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Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP
 Secretary of State
 Home Office
 50 Queen Anne's Gate
 London SW1H 9AT

2 October 1984

Leon Brittan

W3/10

Dr.

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TIME LIMITS IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter to Willie Whitelaw of 17 September.

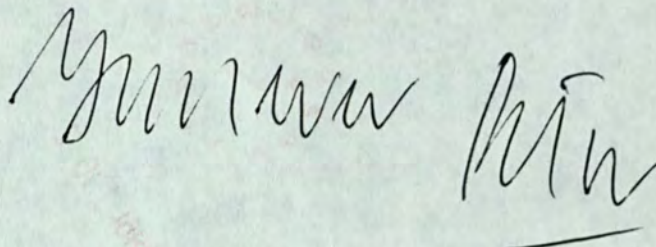
2 There is much to be said for your proposals. If they help to reduce the very long delays that sometimes occur, without significantly affecting the average, they will complement the very worthwhile improvements in the workings of the courts being accomplished by the Lord Chancellor and, in the case of the magistrates courts', yourself.

3 It is important, of course, to consider resources. I understand that, because time spent on remand counts towards sentence, you do not expect the prison population as a whole to fall by more than a hundred or so. You therefore see the exercise as involving largely a readjustment of priorities. I trust that the field trials which you propose will confirm this is so, and that any resource implications which may be highlighted for courts and prosecutors can be accommodated without bids for additional provision. I assume, of course, that you would expect to pay for the field trials themselves out of the provision for your programme that we are agreeing separately.

4 It would be right to proceed cautiously, since we do not want exaggerated ideas to build up about the extent to which time limits can by themselves speed cases being brought to trial. The field trials will, I hope, show the extent to which some types of difficult cases are likely to need longer time limits because of the nature of the investigations involved. It may be useful, even at this early stage, to have statutory provisions in place, so

that the field trials are taken seriously. But it seems important, for all the reasons I have mentioned, not to encourage the belief that time limits will necessarily be quickly introduced or suggest that they might take a particular form.

5 I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, members of H and the Attorney General and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Peter Rees', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

PETER REES

HOME AFFAIRS: Sentencing Police
July 79



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