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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

16 August 1983

Dear Cecil

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LEGISLATION: REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS (RDG)

I am replying to your letter of 2 August to Willie Whitelaw, as the granting of authority to employ Parliamentary Counsel is a matter for me. I have also seen your minute of 2 August to the Prime Minister and comments on the underlying policy issues from a number of our colleagues.

I do of course understand your fears that delay in commencing drafting will lose you the legislative opportunity which seems to have presented itself. I should, however, point out that the Cabinet only agreed to consider at a later date 'tacking' the RDG legislation on to the Co-operative Development Agency Bill. As Arthur Cockfield has pointed out, a final decision must really await a considered view when decisions on both elements of the proposed package are known.

There is also the point that Parliamentary Counsel is already heavily burdened by the agreed legislative programme. Because of the special circumstances of this year, the programme is well advanced and he is already engaged on Bills to be introduced soon after the end of the Summer Adjournment. I would not wish to burden him further with work which might turn out to be unnecessary.

I hope, therefore, in the circumstances, you will agree that a decision about contingent drafting should be deferred until September. We shall then I hope have a clearer picture of when policy decisions will be taken on RDGs and on the Co-operative Development Agency. At that point perhaps we and John Wakeham could consider the possible timetable for a Bill combining these two elements if Cabinet subsequently authorises its inclusion in the legislative programme.

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP
Secretary of State
Department of Trade and Industry

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the Chancellor, the Secretaries of State for Employment, the Environment, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Chief Whip, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir George Engle.

Yours
John Biffen

JOHN BIFFEN

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