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24 APRIL 1981

CABINET
DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

BELIZE INDEPENDENCE

Memorandum by the Lord Privy Seal

1. Colleagues will be aware from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's memorandum to the Prime Minister of 23 April circulated separately that certain problems arose in connection with the Constitutional Conference, which ended successfully on 14 April. These problems concern :

- (a) opposition in Belize to the Heads of Agreement;
- (b) opposition to the Belize Government's constitutional proposals;
- (c) uncertainty about the nature of the security arrangements which will be needed for Belize.

Nicholas Ridley is to travel to Belize on 27 April to make an assessment of the present situation there.

2. Meanwhile it is essential that we should proceed with the preparation of an appropriate Bill for independence if legislation is to be completed before the summer recess. It remains our objective, as it has always been, to bring Belize to independence if possible by the end of this year. We do not want to close this option because the necessary drafting has not been put in hand in time.

/3. I therefore

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3. I therefore invite my colleagues to agree that, on a contingency basis, preparations should begin immediately for a Bill granting independence to Belize. Colleagues will be consulted again before any decision is taken to table a Bill so that any new developments in the coming weeks can be taken into account.

4. Unless I hear to the contrary by ^{1 May}~~29 April~~ I shall assume your agreement.

I H G

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

24 April 1981

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