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Mr Nash

CALL BY ITALIAN CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES ON MR HURD AT THE FCO
5.30 PM WEDNESDAY 3 OCTOBER

Present

The Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
Minister of State

The Italian Chargé d'Affaires

Mr J Poston

1. The Italian Chargé said that he had been instructed by his Government to ask the UK's opinion on the participation by EEC citizens in local elections, both as candidates and as voters. He pointed out that the 1974 Paris Summit had decided that the question of special rights for Community citizens should be studied; there were of course many Italians in France, Germany, Belgium and the UK. The Italian Prime Minister, Mr Cossiga, had mentioned the question as one of the priorities of his Government and the Irish Presidency were trying to push ahead with the problem. Mr Incisa then handed over the attached speaking note.

2. Mr Hurd replied that UK Ministers had not yet taken a decision, so that he could give only his personal view. He thought that the problem was not very easy and saw no easy solution; there was a separate but not unrelated problem which would probably cause the UK more difficulties than it would Italy - that of a common electoral system for the European Parliament. He believed that the latter question would occupy Ministers' attention and cause many problems. It might be difficult to add to the problems by dealing also with the question of voting in local elections. He had not realised that the participation by Community citizens in local elections was an aim of the Italian Government; it had not been discussed in the House of Commons or the British press. There was of course an anomaly in that Irish citizens could vote in all elections in this country. He could say, however, that while he personally was not very optimistic on the problem the Government would take into account the Italian representations before making any final decision.

3. Mr Incisa confirmed that his Government would be willing to enter into reciprocal arrangements if the Community conceded the general rule of participation by Community nationals in local elections. This would apply to candidates as well as to voters.

4 October 1979

cc:

Private Secretary
PS/Mr Hurd
PS/Lord Privy Seal
PS/FUS
Mr Butler
Mr Bullard
Mr Fretwell
Mr Fergusson
EID(I)
WED
Mr Walsh, Cabinet Office
Mr Wasserman, Home Office

SPEAKING NOTE

1. The Paris Summit of 1974 approved inter alia an understanding to recognize a special status to EEC citizens residing in their respective territories. On that occasion the Italian Government renewed a proposal to adopt the principle of a European citizenship. Although the proposal was not retained, the decision was eventually taken to appoint a working group to investigate the possibility of granting special rights to such citizens.
2. The working group has since completed a draft paper concerning the right of EEC immigrants to take part and to run as candidates to the local elections in the place of their residence.
3. The Italian Government is deeply interested in achieving in the nearest future an understanding whereby EEC immigrants shall be granted the right to take part and to run as candidates to the local elections in the place of their residence and warmly welcomes any understanding to such effect. In his programme Signor Cossiga mentioned as a priority of Italy's emigration policy the right of the Italian emigrants to take part and to run as candidates to the local elections in the place of their residence.
4. Consequently and in view of the fact that the Irish Presidency is presently endeavouring to speed up the drafting of such an understanding, which shall have the full support of the Italian side, the Italian Government will be grateful for any indication as to H.M. Government's approach to the matter.

Mr Fretwell
PS/Mr Hurd

A brief on this
has prepared for
this letter to
her Room 4/5
4/5 Oct. 79

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Mr Nash
Mr Boniface
31/10

CALL BY ITALIAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES: WEDNESDAY 3 OCTOBER, 2.30 PM

1. The Italian Chargé d'Affaires asked to call on the Lord Privy Seal: I understand that Mr Hurd is to see him.
2. Since the appointment was made the Counsellor in the Italian Embassy has told us that the purpose of the call is to raise the suggestion that Italian expatriates in the UK should enjoy the right to vote in UK local elections.
3. I submit a brief, which has been cleared with the Home Office.

J N T Spreckley

J N T Spreckley
European Integration
Department (Internal)

2 October 1979

cc: Private Secretary
PS/Lord Privy Seal
PS/PUS
✓ Mr Butler
Mr Gladstone, WED
Mr Wasserman, Home Office

1. Any change in UK practice should surely be for the benefit of all Community countries, not just Italy, and would have to be part of an agreement applying throughout the Community. The proper place for discussion is in the established forum in Brussels:

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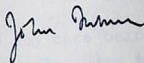
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2.

if the Italians are dissatisfied with progress they can raise the question in the Council of Ministers. Bilateral approaches, seeking special arrangements for Italians, are unlikely to be helpful.

2. I would not expect early decisions in Brussels: the Working Group has made only limited progress in the last five years.



M J E Fretwell

2 October 1979

CALL BY ITALIAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES: WEDNESDAY 3 OCTOBER, 2.30PM

POINTS TO MAKE

1. Note the Italian suggestions.
2. The Government favour the extension of voting rights to UK citizens living within the Community in direct elections to the European Parliament; this will involve careful scrutiny of all our electoral procedures and the Italian suggestion is one we shall bear in mind.
3. Would the Italians propose to extend reciprocal rights to UK citizens resident in Italy?
4. Understand that this question is in any case being dealt with by a Community working group in Brussels. Are the Italians satisfied with progress there? Are they proposing that we should have a separate, bilateral arrangement?

/ESSENTIAL FACTS

ESSENTIAL FACTS

Voting by Foreign Nationals in Local Elections

2. A Working Group was set up by the Paris Summit of December 1974 to study the conditions and timing under which citizens of the Nine Member States could be given special rights as members of the Community. Among these "special rights" being considered is the right of Community citizens to vote in the local elections of other Member States. The Working Group is expected to reach agreement soon on the text of a draft Directive which will be submitted to COREPER for further study. The UK has informed the Commission that we would think it appropriate for Community nationals to be able to exercise the right to vote in elections to County Councils, District Councils and Paris Councils in England and at the corresponding levels of local government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, if it were agreed in principle that they should be able to vote in local elections. But we have taken no position yet on the point of principle.

3. Giving non-UK nationals the right to vote in UK local elections before UK nationals living abroad get any right to vote would be much resented. Home Office are currently considering whole question of voting rights, including in elections for European Parliament. The Parliament will shortly be considering

/possibility

possibility of making proposals for a Common Electoral System, probably in time for next direct elections due in 1984. Under Article 138(3) of the Treaty of Rome it is for the Parliament to draw up proposals for a Common Electoral System; it is then for the Council, acting unanimously, to lay down the appropriate provisions which it shall recommend to Member States for adoption in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

4. Home Office made arrangements for Italians living in UK to vote in election of their own representatives to European Parliament on 10 June. Italian Embassy has expressed satisfaction with arrangements.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION DEPARTMENT (INTERNAL)

2 October 1979