

MR WHITMORE
PRIME MINISTER

John
5x.

I repeat - this is
not a discussion
meeting. I shall
say - if they want
to

British Council of Churches (BCC)

You are receiving a BCC deputation on Tuesday 16 October at 10 am. The meeting, which was requested after the General Election, was first fixed for 27 July but it was swamped in the pre-Lusaka rush and had to be postponed.

Edw the press.
no.

The deputation will be:-

Dr Kenneth Greet, Chairman of the BCC Executive Committee

The Reverend Harry Morton, General Secretary

The Reverend Arthur McArthur, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church

The Reverend Bill Johnston, Church of Scotland

Dame Diana Reader Harris, Christian Aid

Mr Derek Pattinson, Secretary, Church of England General Synod

Dr Greet, Mr Morton and Mr McArthur have all accepted invitations to your dinner party on 7 November for Dr Coggan.

The BCC was founded in 1942. All the churches, except the Roman Catholics, belong (the RCs often send observers). There are similar Councils in Scotland, Wales and Ireland and the BCC is affiliated to the World Council of Churches. It has four main Divisions - Christian Aid, community affairs (including race relations), international affairs and ecumenical affairs.

The BCC is largely financed by grants from member churches. It is short of money.

The BCC has good contacts with Government Departments, for example on aid matters, but it must be some years since they were received by a Prime Minister.

The subjects they hope to raise are:

1. Christian Aid, and its refugee relief work.
2. Southern Africa. The BCC recently published a paper "Political Change in South Africa: Britain's responsibility", which is due to be debated by the BCC and some at least of the member churches later this year. The thrust of this paper is that shareholder pressure and 'constructive engagement' is not enough, and that the Churches should press public opinion and HMG for "disengagement" by the West from South Africa and a readiness to support, or at least not veto, United Nations proposals for sanctions against South Africa, including an oil embargo. (The Churches, particularly the Church of England, may not necessarily endorse this BCC line.)
3. Energy and unemployment.
4. The future of Scotland in a United Kingdom.

The BCC publishes plenty of literature. Last year they produced a book "Britain Today and Tomorrow", edited by Canon Beeson of Westminster Abbey. Dr Greet may hand you a copy, and a copy of the South Africa paper.

The deputation is expecting a meeting of 45 minutes. They would like, if this is acceptable, to make a Press release to say that the meeting had been held, and that these four topics had been discussed - without enlargement on what had been said. Dr Greet will have a draft with him.

CVP

4 October 1979

PRIME MINISTER

*Mr. Coker
May in pt. here
a unit.
Bill
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1.*

BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

You were to have met a small deputation from the British Council of Churches on 27 July but it was swamped in the pre-Lusaka rush and had to be postponed until Tuesday 16 October.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council wrote to you on 12 July (copy attached) to let you know what subjects the deputation hoped to raise with you. I understand that this is still the ground they would like to cover when they come next month. We need to decide:-

(i) Whether you want any other Ministers or officials with you when you see the deputation. Would you like Mr. Neil Marten to be present since they want to talk about the refugee relief work of Christian Aid? I rather doubt whether you will need anybody to support you on the other subjects they want to bring up - Southern Africa, Energy, Unemployment and the Constitutional Future of Scotland.

(ii) Whether you need any briefing on the subjects mentioned in Dr. Greet's letter. Again, I should not have thought that you would need anything, except possibly a note on the refugee relief work of Christian Aid.

*The meeting is rather
for them to give me their views
than for me to give them mine! They can i. take longer.
Further - I take it the meeting is purely a no
press statements other than the
fact of the deputation if they so wish.
M.T.*

27 September 1979