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Prime Minister

Mrs 15/12



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Secretary of State for Industry

15 December 1982

Murdo Maclean Esq
 Private Secretary to the
 Government Chief Whip
 12 Downing Street
 London SW1

Dear Murdo,

I undertook to let you know the likely timetable for reaching and announcing decisions on the new BSC Plan for 1983/86, which will be finalised in the light of the guidance to be announced by my Secretary of State on Monday 20 December.

2 BSC now advise us that they will not complete their new Plan until towards the end of January. This means that the earliest date for reaching and announcing decisions on the Plan, including revised EFL's for 1982/83 and 1983/84, will be late February or early March, and therefore in the normal course of events we would not expect to offer a steel debate until early in March, after announcing a decision on the BSC Plan for 1983/86.

3 You may consider that the pressures for a further debate on steel are such that it may be necessary to offer a debate rather earlier than this. We see no purpose whatever in a steel debate before Christmas recess - there would be nothing to add to what is in effect a generally reassuring statement. But if there is felt to be a strong demand for an early debate, I suggest you offer one soon after the House returns after the Christmas recess. By that time we may, for example, be able to say rather more about how the tighter ECSC steel regime is working, and the extent to which other member states have notified steel capacity cuts to the Commission.

4 I am sending copies of this letter to Nick Huxtable (Lord President's Office) and Willie Rickett (No 10).

*Yours sincerely,
 Jonathan Spencer*

J P SPENCER
 Private Secretary

*under
 -statement 1/11*