

CONFIDENTIAL

DSG



cc Master set

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

EVIDENCE TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENERGY

The Prime Minister held a meeting this afternoon with the Home Secretary, the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State for Energy and the Chief Whip to discuss the issues raised in your minute A02660 of 18 July 1980. You and Mr. Ibbs were also present.

The Chief Whip said that, as a result of approaches he had made to a number of members of the Select Committee, there was a reasonable prospect that the Committee would not continue to press for the CPRS Report to Ministers on the future of the two AGR stations. But he could not guarantee that they would drop their request. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster added that, although he could not intervene directly himself, he was going to have a word with Mr. du Cann to enlist his help with the Select Committee. He was anxious to avoid another row which, though not big in itself, would add to the cumulative effect of other disagreements.

In discussion there was agreement that it was desirable that the Head of the CPRS should not give evidence to the Select Committee since so much of his work took the form of advice to Ministers. A former Head of the CPRS had given evidence to a Select Committee in the past, but that had been in connection with a published CPRS Report. There could be no question of allowing the Select Committee on Energy to have the AGR Report since this was clearly advice to Ministers.

/ The Prime Minister

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

The Prime Minister said that they were agreed that Mr. Ibbs should not appear before the Committee nor should he submit the CPRS Report. Instead, the Secretary of State for Energy, who was already due to appear before the Select Committee the following week, should be ready not only to let the Committee have the facts about the AGRs, but also to explain to them the considerations which Ministers had in mind when reaching their decisions on the AGR stations. He should not, however, disclose the content of the CPRS Report. If, notwithstanding the Secretary of State for Energy's evidence, the Select Committee continued to press for the appearance of Mr. Ibbs before them, one way of proceeding might be to authorise him to put in a factual note and then to give oral evidence to the Committee. But Ministers would need to meet again to review the situation before any decision to move to this fall-back position was taken.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State for Energy and the Chief Whip.

*KW.*

23 July 1980

CONFIDENTIAL