

E. R.
PRIME MINISTER

LIAISON COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE SELECT COMMITTEE SYSTEM

The Liaison Committee published this Report in January. The attached note from the Lord President seeks agreement to the Government's response, which would take the form of a letter to Edward Du Cann, Chairman of the Liaison Committee.

The draft letter (Flag A) follows the Government's policy of resisting any pressures for further developments in the Select Committee system.

A number of the Liaison Committee's recommendations, such as their suggestion that the work of Select Committees should be televised, are primarily for the House to consider. There are few recommendations of importance for the Government to consider.

The only passages of interest in John Biffen's reply are those dealing with the Committee's recommendations on papers by the CPRS, and the activities of the Security Services.

On the former, the reply repeats that the reports of the CPRS are confidential advice to Ministers and that it would not be right to make them available to Select Committees.

On the latter, the reply takes up a comment by the Liaison Committee that the activities of the Security Services fall within the ambit of Select Committees. The reply says that the Government's view is that Committees should refrain from enquiries in this field, and that the Government regards itself as bound by the convention that it does not provide information or answer questions in Parliament on matters of security and intelligence.

Content for Mr. Biffen to reply to Mr. Du Cann as proposed, subject to the views of colleagues?

WM

Yes

20 April, 1983



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

21 April 1983

Liaison Committee Report on the Select
Committee System

The Prime Minister has seen the Lord President's minute of 19 April. Subject to the views of colleagues, she is content for him to reply to Mr. Du Cann as proposed.

I am copying this to Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office), Lesley Pallett (Home Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

W. F. S. RICKETT

David Heyhoe Esq
Lord President's Office.

Replecement



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MO 21/8/4

26th April 1983

W.R. 28/4

A.J.C. 25/4

De Ldn

REPLY TO THE LIAISON COMMITTEE'S REPORT
ON THE SELECT COMMITTEE SYSTEM

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 19th April to the Prime Minister about the Liaison Committee's report on the Select Committee system. This is just to confirm that I am content with the terms of your proposed reply to Edward du Cann.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever
[Signature]

Michael Heseltine

The Rt Hon W John Biffen MP

Eccen Polye
Larson Cth
A 3

18 APR 1985

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Parliament
WJ/S

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY
THAMES HOUSE SOUTH
MILLBANK LONDON SW1P 4QJ

01 211 6402

The Rt Hon John Biffen MP
The Lord President of the Council
The Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1

3rd May 1983

Dear Lord President

Thank you for copying to me your note to the Prime Minister about your proposed reply to the Liaison Committee's Report on the Select Committee System.

I have only one comment on your draft. This relates to page 3 of your text. I would rather omit the sentence which reads:

"Nevertheless, as the Committee point out, there is always the possibility of differences of opinion arising between Ministers and Select Committees as to whether it would be in the public interest for particular information to be disclosed".

I am now involved in such a difference of opinion. I have just received a letter from the Chairman of the Energy Committee about the refusal by officials appearing before the Committee to disclose details of discussion within Government organisation for energy conservation. I do not think it would be sensible to encourage more than is unavoidable the thought that this matter might be debated on the floor of the House. It would help if this sentence were omitted and the succeeding sentence was prefaced by: "However" and linked to the preceding paragraph.

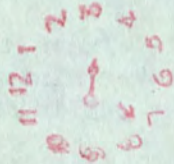
I am copying this letter to Cabinet colleagues and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely
Nigel Lawson

NIGEL LAWSON
(Approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his absence)

Parliament,
Select Committee,
P76

3 MAY 1981





WM
9/5

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

01-212 3434

My ref: K/PSO/12241/83

Your ref:

-9 MAY 83

Dear John,

Thank you for copying to me your note of 19 April to the Prime Minister together with the draft reply to the First Report of the Liaison Committee 1982-83. I should like to endorse the line you are proposing to take in the reply. There is no doubt that a considerable volume of work is now being generated by Select Committee requests for information and evidence. I should not like to see the system further extended without some safeguard in this respect and clearer evidence of the benefits which might accrue.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

TOM KING

Parliament
H/C Procedure
PTG

9 MAY 1963

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