

CONFIDENTIAL



PRIME MINISTER

COMMONS BUSINESS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

1. The programme for the Commons between now and Christmas has become seriously congested. The Chief Whip and I have considered how much business can reasonably be fitted in and what is likely to have to wait until after the recess.

2. We shall have to provide for:

A Debate on Public Expenditure White Paper

2 Supply Days - one a half-day, to include the vote on account; the other to approve the Winter Supplementary Estimates

Debate on the Christmas Adjournment Motion ) Can be taken on  
Consolidated Fund Bill ) the same day

Christmas Adjournment

Private Members' bills - one day

Private Members' motions - one and a half days

Opposed Private Business - half a day

3. These commitments are unavoidable and will take up  $7\frac{1}{2}$  days of the 15 days available from the end of this week. In addition, we should not go into the recess without a debate on the White Paper on the Immigration Rules; and in view of the difficulty we had when Northern Ireland business was taken late at night before the summer recess we should provide a day for Northern Ireland Orders, including their Appropriation Order. This will have to be in addition to tomorrow's debate on the White Paper on the Government of Northern Ireland.

4. This leaves  $5\frac{1}{2}$  days for legislative business. I have already announced, in last week's business statement, the Second Reading of the National Heritage Bill on 3 December. For the remaining  $4\frac{1}{2}$  days, I propose that first priority should be given to the Zimbabwe Bill, which we need to take to Royal Assent before the recess. This will be difficult, particularly if the Patriotic Front do not fully accept the conclusions of the Conference and the Bill is resisted on that account. We shall need at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$  days for the Bill in the Commons and should be prepared to go through the night and on to the next day if necessary.

5. I consider that our next priority should be the Employment Bill. I hope we shall obtain the Second Reading in one day, with an extended sitting if necessary, but we might have to concede more time if the Opposition insist.

6. We must also be prepared to provide for guillotine motions on

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the Industry Bill and, if necessary, the Education Bill. Like you, I should prefer separate motions if at all possible, but I should like to keep open the option of a single motion until we know how much time will be needed for the Zimbabwe and Employment Bills: I should not want to put either of these at risk.

7. The Local Government, Planning and Land Bill will, of course, proceed in the House of Lords as we agreed in Cabinet last week.

8. I am afraid we cannot expect to get through much other business before Christmas. Even the items I have indicated will be difficult enough, with the prospect of several late or all-night sittings. There is very little in hand for emergency debates or unexpected developments. I have therefore had to explain to colleagues in Legislation Committee that I can see virtually no prospect of finding time before Christmas for second readings of the Petroleum Revenue Tax Bill (although we shall introduce the Bill on a Ways and Means Resolution); the Port of London (Financial Assistance) Bill; the National Health Services Bill; the Social Security Bill; or the Tenants' Rights Etc (Scotland) Bill. Nor shall we be able to take the Rate Support Grant Orders for England and Wales or for Scotland, or any other business which is likely to require time before 10.00 pm. I am grateful for the understanding they have shown of the difficult position in which we are placed: the Chief Whip and I will, of course, do everything possible to ensure that bills make good progress after the recess, and are brought to Royal Assent by the due dates where early Royal Assent is required.

9. I am copying this minute to Cabinet colleagues, to the Minister of Transport, the Chief Whip and the Lord Advocate, to First Parliamentary Counsel and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*NBSJS,*

27 November 1979

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*P.S. I would welcome a brief word about this as the date of the recess when you have a moment.*



the industry will and, if necessary, the education will. This is not  
I should prefer separate motions if it is possible, but I would  
like to keep open the question of a single motion until we have  
much time will be needed for the debate and amendment stages.  
I would prefer to put either of these at risk.

7. The local Government, Planning and Land Bill will, of course,  
proceed in the House at a later date than the Housing Bill.

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8. I am afraid we cannot expect to get to the end of the  
bill by Christmas. Even the House has not yet taken  
any steps with the exception of a few amendments.  
There is very little in hand for amendment and no  
Government amendments. I have therefore had to  
write to the Committee that I can see virtually no prospect  
of finding time before Christmas for second readings of the  
Revenue Bill (although we shall introduce the Bill in the  
House next week) and the Social Security Bill (which  
is the main part of the Social Security Bill).  
The Government must therefore be prepared to  
bring the Revenue Bill (and the Social Security Bill) to  
the House next week and to leave it there until  
the end of the year. I am sure that the House will  
be able to deal with the Revenue Bill and the Social  
Security Bill in the next few days. I am sure that  
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9. I am sorry that it is not possible to  
of Ministers, the Chief Whip and the Lord Advocate, to first  
Parliamentary Council and to the House of Commons.

1979

27 November 1979

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the Revenue Bill and the Social Security Bill in the  
next few days.