

HM Treasury

Jamie Mortimer
Under Secretary



**Parliament Street
London
SW1P 3AG**

DAO(GEN) 6/95

15 September 1995

Dear Accounting Officer

ACCURACY OF EVIDENCE TO THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

I am writing at the request of the Public Accounts Committee to remind you of the importance which the Committee attaches to the accuracy and reliability of evidence given to it.

2. As stated in paragraph 26 of the Accounting Officer Memorandum (and paragraph 23 of the Memorandum for NDPB Accounting Officers), the Accounting Officer should ensure that he or she is adequately and accurately briefed on matters which are likely to arise at a Public Accounts Committee hearing. The Committee should be informed immediately if it is subsequently discovered that the evidence provided contained any error. If any uncertainty attaches to evidence given to the Committee, the nature and extent of this uncertainty should be made clear at the time.

3. The Committee's request came in a letter from the Chairman to the Financial Secretary. It was prompted by a number of instances where Accounting Officers had unintentionally given incorrect or incomplete information, misleading the Committee and preventing it from pursuing certain lines of questioning. In replying to the Chairman, the Financial Secretary emphasised the considerable time and effort which Accounting Officers put into preparing for the Committee's hearings and the care taken by Accounting Officers to ensure that they are able to answer the Committee's questions accurately and helpfully. The Chairman acknowledged this.

4. This letter is being circulated to departmental Accounting Officers and their Principal Finance Officers only, with the request that they arrange for it to be brought to the attention of the Accounting Officers in each of their executive agencies and sponsored bodies. Copies are also being sent to the Clerk to the Committee and to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Jamie Mortimer

JAMIE MORTIMER