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PRIME MINISTER

DISPERSAL OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

I have seen Jim Prior's minute of 15 October to you about the Cabinet decision to disperse the Health and Safety Executive to Bootle.

He makes a point in his minute about the risk that one of the consequences of dispersal of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate would be to introduce delay into our future nuclear programme.

I am, indeed, very concerned about the strength of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. I am told that out of its complement of 140 there are already 14 vacancies. The HSE and the Chief Nuclear Inspector have already advised me that their ability to under-take their safety responsibilities is being constrained by the present staff shortages.

In particular, the Inspectorate will have great difficulty in undertaking the safety assessment of the Pressurised Water Reactor as rapidly as it should be undertaken if we are to meet the CEGB's present programme requirements.

I hope, therefore, that some way can be found, perhaps as suggested by the TUC and the CBI, to make any announcement of the dispersal of the HSE to Bootle in such terms as to provide some flexibility. This will be vital if we are to minimise the risk to the nuclear programme.

I am copying this minute to Jim Prior, other members of Cabinet, Paul Channon, Norman Fowler and Sir John Hunt.

JG.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY

23 OCTOBER 1979



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