Donald Anderson, who chaired the Committee during the water enquiry, and it is my intention in announcing publication of the Government's response, also to arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

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