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From the Minister

PRIME MINISTER

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The memorandum OD(80)/54 circulated by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs draws attention to the issues we must face if sanctions are imposed against South Africa by the United Nations. It is supported by a Cabinet Office paper which draws attention in paragraph 14 to the effect of an embargo on imports of fresh and canned fruits from South Africa. It notes that in the United Kingdom in the short term at least there would be acute shortages and substantial price rises for these items. Moreover, the United Kingdom would be the most hard hit among traditional importers of South African supplies of such commodities.

I would like to emphasise very strongly that this is the only sanction of all those considered which might be applied by the United Kingdom which would be immediately perceptible by the general public given that there would be price rises for canned fruit in the shops and acute shortages of such items as oranges and grapes in the middle and late summer.

I do not believe that we can afford to neglect the presentational problem that this will cause for the Government at almost any time let alone the present. I am not convinced that we can find alternative supplies in anything under the medium term, even if then.

I believe that we shall need to give the most careful consideration to this problem of price, supply, and presentation before deciding on any course of action involving sanctions against South Africa.

I am copying this to other members of OD and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Peter Walker

PETER WALKER
3 October 1980

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