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CC(85) 32nd
Conclusions

COPY NO 75

CABINET

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet
held at 10 Downing Street on
THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 1985
at 10.30 am

P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Viscount Whitelaw
Lord President of the Council

The Rt Hon Lord Hailsham of St Marylebone
Lord Chancellor

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

The Rt Hon Nigel Lawson MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph MP
Secretary of State for Education and Science

The Rt Hon Peter Walker MP
Secretary of State for Energy

The Rt Hon George Younger MP
Secretary of State for Scotland

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP
Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon John Biffen MP
Lord Privy Seal

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon Norman Tebbit MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

The Rt Hon Tom King MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

The Rt Hon Michael Jellicoe MP
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

The Rt Hon Lord Young of Graffham
Secretary of State for Employment

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Secretary of State for the Environment

The Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP
Paymaster General

The Rt Hon John MacGregor MP
Chief Secretary, Treasury

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THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon John Wakeham MP
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

Mr Malcolm Rifkind MP
Minister of State, Foreign and
Commonwealth Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr D F Williamson (Items 2 and 3)
Mr C L G Mallaby (Items 2-4)
Mr A J Langdon (Item 1)
Mr R Watson (Item 1)

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PARLIAMENTARY
AFFAIRS

1. The Cabinet were informed of the business to be taken in the House of Commons in the following week.

Debate on
United
Nations
Educational,
Scientific
and Cultural
Organisation

THE MINISTER OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (MR RIFKIND), said that the debate on the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) on Friday 22 November was on a motion for the adjournment of the House. It presented an opportunity for the Government to hear the views of Members of Parliament about the possible withdrawal of the United Kingdom from UNESCO. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had not yet taken a decision on the recommendation he would wish to make in this respect.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up a brief discussion, said that the United Kingdom withdrawal from UNESCO could release £5 million which could be allocated to the aid budget, and might be more advantageously used in that way. The decision on whether to withdraw would need to be considered by Ministers shortly.

The Cabinet -

1. Took note.

Televising
of the
Proceedings
of the
House of
Commons

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL said that a debate was to be held on Wednesday 20 November, on the basis of a motion in the name of Miss Janet Fookes MP and other Conservative backbenchers, to approve in principle the holding of an experiment in the televising of the proceedings of the House of Commons and to recommend the appointment of a Select Committee to consider the implementation of such an experiment. This was the route which the House of Lords had taken in reaching their own decision to televise their proceedings. It was proposed that the motion should be decided on a free vote. He would intervene early in the debate to give a factual account of the issues and an indication of the matters which would need to be considered by the Select Committee. The debate would be only the first stage, and the appointment of the Select Committee would not necessarily signal a final decision by the House to televise its proceedings. The House would have to make a final view on the basis of the recommendations of the Select Committee.

In discussion, some members of the Cabinet made it clear that they remained opposed to the introduction of television broadcasting of the proceedings of the House of Commons. They thought that the conduct of business in the House had gained nothing from the introduction of sound broadcasting: if anything it had been adversely affected. The effects of introducing television was likely to be worse. The temptation to certain Members to take advantage of Parliamentary privilege to give wide currency to wild and often scandalous allegations would be even greater than at present. There would be acute and constantly recurring

problems of ensuring balance; the selection of speakers already tended to give disproportionate time and weight (as compared with voting results) to those who spoke against the Government (including those from its own back benches who were critical of the Government. Television would accentuate that tendency still further, if extracts from the proceedings were selected for transmission by the broadcasting organisations. The period of the run up to a General Election was not a good time to embark on such an experiment.

Other members of the Cabinet said that they favoured the introduction of television broadcasting of the proceedings of the House of Commons. Given the importance of television as a mass medium, it was not logical to allow sound broadcasting but deny television broadcasting. Failure to introduce television could bring about further decline of the standing and regard in which Parliament was held by the public at large. The problems of securing balance would be no more difficult for televised extracts from proceedings in the House of Commons than for radio-broadcast extracts and for current affairs programmes. Though there was a danger that some Members would abuse the presence of television cameras to give currency to allegations which could not be repeated outside Parliament, it could not be taken for granted that the general effect on the conduct of Parliamentary proceedings would be adverse. Television was here to stay; it had already had a considerable impact on the conduct of politics, it could not be kept out of the House of Commons indefinitely, and Ministers and Members would have to learn to live with the consequences. These would not necessarily be without benefit to the Government of the day, which was the main source of news and announcements.

