

SUBJECT



FILE

✓ Master
cc: CW

DS

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

11 March 1982

Dear John

Legislative Programme 1982/83

The Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Chief Whip met this morning for a discussion of the Legislative Programme for next Session, on the basis of the Home Secretary's minute of 5 March reporting discussion in QL on 3 March.

The discussion will be continued shortly, probably in the course of the Prime Minister's regular Monday morning meetings on 15 March. It may nevertheless be useful to you and to other recipients of this letter to have a brief note of the ground covered this morning.

The Prime Minister felt that the '82/83 Programme could accommodate more Bills which would demonstrate a sense of direction in Government policy. She raised first the question of the Data Protection Bill. The discussion covered the areas of controversy likely to be opened up with this Bill. The Prime Minister was disposed to accept that a final judgement could only be made in the light of the public response to the forthcoming White Paper on the subject. She nevertheless wanted to consult Industry Ministers further, about the possible problems for British industry if legislative action was delayed. She also asked that consideration be given to the possibility of drafting and publishing a Bill which might nevertheless not be proceeded with until the 1983/84 Session. The Prime Minister also proposed that if it proved desirable to go ahead with the Bill in 1982/83, it might start in the Lords. The Chancellor of the Duchy said that this might prove helpful to management of Lords business if the Bill were to be in the Programme.

The Prime Minister referred to her personal pledge on the right to buy for tenants of properties held on leasehold or belonging to housing trusts. The Chief Whip drew attention to the results of his researches about the political demand for the measure, and the Home Secretary pointed to the implications of the Boundary Commission's proposals.

The Prime Minister suggested that there was a strong case for a Water Bill which went beyond borrowing limits. The Chief Whip drew attention to the controversial nature of several of the

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proposals which would be included in such a Bill and pointed out that action on the Bill needed to be completed by April 1983 in respect of the borrowing powers. The Prime Minister felt that, with an early start, it ought to be possible to meet such a timetable.

The discussion also touched on the possible need for legislation in relation to Northern Ireland, and the priority to be accorded to the Gas Safety Bill, which would be required only if other policy decisions were confirmed.

I am sending copies of this letter to David Heyhoe (Lord President's Office), Jim Buckley (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office), Michael Pownall (Government Whips' Office, Lords) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Mike Pattison

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Home Office.