



10 DOWNING STREET

Ack  
Box  
No 10 (Croye)

From the Principal Private Secretary

9 April 1979

Dear Mrs. Thatcher.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has told the Prime Minister and yourself of his plan to retire on 25 January 1980, and to announce this on 5 June. I promised Caroline Stephens to let you have a note about this and the implications.

The Archbishop's decision to resign, and his timing, are matters for him. (Having been appointed in 1974, he was not in fact bound by the Church's new retirement-at-70 rule, although his successor will be). Having received Dr Coggan's formal resignation, the Prime Minister has tendered it to The Queen.

In June 1976, after discussion with you, the Prime Minister gave a Written Answer in Parliament about the new procedure, agreed with the Church, for the appointment of Archbishops and Diocesan Bishops. Under this procedure, when the news of the Archbishop's retirement is public, it will be for the Crown Appointments Commission to consider the vacancy, and to advise the Prime Minister about it, with the right to make two recommendations, in an order of preference if desired.

For a Canterbury vacancy, the Commission is made up as follows:-

Voting Members

- A lay Chairman, appointed by the Prime Minister
- 2 Bishops
- 6 members, 3 clergy and 3 lay, of the Church's  
General Synod
- 4 representatives of the Diocese of Canterbury

Non-Voting Members

- A Bishop (Bishop John Howe) representing the world-  
wide Anglican Communion
- The Prime Minister's Appointments Secretary  
(Colin Peterson)
- The Archbishops' Appointments Secretary

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E. B.

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

The only action over setting up the Commission which falls to the Prime Minister to take is the appointment of the Chairman, who must be a practising member of the Church of England. For this the Prime Minister - knowing, as he did some time ago of the Archbishop's intention - had selected, with the approval of The Queen and the Archbishop, Mr Richard O'Brien, who has since been approached. Mr O'Brien, aged 59, is Chairman of the Manpower Services Commission. The choice of Chairman would not, however, be announced until the Archbishop has made his announcement on 5 June.

After the Archbishop's announcement, it is envisaged that there will be consultation of Bishops, clergy and lay people, to be carried out by the two Appointments Secretaries, working closely together. The Commission would then meet, probably early in July, and the Prime Minister might wish the Chairman to report as soon as possible after that meeting. It will thus be July when the Prime Minister will need to decide the final recommendation to The Queen.

I hope this may be helpful. If any further background is needed, Colin Peterson and I will, of course, be ready to give it.

I have marked this letter as I have because of the Archbishop's wish to keep the news of his plans entirely confidential until 5 June.

Yours sincerely,  
Kenneth Stone.  
CB.

The Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher