

Centre for Policy Studies

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27 November 1980

Dear Ian,

European Parliament

I had a talk the other day with Robert Jackson MEP, who you probably know is a highly intelligent man. I should think he is probably a Federalist, although I heard a rumour that he would like to change from his European Parliamentary seat to a Westminster one.

Robert's report on the morale of the Conservative Euro members was rather bleak. He said that he and his colleagues were all working terrifically hard; he instanced a report by some Ph.D. student from Alaska (a friend of Alfred's?) who has proved that out of 30 of the hardest working members of the European Parliament, 17 are English Tories. However, he says that sooner or later they will become disillusioned because in his opinion they are ill-led and do not have a clear picture of where they are supposed to go within the European community. This will be bad because, like it or not, the Conservative Party is The European Party and if British membership of Europe turns out to be a failure, that failure will rebound on the Party in Britain. Therefore first whatever parameters for action are thought about, these should be made crystal clear: and secondly the leadership of the group should be effective.

In the latter connection he said that Jim Scot-Hopkins was likely to be challenged in a year or so by Fred Warner, the European member for Somerset. I have not been able to find out exactly whether an election is really a possibility for the leadership of the Conservative group - after all Jim Scot-Hopkins was nominated leader by the Prime Minister - but Robert Jackson was implying that some people would try and force such a thing if nothing were to happen.

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Fred Warner is an old friend of mine. As you probably know, he is a man of great energy as well as experience. The first quality has obviously enabled him to make a successful jump from the Civil Service to politics in a way that few do. I have always understood that he was completely exonerated after the enquiries into his old friendship with Burgess.* Personally, I would regard him as potentially a good leader, although he is over 60. The last qualification means, however, that he has still several more years of vigour ahead - and being over 60 there is the advantage that he could not be expected to stay for very long.

*Yours ever,
Hugh*

HUGH THOMAS

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* I have subsequently discussed this at considerable length with Ed. Greenhill who I think wd. agree with the tenor of this article