

FROM:

THE RT. HON. LORD HAILSHAM OF ST. MARYLEBONE, C.H., F.R.S., D.C.L.



HOUSE OF LORDS,
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CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

Visit of the Pope

I have received from two peers, the Earl of Bessborough and Lord Ingleby, a suggestion that during the coming papal visit the Pope should be asked to address members of the two Houses of Parliament. This suggestion is likely to get a good measure of support since I doubt whether they are alone.

I emphasised to both that, if made, this would have to be a political decision receiving support at least from the three main parties, that it might well be made the occasion for some self-advertising demonstrations by extreme Protestant groups inside and outside Parliament, and that in any case I thought it would be necessary to make the necessary consultations, and to study the precedents applying to joint meetings.

Both peers having independently consulted the Clerk of the Parliaments, I requested him to prepare without prejudice a list of the precedents and offer advice about the appropriate drill. He has complied with my request in a note to my Private Secretary, a copy of which I append.

I express no opinion at this stage as to the merits, but consider that the time has now come to inform colleagues as to what has transpired.

I ought to add that Miles Norfolk came to my room at his own request today and discussed the matter. He had been himself approached by Ingleby but not by Bessborough. He was extremely sensible and advised the greatest caution. We both agreed that any soundings which were taken should be extremely tentative. It would be far better that nothing should be done at all than that something should be done and then go wrong.

I shall take no further step in the matter on my own initiative unless and until I have been approached by colleagues.

I am sending copies of this minute and the enclosure to Willie Whitelaw, Peter Carrington, Christopher Soames, Humphrey Atkins and Francis Pym, to Mr. Speaker, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

H: of S: M.

18th March, 1981

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