Parliament

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. A01207

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Affairs: Legislative Programme 1979-80

BACKGROUND

You asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to provide you with a progress report on the legislative programme for this Session. His minute of 21st January reports reasonable progress with the Bills already introduced. These Bills are listed in the Annex to the minute, items 1 to 8, according to the stage they had reached at the end of last week. The Competition and Industry Bills are through Standing Committee. The British Aerospace, Transport and Education (No. 2) Bills are in Committee. It has become necessary to introduce a guillotine for the Education (No. 2) Bill which, for financial reasons, must become law by Easter. The major Bills that received Second Reading just before Christmas - Employment, Housing and Social Security - are now, or shortly will be, in Standing Committee. The Chief Whip expects a guillotine to be necessary for the Social Security Bill and perhaps others.

2. It is less satisfactory that a number of major Bills are not yet ready for introduction. Paragraph 7 of the minute and paragraph 9 of the Annex refer. The following are coming to Legislation Committee this week or next and will then be ready for introduction:

Coal Industry

Local Government, Planning and Land (No. 2)

Broadcasting

The Port of London (Financial Assistance) Bill cannot be introduced until Ministers have considered policy issues concerning the finances of the Merseyside Docks and Harbours Board at E(EA) on 30th January. As the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster points out, the Petroleum and Submarine Pipelines (Amendment) Bill is not yet available. You settled the policy at a meeting just before Christmas. The policy issues for the Energy Conservation Bill come to E(EA) on 30th January. Finally, there is the Contempt of Court Bill scheduled for introduction in the Lords, probably in March, on which drafting is proceeding.

3. In summing up the discussion on the Local Government, Planning and Land Bill on 6th December (CC(79) 24th Conclusions, Minute 2), you referred to likely congestion of business in the House of Lords and the likely extension of the Session. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster suggests in paragraph 8 of his minute that if Parliament sits into the first part of August the spillover might be restricted to three weeks in October. (The Party Conference is in the week beginning 6th October). It is too early to determine the timetable at this stage. Much will depend on the progress of Bills between now and late spring.

HANDLING

4. You will not want a long discussion. After the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has introduced his minute, the Chief Whip and the Minister of State, MAFF, may want to comment on the implications of the programme for their respective Houses. You may want to ask the Secretary of State for Energy about progress with his Bills that have yet to be introduced, and to ask the Minister of Transport about the Port of London (Financial Assistance) Bill.

CONCLUSIONS

5. The minute does not seek decisions from Cabinet. Subject to the discussion, you might invite your colleagues to note the position, to confirm that no further major Bills can now be contemplated for this Session, and to stress the need to proceed as quickly as possible with Bills now in Standing Committee and with the preparation of those which have not yet been introduced.

RTA

(Robert Armstrong)

23rd January, 1980