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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

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17 November, 1983 CW's O
 Lord Denham
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The Prime Minister has seen a copy of the papers considered by H Committee on 15 November about conveyancing. She has also seen a copy of the minutes of the Committee's discussion.

The Prime Minister welcomes the Committee's decision to pursue the idea of extending to employed solicitors the right to offer conveyancing services. She has, however, some doubts as to whether this step alone would satisfy public discontent, particularly if (as is highly desirable) the registration of land were to be speeded up. The Prime Minister has accordingly asked if the official group could also investigate the possibility of providing the essential consumer protection, on which the Committee rightly insisted, for the conveyancing of registered land by persons other than solicitors. The Prime Minister considers that it might be possible to devise arrangements for safeguards involving professional standards, a compensation fund and supervision by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Office of Fair Trading; but she is conscious that it would take time for such arrangements to be developed. In the Prime Minister's view, therefore, it is all the more important to establish as soon as possible whether such arrangements would be practicable, particularly in the light of the need to respond to the House Buyers Bill, sponsored by the Consumers Association, which is due for its Second Reading on 16 December.

The Prime Minister has asked that the Policy Unit at No. 10 should be associated with the working of the official group.

I am sending copies of this letter to all the Private Secretaries to the members of H Committee.

DAVID BARCLAY

Miss Janet Lewis-Jones,
Office of the Lord President of the Council

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