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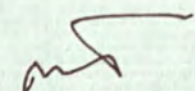

PRIME MINISTER

c.c. Mr. Redwood

CONVEYANCING

During the course of the day we were asked to clear the text of an answer which the Attorney General will be giving in the House on the Government's plans for conveyancing. The purpose of this answer is to demonstrate that the Government is going sufficiently far to enable Austin Mitchell to withdraw his Bill. The text has been negotiated with Mr. Mitchell.

The wording of the answer, no doubt reflecting the negotiations which have taken place, represents an advance on the note which the Solicitor General gave to Mr. Mitchell on 12 January and which you also saw. This note referred to "whether, and if so how, adequate tests of competence could be devised". The answer attached now refers to "what tests are needed for non-solicitor conveyancers", which creates a presumption that non-solicitors will be allowed to convey. I told the Lord Chancellor's Private Office that if the Law Officers were prepared to make this advance we would not stand in their way. I understand that the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry are also content with the answer.

15 February 1984



Question

To ask Mr <sup>Attorney</sup> ~~Solicitor~~ General what plans the Government has for improving the house transfer system in England and Wales.

Answer

We have established a Committee, chaired by Professor Street of the University of Manchester, with the following terms of reference:

- "1. To consider what tests or other evidence of competence ~~would be~~ <sup>are</sup> needed for non-solicitor conveyancers in order to provide the public with a satisfactory assurance of adequate skill; how any such tests might be administered; and what other requirements should be placed on non-solicitor conveyancers to ensure adequate consumer protection.
2. To consider the scope for simplifying conveyancing practice and procedure, and any other matters concerning the simplification of house purchase which may be referred to the Committee."

The Lord Chancellor has invited the following organisations to nominate a representative to serve on the Committee.

The Law Society  
~~Senate of the Inns of Court and of the Bar~~  
Institute of Legal Executives  
National Institute of Conveyancing Agents  
Consumers Association  
National Consumer Council  
Building Societies Association  
X ~~Bank Bankers Association~~  
~~Committee of London Clearing Banks~~  
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors  
National Association of Estate Agents  
Association of District Councils  
Association of Metropolitan Authorities

local  
A, law society

Society for Computers and Law

British Insurance Association

We have asked the Committee to report by September on the first limb of its terms of reference, and by the end of the year on the second limb. We hope to bring forward any necessary legislative proposals ~~next session.~~ *in the 1984/85 session.*

We will shortly issue a consultation paper on how best to ensure that conflicts of interest and anti-competitive practices do not arise when solicitors employed by banks, building societies and other organisations are permitted to undertake conveyancing for their employers' customers. We hope to bring forward legislation permitting building societies to offer the service next session.

The Government is also concerned about barriers to effective competition between solicitors in private practice. We intend to discuss with The Law Society the scope for amending the Solicitors Practice Rules so that solicitors may advertise their charges for conveyancing work.

We have also decided to institute a wider-ranging review of the house transfer system, designed to identify ways to simplify and

speed up the process. The issues will be considered inter-Departmentally with appropriate <sup>Part. + public</sup> consultation including reference <sup>of</sup> ~~at~~ specific issues to the committee. The review will be completed by the Autumn.

Furthermore we intend to speed up the extension of land registration. Additional manpower is to be made available to the Land Registry so that compulsory registration will cover areas containing 85% of the population - as opposed to 73% at present - by 1987. This is the first extension of compulsory registration (except for former council houses) since 1978.

These measures demonstrate the Government's commitment to simplifying house transfer and <sup>to</sup> ~~improving~~ competition so that the public can benefit from a quicker and cheaper system.