


CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. A0842

PRIME MINISTER

New Hebrides Independence

(OD(79) 42)

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's memorandum seeks agreement for the introduction, in the current Session, of legislation for such amendment of United Kingdom enactments as will be required if the New Hebrides should join the Commonwealth after reaching independence in April or May 1980. The granting of independence will not itself require legislation.

2. This Amending Bill would follow a well established pattern and should be short and non-controversial. The New Hebrides' status as an Anglo-French co-dominion is unusual but the French at official level now expect the country to apply to join the Commonwealth. It would not prevent it joining francophone associations also.

3. The memorandum also serves to inform the Committee of the Conference on the future of the New Hebrides held with the French in September this year; of the subsequent Exchange of Notes agreeing to grant independence and of the General Election won by the Anglophone party almost certain to seek Commonwealth membership.

4. I recommend that you express agreement, subject to the views of your colleagues, to the proposal made by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. The Lord Privy Seal has written separately to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about the timing of the introduction of the Bill.



(Robert Armstrong)

4th December, 1979