



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

10 March 1980

Dear Sir,

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY AND TRADE

Thank you for your letter of 29 February 1980 in which you raised the question of the Prime Minister submitting written evidence to the Select Committee on Industry and Trade about the organisation of the Departments of Industry and Trade.

I have consulted the Prime Minister, and she has concluded that it would be undesirable for her to give evidence, whether oral or written, to Select Committees. If a Select Committee asks for evidence on machinery of government matters, she would prefer the departmental Ministers concerned to respond, making it clear that he does so with her approval. On this occasion, therefore, she would like Mr. Nott to submit evidence to the Industry and Trade Select Committee, and I attach a draft of a letter which he might send to the Chairman of the Select Committee.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (FCO), Ian Ellison (Industry), John Stevens (Chancellor of the Duchy's office), David Wright (Cabinet Office) and David Laughrin (CSD).

Yours ever,

Alvi Whimmon.

S. Hampson, Esq.,
Department of Trade.

LEFT LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE TO THE CHAIRMAN
OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY AND TRADE

As you know, I am eager to help the Committee in any way I can and I have, therefore, asked my department to prepare notes on the matters on which the Committee have asked for further information. If it would be helpful, I should be glad to appear before the Committee again to answer questions on the notes.

There is one matter on which I thought it best to write to you myself rather than to deal with the point in a departmental note. This concerns the question whether the Departments of Trade and Industry should or should not be merged.

You will remember that the former Department of Prices and Consumer Protection was merged with the Department of Trade. I understand that as it was not wished to recreate a very large department so soon after the old DTI had been broken up, the Departments of Trade and Industry were left separate. This arrangement is working well, and the Prime Minister has no plans to change it.

Obviously there is nothing I can add to what is said above about the Prime Minister's views and, as I am sure you will understand, it would not be profitable, therefore, for the Committee to invite me to appear before them to amplify the contents of this letter.