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PRIME MINISTER

1976 DOCK WORK REGULATION ACT

When Patrick Jenkin as Chairman of E(EA) minuted you about Ports Policy on 5 August last year he said that around the turn of the year we would need to consider whether to legislate this session to repeal the moribund Dock Work Regulation Act of 1976. A repeal Bill has been drafted and has a place in the programme for this session; but no announcement of intention has been made.

We are all agreed that the Act, which requires me to introduce a new Dock Labour Scheme "as soon as may be" and provides for such a scheme to embrace more ports and more work than the current scheme, must be repealed. We are also agreed that the timing of such a move is all-important. I have now considered this carefully and concluded that we should not proceed with repeal at this stage.

There would be no immediate practical benefit from getting rid of the Act, and doing so would provoke considerable opposition from the dockers. Union and docker reaction might well fall short of a sustained national strike but the consequent deterioration in the industrial relations climate would have other unhelpful repercussions eg on the employers' plans for further severances, on their talks with the unions on the future of the industry and on the National Dock Labour Board's cost cutting programme. These seem unnecessary risks to take this side of an election. Moreover I think to announce repeal now could prejudice the successful flotation of Associated

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British Ports; and a subsequent announcement in time for legislation this session could attract the criticism that we had withheld material information at the time of the flotation.

I do not therefore propose to bring forward the legislation in this Parliament.

I am copying this to members of E(EA), the Lord President of the Council and Sir Robert Armstrong.

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25 January 1983

Find Pel. the
Action in the
Pants, Pt 2

25 JAN 1983



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

27 January 1983

Dear Barnaby,

1976 DOCK WORK REGULATION ACT

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of 25 January.

The Prime Minister endorses your Secretary of State's conclusion that it would not be desirable to legislate, in this Parliament, to repeal the Dock Work Regulation Act of 1976.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of E(EA), to David Heyhoe (Lord President's Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

Michael Scholar

Barnaby Shaw, Esq.,
Department of Employment.

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SECRET

Prime Minister

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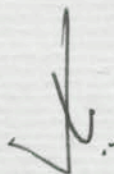
Please see Mr Tebbit's
minute (attached).MR SCHOLAR

cc Mr Mount

THE 1976 DOCK WORK REGULATION ACTAgree that no legislation
be brought forward to repeal
this Act during this Parliament?

In his note of 25 January, Mr Tebbit proposes not to bring forward legislation to repeal the Dockwork Regulation Act 1976 during this Parliament. MCS 26/1

We have no doubt at all that Mr Tebbit is right. The Prime Minister will recall the central conclusion of the Official Group (MISC 78) on industrial action in the docks that the only issue likely to lead to a national dock strike in the near future would be repeal of the 1976 Act. Furthermore, as Mr Tebbit says, there will be no immediate practical benefit from repeal. It is of course true that we would much rather not have on the books the obligation to introduce a new Dock Labour Scheme; but there does not seem to be any immediate pressure to deliver on that obligation.


25 January 1983



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cf JV

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Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Norman Tebbit MP
Secretary of State
Department of Employment
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London SW1H 9NA

28 January 1983

Dear Secretary of State,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 25 January to the Prime Minister about the repeal of the 1976 Act.

I agree with your proposal to defer legislation beyond the lifetime of this Parliament. The Act clearly must be repealed at some stage, but there seems no point in doing so when the advantages are minimal and the costs potentially large.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, members of E(EA), the Lord President of the Council and Sir Robert Armstrong.

yours sincerely

LEON BRITTAN

for (approved by the Chief Secretary and signed in his absence).

Ind Pst : Ind Action in the Park Pt 2



31 JAN 1983

