FROM THE EARL FERRERS (ACTING LEADER)

Parliament
2 pps MS

FROM THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE
HOUSE OF LORDS

29 January 1980

Dear Francis,

Thank you for your letter of 22 January in which you were kind enough to agree that it would be inappropriate to seek particular qualifications to the broad terms of reference of the new Committee.

The House agreed to appoint a "Select Committee on science and technology" on 23 January. The Committee of Selection has met and it will propose the following names to the House. Lords Caldecote, Cranbrook, Bessborough and Lucas of Chilworth (Conservatives); Lords Brown, Gregson, Shackleton and Lady Jeger (Labour); Lords Avebury and Lloyd of Kilgerran (Liberals); and Lords Todd (proposed Chairman), Ashby, Adrian, Schon and Sherfield (Cross Benchers). The necessary motion will be tabled when the report of the Committee of Selection has been published.

I agree entirely, of course, that Lords Committees should be treated on the same terms as Commons Committees. I shall write to the Committee on Science and Technology in due course and I will make available to them the revised Memorandum of Guidance. I shall of course be happy to provide what help I can should the Committee indicate any intention of working in areas which touch on defence. In the meantime, as you suggest, it will be sufficient to wait to see the shape of the Committee's programme of work.

I am copying this letter as before.

Yours ever,
Robin,

FERRERS

The Rt Hon Francis Pym, MP
Secretary of State for Defence

SECRETARY OF STATE

WITH

THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE

PRIVATE SECRETARY

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, WHITEHALL

LONDON, S.W.1A 2HB

With apologies for the delay in preparation

30.1.80

The following image type has poor quality text due to the nature of the material.

Image quality is best available.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

MO 21/8/4

22nd January 1980

Dear Ri

LORDS SELECT COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Thank you for your letter of 15th January.

I entirely take your point that if the terms of reference are to be of a general character as you forecast, it would be inappropriate to seek particular qualifications. But, as explained in my earlier letter of 16th November to Christopher Soames, I would be reluctant for practical reasons to see the Committee's activities touch on the Defence field, particularly in the near future, and I should be grateful for your continued help in this respect.

On the other hand while, as you suggest, there could be security difficulties in particular defence areas, the point should not be overstressed. The new Select Committee on Defence in the Commons will, like its predecessor, be granted access on a strictly need to know basis up to the level of Secret, and I believe that if the Lords Committee were at some stage to seek evidence from my Department, you would not wish me to do less for them. This would be in line with Annex C of the attachment to Paul Channon's letter of 21st December which, I note it, you will be making available to the Lord's Committee in due course. On this basis, the line suggested in your letter is too restrictive.

Yours [illegible]

I suggest therefore that it might be best to let matters lie until the Committee have decided what their programme of work should be.

I am sending copies of this letter to those who received copies of yours.

Yours ever

Francis

Francis Fym

With the compliments of the

Private Secretary to the Leader of the House

and the Chief Whip

House of Lords

NBPM

NJS

FROM THE EARL FERRERS (ACTING LEADER)

Parliament

FROM THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE

HOUSE OF LORDS

15th January 1980

Dear Francis,

LORDS SELECT COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

In your letter of 16th November to Christopher Soames, you expressed reservations about the terms of reference of the proposed Lords Committee on Science and Technology.

The House has now agreed to a recommendation from the Procedure Committee to set up a Select Committee on science and technology, but the terms of reference have not yet been tabled. Those peers, who are actively interested in the new Committee, hope that the terms of reference will be agreed shortly. The House, and those who particularly support the establishment of the Committee, will expect them to be "to consider Science and Technology".

Whilst I entirely understand, and sympathise with, your view that it would be inappropriate for a Lords committee to start ferretting around in a sensitive area, it would be unusual in this House to make specific exclusions. I am sure that it would be considered unacceptable for the Lords committee to have narrower terms of reference than the former Commons committee. Indeed, I fear that such an attempt might even be resisted on principle, and successfully, by peers voting on a non-Party basis. Lords Committees are, however, usually keen to develop good working relations with Government Departments and they are generally tactful and sensible in the use of their terms of reference. I should be happy to write to the Chairman of the new Committee, who is expected to be Lord Todd, President of the Royal Society, to suggest that a procedure be adopted under which the Leader of the House would write to the Chairman to notify him if the subject matter of a proposed enquiry in the defence field touched on highly classified defence research and development. The Leader could indicate that the Government would be unable to give the Committee information on matters affecting national security. This would be in line with the Crossman letter of 1967 referred to by the Home Secretary in his letter of 10th January 1980 to Paul Channon.

repeated

The Rt Hon Francis Pym, MP
Secretary of State for Defence

/...

FROM THE EARL FERRERS (ACTING LEADER)

FROM THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE

HOUSE OF LORDS

In his letter of 21st November 1979 to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Christopher Soames undertook to consult with Lord Shackleton and Lord Sherfield who proposed the committee to the Procedure Committee, with the usual channels and with the Chairman of Committees. I have done so on his behalf and I have found that their views are very similar to my own and to those of the Lord President, which I have summarised. I hope, therefore, that you would be able to feel content with these arrangements.

I should perhaps add that the new Committee's activities will, in any case, be circumscribed by the decision of the House that initially it should have the services of only one Clerk to cover its work and the work of any Sub-Committees which it may appoint.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of Legislation Committee, Sir Ian Bancroft and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever,

Robin.

FERRERS

The Rt Hon Francis Pym, MP
Secretary of State for Defence

Parliament

V MS

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

TELEPHONE 01-218 9000
DIRECT DIALLING 01-218 2111/3

16th November 1979

MO 21/8/4

Dear Christopher,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 14th November to Mark Carlisle. Your timescale has not permitted as careful consideration of this proposal as I should have liked, but I set out below my initial reactions.

I must say that I have certain misgivings about the proposal to set up a functional committee in the Lords when we are to have Departmentally related committees in the Commons. There seem to me to be dangers of overlapping and conflict here which deserve careful consideration before we commit ourselves. Moreover, at a time when we are seeking to achieve substantial economies in the running of Departments I am sure we should look very closely at proposals which are likely to result in an increase in administrative workload.

From a Departmental point of view I see potential difficulties about the inclusion of defence matters within the scope of a Science and Technology Committee. Defence research and development is very closely related to the defence equipment programme and much of the work is of course classified. This raises issues which I think need to be considered carefully before any decision is taken to include defence within the Committee's scope. In the short term too, there is the difficulty that as part of the programme of economy measures which I have instituted in the MOD, Euan Strathcona is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of research and development activities in the defence field. I would not wish a Select Committee to set up an inquiry in this area until such time as our own review is complete.

/ I ...

The Rt Hon The Lord Soames GCMG GCVO CBE

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

Francis Pym