The following points were also made -

- a. One solution to the problem of editorial balance would be to follow the example of Canada, and to dedicate a television channel solely to the proceedings of the House of Commons, and broadcast them in full, with the cameras restricted to the Member addressing the House or the House as a whole. There would, however, remain some problems in relation to the selection of extracts for news and current affairs programmes.
- b. Parliament would need to keep a firm control over the broadcasters.
- c. If the House voted on 20 November for the appointment of a Select Committee, great care would need to be taken in the choice of people to serve as Chairman and Members.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the Cabinet agreed that there should be a free vote upon the motion to be discussed on 20 November, and in accordance with precedent, members of the Government should be free to vote according to their personal conviction. If the vote went in favour of setting up a Select Committee to consider how an experiment could be implemented, a final decision would not formally be taken until the Select Committee had reported, but

it seemed unlikely that the trend established by the vote on 20 November would be reversed. It was recognised that the problems and dangers in the introduction of television into the House of Commons were different from those which had faced the House of Lords. If the recommendations of the Select Committee led to the setting up of an experiment, there would be a need for firm control of the broadcasting media and for a clear understanding on the part of the broadcasting organisations that any experiment, and subsequently any permanent system that might be established, would have to be funded from within their existing resources.

The Cabinet -

- 2. Took note, with approval, of the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion.

2. THE MINISTER OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (MR RIFKIND) said that further appointments had been made to the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group to be concerned with South Africa, which was being established following a decision at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October. In addition to Lord Barber for the United Kingdom and Mr Malcolm Fraser for Australia, the former Indian Foreign Minister, Mr Swaran Singh, had been appointed. Contrary to earlier expectation, Dr Julius Nyerere, the former President of Tanzania, appeared to be unwilling to join the Group. A former Tanzanian Foreign Minister, Mr John Malecela, who appeared to be a man of moderate views, would be a member. Dame Nita Barrow from Barbados had also been appointed to the Group. Two places had still to be filled. Mr Pierre Trudeau, the former Prime Minister of Canada, was still under consideration but appeared to be reluctant; and the Commonwealth Secretariat wanted the former Head of State of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo, to be the second African member of the Group

THE MINISTER OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE said that the Government of Israel was in crisis. There was a serious split between the Prime Minister, Mr Shimon Peres of the Labour Party, and the Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr Ariel Sharon of the Likud Party. The reason was that Mr Sharon had been publicly critical of Mr Peres. Mr Sharon had not so far been dismissed, partly because, under the terms of the coalition agreement, a Minister could be dismissed only by the senior Government member from the same party. Mr Yitzhak Shamir, the Foreign Minister and leader of the Likud group on the coalition, had not been willing to dismiss Mr Sharon. The Government crisis was continuing and it was possible that the coalition would break down in the coming days. There could be no certainty about what would then happen, but Mr Peres might seek to form a coalition of a different composition.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

South Africa
Previous Reference:
CC(85) 31st
Conclusions,
Minute 2

Israel

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The Cabinet -

Took note.

COMMUNITY
AFFAIRS

Intergovern-
mental
Conference

Previous
Reference:
CC(85) 31st
Conclusions,
Minute 4

3. THE MINISTER OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (MR RIFKIND) said that there had been another meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference, at which the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had represented the United Kingdom, on 11 November. All the proposals for Treaty amendment should now be on the table. It was encouraging that there had been no proposal to delete or amend the national veto ("the Luxembourg compromise"). It was also important that the Presidency had also drawn the conclusion that the member states did not wish to change the balance of power between the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the European Parliament. The Sub-Committee on European Questions of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee would be meeting on 20 November in order to prepare the United Kingdom position for the discussion at the European Council on 2-3 December.

