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SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and
Commonwealth Affairs

Prime Minister

To see Jim Prior's letter.
I don't think you need to read
the attachment.

P 27/4.

26 April 1984

Alan Greaney

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John Houston was good enough to send me a copy of the third draft of the Conservative Manifesto for Europe. On a technical level the draft seems very comprehensive but I must admit to considerable disappointment about its political tone. I fully concur with the strategy of trying to put ourselves between the Labour Party's fundamentally anti-European stance and the Alliance's unrealistic 'federal blueprint' approach. However I don't believe that we need to go quite as far as this document presently does in giving quite such an overwhelming emphasis on fighting for British interests at the expense of the potential which the Community offers to all its members if we were able to widen the fields of co-operation and resolve our present difficulties.

I would welcome any moves to give a greater bow in the direction of giving greater prominence to our vision of how Europe can develop as a force in world affairs, and to building a little more generosity of spirit and idealism into the text. I'm sure the theme of Conservative leadership should be stronger in the manifesto.

I attach a list of suggested detailed textual amendments which I hope you will consider. I am sending copies of this letter to Cabinet colleagues, the Party Chairman, the Chief Whip and Peter Cropper.

Lawson

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Suggested Amendments to Draft Conservative European Manifesto

Para 1, second sentence to read: 'This manifesto explains why Conservative policies pursued both by a strong Conservative Government and by a powerful Conservative team in the European Parliament are the best guarantee of British interests in Europe and the best means of securing a prosperous and united European Community'.

- I think the present formulation lays too much stress on the role of Government and gives very much a subordinate role to our European Members who are, after all, the ones seeking election.

Para 2, final sentence to read: 'Labour's policies had damaged British interests, thoroughly soured relations with our partners and yet signally failed to secure reforms, and undermined the Community's attempts to get to grips with the deteriorating world economic situation'.

Page 2, second sentence: 'Our firm economic policies at home are restoring the economic health of Britain, giving us the fastest growth rate of the Ten, and we are helping to lead the Community out of recession.'

I would have thought our achievements in maintaining the butter subsidy and establishing the sheepmeat regime deserve a mention later on this page, or perhaps on page 19.

Page 3, end first paragraph add: 'Particularly welcome too has been the establishment of the Urban Renewal Regulation which will contribute £60 million of Community funds to combatting problems or urban decay in Belfast'.

Page 4, second paragraph: 'The Ten by working together can have considerably more influence over matters of foreign policy, economic policy and trade than they can do by working alone'. I think references to the 'super-powers', lumping America and the Soviet

Union together, is a thoroughly undesirable precedent in a Conservative document. I think that in the following paragraphs some reference should be made to the Ten's success in working together at the United Nations, and taking common positions over the Middle East and South-East Asia - and, perhaps, the Falklands.

Page 6: 'Conservatives will support', to read 'Conservatives will work to promote' - it sounds more energetic and less reactive.

Page 9, second paragraph, insert additional second sentence: 'Only through taking full advantage of the Community's rich resource of 260 million - to become 300 million after enlargement - consumers can Europe hope to maintain its share of world markets against the industrial challenge from America, and the countries of the Pacific Basin.'

Page 10, line 10 after 'traveller' insert: 'as a student'.

Page 11: in the section on Community funds I think it would be useful to include some reference to the sums we have received from the Regional Social and Agricultural Funds and the ECSC.

Page 15, para 2 to read: 'We have put forward this case with determination and persistence - and with increasing success. While continuing to press the case for long-term reforms, we have secured interim arrangements for British refunds of £2,500 million, two thirds of our budget burden in the years 1980-83. In contrast, the Labour Government presided over a rapid escalation in Britain's budget burden to almost £1 billion in the last year for which they were responsible. Their formal 'renegotiation' used up much good will towards Britain and yet they failed to secure any relief whatsoever'.

Page 22, lines 5 to 7 to read: 'Over the years the Parliament's say in how Community funds are spent has increased, but as it has little direct responsibility for how the money is raised it has little incentive to have a proper regard for the need to restrain expenditure.'

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Pages 23-4: I believe the balance of this concluding section is wrong and I would suggest an additional paragraph making reference to the success of the Community and the importance of taking it forward. At present there is too exclusive an emphasis on 'British' or 'our' interests - 6 references in 4 paragraphs. I would therefore propose something along the following lines:

'The Community is founded on a great deal more than just the pursuit of ten differing national interests. Compromises have to be reached and differing aspirations reconciled. The Community may, on occasion, seem to be beset by short-term conflicts but these should not be allowed to obscure the immense progress made in building a new Europe over the past few years. The remarkable point to note has been Europe's ability to agree on so many different matters during the recent years of recession rather than those issues which divide us. The Community provided with the right leadership is an association of immense potential whose achievements in the future may yet dwarf what has been achieved to date. Should the leadership of the Community fall into the wrong hands the price of stagnation will be large today but far greater for future generations.'

In the penultimate paragraph I would propose the deletion of 'this is not the time to call for Socialist policies' - implying that there is an appropriate time; and the substitution of 'the implementation of Socialist policies across Europe as Labour propose would destroy jobs and prosperity across Europe as they did in Britain.'

I would also suggest a slight remoulding of the final paragraph to read:

'Nor would it be right at this time to plunge into a federal Europe abandoning our capacity to protect British interests as the Liberals propose. A resolute Conservative team in Government and the European Parliament is the best protection for British interests

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and for carrying forward the Community as a whole. We do not change our policies every time there is an election - our commitment to Britain's place in the Community has remained steadfast for more than 20 years. That is why people trust us. And it is why we seek renewed election through your support on June 14.'

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