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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

10 February 1982

Dear Jonathan

with MCS?

Thank you for sending us a copy of your letter of 5 February to Michael Scholar concerning the practice of making available uncorrected proof transcripts of public Select Committee hearings in the Library of the House of Commons.

I have sought the advice of the House authorities on this point and have shown your letter to the Lord President of the Council. The position is that this practice, although not widely known, is designed to ensure that Members of Parliament are able to inform themselves about evidence given during public proceedings in a Select Committee which may then be extensively reported in the media. The decision whether or not to make uncorrected transcripts available in the Library after a public hearing rests with the individual Select Committee. Generally, Select Committees will arrange for uncorrected transcripts to be placed in the Library whenever it is thought that a public hearing may give rise to press, radio or television interest. Since, however, this practice appears to be very little known, further thought will be given to the issue of appropriate guidance to Departments.

You also queried the marking of departmental copies of uncorrected transcripts of public hearings with the words "In Confidence until published". Since the hearing which gave rise to this query was held in public the marking of uncorrected proofs in this way self-evidently conveyed no indication of a security or a confidentiality classification. In fact the practice of marking proofs in this way probably began a number of years ago when public hearings were much less common than they are now. However, I should point out that these proofs are only made available at the discretion of Select Committees and that their contents cannot be treated as public knowledge, nor can they be made available outside departments, until the evidence is subsequently published in the usual way. For this reason they continue to be marked "In Confidence until publication".

I am sending a copy of this letter to Michael Scholar. ✓

Yours sincerely
N P M Huxtable

N P M HUXTABLE
Private Secretary

Jonathan Spencer Esq
Private Secretary to the
Secretary of State for Industry

10 FEB 1984