Finance

Previous
Reference:
CC(85) 28th
Conclusions,
Minute 2

THE MINISTER OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE said that the European Parliament was voting that day on amendments to the draft Community budget for 1986. It was almost certain that the European Parliament would approve amendments which would substantially increase the draft budget. There was little doubt that there would then be a serious disagreement between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. It was possible that a budget would not be agreed by the beginning of 1986. If so, there would be restrictions on expenditure under the provisional twelfths regime which, despite the extension of the Community to Spain and Portugal on 1 January 1986, would relate to expenditure by the Community of ten member states in 1985. The European Democratic Group in the European Parliament was opposing some of the more exaggerated claims for budget increases but did support higher expenditure than the United Kingdom Government had agreed in the Council of Ministers (Budget).

In discussion it was pointed out that there would be difficulties when the Council of Ministers (Budget) discussed the European Parliament's amendments. It might not be possible to block some of the increases proposed.

Fish
Previous
Reference:
CC(85) 28th
Conclusions,
Minute 2

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD said that in the Council of Ministers (Fisheries) on 4 November the United Kingdom had again successfully blocked the unsatisfactory proposal on the limit for fish for human consumption caught as a by-product of industrial fishing for Norway pout.

The Cabinet -
Work note.

NORTHERN
IRELAND
AFFAIRS
Previous
Reference:
CC(85) 31st
Conclusions,
Minute 3

4. THE PRIME MINISTER said that, since the Cabinet's previous discussion, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had obtained further improvements in the package which had been negotiated with the Irish Government.

Although a very difficult situation had now arisen, because of revelations in the Irish media of much of the contents of the Agreement, she and the two Secretaries of State were in no doubt that it was right to go ahead with the proposed Agreement.

The Cabinet -

1. Confirmed its decision that the proposed Anglo-Irish Agreement should be signed by the Prime Minister.
2. Invited the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to propose a form of words for his use and that of the Prime Minister in case there were questions in the the House of Commons that afternoon, about the proposed agreement.
3. Invited the Secretary of the Cabinet to arrange for copies of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Summit Communiqué to be made available in the Vote Office of the House of Commons at the time when the Prime Minister was starting her press conference at the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Summit.

Cabinet Office
14 November 1985

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CAB 128/82

SUBJECT

MOST CONFIDENTIAL RECORD

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MOST CONFIDENTIAL RECORD
TO
CC(85) 32nd Conclusions

Thursday 14 November 1985

NORTHERN
IRELAND
AFFAIRS

Previous
Reference:
CC(85) 31st
Conclusions,
Minute 3

THE PRIME MINISTER said that, since the Cabinet's previous discussion, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had obtained further improvements in the package which had been negotiated with the Irish Government.

The Irish side had been brought to agree to a firmer statement about continuing and enhanced co-operation in combating terrorism. The Irish Government had agreed to announce that it would accede as soon as possible to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism; the Irish Attorney General had advised that there would be a risk of constitutional challenge if the Irish Government signed the Convention before the required legislation was passed in the Dail, with a view to ratifying it afterwards. The United Kingdom Government had said that the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Conference could not be housed in Stormont; but a reasonably secure building not far from there had been identified, which might be purchased and converted for the Secretariat. The United Kingdom Government had made clear to the Irish Government that, if the reaction in Northern Ireland to the Agreement was worse than expected, these matters would have to be discussed again. With regard to the risk of legal challenge to the proposed Agreement, which the Cabinet had discussed on 7 November 1985, the Attorney General had advised that an application for judicial review could be launched but that the Government would have a good defence and it should not succeed.

The Prime Minister said that the Agreement maintained two important features previously noted by the Cabinet: that the Intergovernmental Conference would have no executive powers and that there would be no derogation from United Kingdom sovereignty.

Although a very difficult situation had now arisen, because of revelations in the Irish media of much of the contents of the Agreement, she and the two Secretaries of State were in no doubt that it was right to go ahead with the proposed Agreement.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND said that there had been a long series of major press leaks from the Irish side. The resulting reports in the media had been slanted, in that they had concentrated on elements in the package which were welcome to the Republic of Ireland. The actual package was more favourable to United Kingdom interests than the press stories had suggested. For instance, the Irish willingness to accede to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism had not featured in the media. Once the Agreement had been published, the Government should emphasise that the Irish Republic was recognising for the first time that the status of Northern Ireland would not change unless a majority there so wished and that the present wish of a



majority was for no change; that there was no derogation from sovereignty and that the Agreement could encourage devolution in Northern Ireland in due course, a development which the unionists wanted.

