

28 May 1981

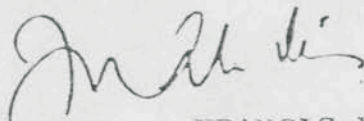
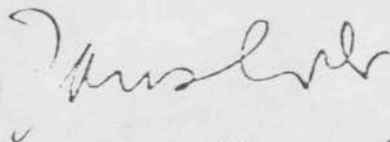
Dear Edward,

Thank you for your letter of 14 May about Government replies to select committee reports.

I was glad to hear that you were generally satisfied with the position with regard to the timing of departmental replies. I will, however, as you suggest, arrange for Departments to be reminded of the continued need for urgency in their replies. At the same time I will ensure, as indicated in my letter of 13 February, that substantive replies to select committee reports should no longer take the form of answers to arranged written questions.

As regards replies in the form of Ministerial statements on the Floor of the House, I have noted your view that committees may expect these to be subsequently supplemented by a memorandum. There may be occasions, however, when Departments will not have anything to add to the statement on the Floor. To avoid misunderstanding in such cases we will in future arrange for committees to be informed when no further reply is envisaged.

Finally, as you recognise, there are occasions when a reply in the form of a memorandum, or Ministerial letter to the chairman, seems appropriate, either on grounds of speed, economy, or for some other reason. I would hope that committee chairmen would agree that where this more informal type of reply is used, unless special considerations of confidentiality arise, it should normally be open to a Minister to make public the contents of his reply in the same way as if it had taken the form of a White Paper.



FRANCIS PYM

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