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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

20th December 1982

My dear Geoffrey,

Thank you for arranging the second meeting this afternoon between Ministers and myself and Joel Barnett which was most kind of you. I am sorry that we cannot reach agreement on the Bill's contents. However, I am sure our positions are not so far apart as to preclude agreement in the future. In view of the massive support for the principle of the Bill in the House (over 300 Members have indicated their views in support) and the very powerful support in the press from the newspapers, which include The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Economist and The Financial Times, it would be highly desirable to proceed in an agreed and orderly fashion.

I am sorry you are unable to offer full drafting assistance with the Bill which I would very much have liked but I understand your difficulties. However, I did leave with you a copy of the third and latest draft of the Bill and I would be grateful if your advisers could have a look at it and offer any advice of a technical character that they feel able to proffer. It may well be that they will see some technical error or inadequacy on the face of the Bill which could be rectified at this point. In particular, might I ask you for help on the following points which neither I nor the Public Bills Office in the House feel particularly competent to deal with.

1. We need a draft for a clause and schedule establishing the Public Accounts Commission. What I have in mind is something similar to that provided in the House of Commons (Administration) Act in relation to numbers, ex-officio appointments, basis of nominating members etc. A schedule will probably be needed for the following purposes:

- (i) to establish a corporate status;
- (ii) to stipulate terms on which members shall hold office, vacate office and resign;
- (iii) specify how the Commission will operate over a dissolution;
and
- (iv) specify Chairmanship and method of conducting business, including the situation where the Chairman is absent.



2. A schedule to make provision for the transfer of the existing E. & A.D. staff to the Commission and consequentially, for e.g. the application to the N.A.O. staff of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

3. A schedule of repeals, particularly in relation to the 1866 and 1921 Acts, which may be required.

4. A clause providing an indemnity to the C.A.G. and his staff, if they are no longer civil servants, against claims arising from the exercise of statutory duties, including those undertaken under the new provisions.

I am proposing to publish the Bill either in the second or third week of January, ie some time between January 12th and January 23rd but I have not yet reached a firm conclusion as to the actual date.

With all good wishes,

Yours ever,

Nam JFR Stevas

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