In discussion the following points were made -

- a. If the expert advice on security risks made it necessary the arrangements for the Anglo-Irish Summit would be changed.
- b. The Prime Minister had invited the Leader of the Opposition, the leaders of the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party, and the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party to call on her before the Anglo-Irish Summit for a strictly confidential briefing on Privy Council terms about the general contents of the proposed Agreement. The Leader of the Opposition would be accompanied by Mr Roy Hattersley MP.
- c. Briefing about the Agreement would be sent to all Cabinet Ministers that evening, strictly for their personal use only.
- d. After the Anglo-Irish Summit, the Agreement, the Summit Communiqué and the press release summarising the Agreement would be sent to Members of Parliament on both sides of the House who had shown particular interest in Northern Ireland affairs. Similar material would be sent to members of the Northern Ireland Assembly and to a number of influential persons in Northern Ireland.
- e. The texts of the Agreement and the Communiqué would be made available to Members of Parliament at Westminster at the time when the Prime Minister was beginning her press conference with the Taoiseach at the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Summit. This would ensure, among other things, that Members of Parliament had access to the texts no later than members of the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- f. Given all the leaks in the media, there was a risk that in the House of Commons on that day or the following day Unionist Members would mount some kind of demonstration; or that insistent moves would be made to call for a statement by the Government on the proposed Anglo-Irish Agreement or to table a Private Notice Question. A move to table a Private Notice Question was already being resisted.
- g. A form of words should be agreed for the use of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at Question Time that day. If asked when or where the Agreement would be signed, Ministers would say that they were unable to comment. If asked whether the Cabinet had taken decisions on the proposed Agreement, Ministers should reply that a statement would be made in due course. If there was pressure on the Government to give an assurance that no Agreement would be signed before a full debate had taken place in the House of Commons, Ministers could reply



that, if there was to be an Agreement, it would ^{not} enter into force before a full debate or without the approval of Parliament.

h. If pressed in the House of Commons on the following day, the Lord Privy Seal, and other Ministers as necessary, could say that the Prime Minister would make a statement to the House on Monday 18 November and that the text of the Agreement and of the Communiqué on the Anglo-Irish Summit would be available in the Vote Office from the moment of publication.

i. The debate on the Agreement in the House of Commons was likely to take place in the week beginning 25 November. The debate in the House of Lords would follow later in the same week or on Monday 2 December. It was probable that few members of the House of Lords would oppose the Agreement.

The Cabinet -

1. Confirmed its decision that the proposed Anglo-Irish Agreement should be signed by the Prime Minister.
2. Invited the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to propose a form of words for his use and that of the Prime Minister in case there were questions in the House of Commons that afternoon, about the proposed Agreement.
3. Invited the Secretary of the Cabinet to arrange for copies of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Summit Communiqué to be made available in the Vote Office of the House of Commons at the time when the Prime Minister was starting her press conference at the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Summit.

Cabinet Office

15 November 1985

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SUBJECT

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MOST CONFIDENTIAL RECORD
TO
CC(85) 32nd Conclusions
Thursday 14 November 1985

TEACHERS' PAY
DISPUTE

THE PRIME MINISTER said that she hoped that colleagues concerned with education matters would be giving careful thought to the situation regarding teachers' pay.

Previous
Reference:
CC(85) 29th
Conclusions,
Minute 1

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL said that he had that morning convened, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education and Science, a meeting of Ministers to consider the situation. The meeting had concluded that it would be useful for a group of Ministers, with appropriate official support, to consider the present situation and suggest possible courses of action.

The Cabinet -

Took note that the Prime Minister would arrange for a group of Ministers to consider the present situation in the teachers' disputes in England and Wales, and in Scotland, and the possible courses of action open to the Government, and report.

Cabinet Office

19 November 1985