



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR JOHN HUNT
CABINET OFFICE

The Prime Minister has considered your minute of 6 May and I have discussed her conclusions on it further in the light of my talk with you. She has now decided as follows.

The Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (OPD) should be set up with the proposed terms of reference and with a membership as you suggest with the addition of the Secretary of State for Trade. The Prime Minister had doubts whether it was right for the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be burdened with membership of this Committee and she would wish it to be conveyed to the Home Secretary that he is only to attend if he so wishes; and she would be content that the Chancellor of the Exchequer be represented by a Treasury Minister rather than attend himself. The Prime Minister agrees that a separate Committee is not necessary for Rhodesia and Southern African questions, nor does she think a separate Committee is necessary for Northern Ireland. As regards European questions she has concluded that the proposed Committee, under your terms of reference, should be a Sub-Committee of OPD augmented as required. On this basis all those Ministers whom you recommend as members of OPD would be members of the Sub-Committee with the exception of the Home Secretary, Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Defence. The Prime Minister would then add to the Sub-Committee, as you suggest, the Minister of Agriculture and the Attorney General, leaving the Secretaries of State for Industry, Employment and Energy to be called in as necessary.

/The Prime Minister

The Prime Minister does not wish to have a separate Committee to deal with Common Fisheries Policy: this should be referred either to OPD itself or to its Sub-Committee dealing with European questions as appropriate.

As regards Economic Committees, the Prime Minister agrees that there should be a Ministerial Committee on Economic Strategy (ES) under the terms of reference you propose and with your proposed membership, including the Lord President and the Minister of Agriculture. She would prefer not to set up a separate Ministerial Committee on Economic Affairs but to have this set up as a Sub-Committee of the main Committee without further terms of reference. The Sub-Committee should be constituted under the Secretary of State for Industry as Chairman and with membership as you propose but without the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Lord Privy Seal, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, or the Minister of Transport as members.

The Queen's Speech and Future Legislation Committee has already been established. As regards the Legislation Committee, the Prime Minister wishes that this Committee should meet under the Chairmanship of the Lord Chancellor and with the Leader of the House as a member. The other members should be as you propose, with the exception of the Home Secretary.

The Prime Minister agrees the terms of reference and membership of the Committee dealing with Home and Social Affairs (H).

The Prime Minister has emphasised again her desire to keep as tight a rein as possible on Ministerial Committees and upon the amount of time which Ministers devote to them.

K.R.S.

8 May 1979