

PRIME MINISTERLEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 1984-85Privatisation Bills

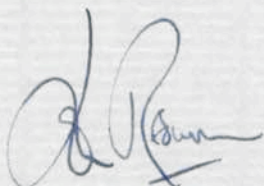
There have been some developments. Nicholas Ridley is now going to argue that both Public Transport and Civil Aviation can be handled in the Same Bill. The Treasury are going to strengthen their argument for the Nationalised Industries Bill by pointing out that it enables subsidiaries and assets to be sold off from public enterprises without additional legislation. Meanwhile, Peter Walker's proposals on gas do not look very attractive as they stand at the moment.

The ideal solution would be to accept Nicholas Ridley's offer of a single Bill, and to include a slot for a Gas Bill as well. This would avoid disappointing Peter Walker, although there would need to be some rubric about timely completion of the policy work on gas so that there was a chance of getting Instructions to Counsel in good time. If there has to be a decision between these measures, the United Transport Bill seems more important than Gas, given the policy difficulties over the latter.

Private Rented Housing

At Cabinet, DoE will be arguing that they can handle a Housing Bill as well as the necessary local government measures. Ian Gow would see the legislation through, and he and his team of civil servants will not be utilised in any way on the local government legislation.

This still seems a desirable measure if the Government wishes to do anything about the deplorable state of the private rented housing market that might work within the lifetime of this Parliament. The policy work is quite well advanced - as you saw with Patrick Jenkin's paper to H - whilst there is a pressing problem of under-utilised houses on one side and homelessness on the other. At the 16 December Meeting of Ministers, it was agreed to press ahead with this topic.

JOHN REDWOOD