



## Government Chief Whip

12 Downing Street, London SW1

The Prime Minister

### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In the next few weeks there will be elections for both the Presidency of the Parliament and for the leader of the European Democratic Group. The relevant dates are as follows:-

President of European Parliament	Polling Day - January 18th and 19th
Last day for nominations for Leader of EDG	January 26th
Polling day for Leader of EDG	February 9th or 10th

At the moment there are two candidates of the Centre Right for the Presidency, Mr Egon Klepsch (German Christian Democrat) and Sir James Scott-Hopkins (EDG). Mr Klepsch has been promised the support of all the Centre Right Groups except the British Conservatives, amounting to about 170 votes. The EDG has 63 votes. Therefore it seems doubtful whether Jim Scott-Hopkins will win. It is possible that a compromise candidate like Mr Tindemans of Belgium may come in after the second ballot. Jim Scott-Hopkins will probably get all of the 63 EDG votes, although one or two may drift away to Mr Dankert the Socialist nominee.

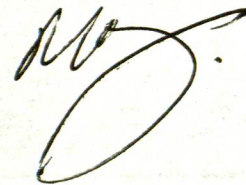
Assuming Jim Scott-Hopkins fails to be elected President of the Parliament the next question will be whether he will be re-elected to lead the Group. There is a certain dissatisfaction in his performance. Indeed, Brian Hord has said that he might oppose him. Hord is unlikely to get more than a handful of votes.

John de Courcy Ling the Chief Whip to our Group tells me that he has examined the position in the Group with some care, and concludes that we cannot take it for granted that Jim Scott-Hopkins will be elected as Chairman of the Group for a further term if he fails to win the Presidency, although the odds are that he will be elected. The most likely person to command the

support of the Group in his place is Sir Henry Plumb.

Henry Plumb has let it be known that he would be most unwilling to oppose Jim Scott-Hopkins. Jim Scott-Hopkins has let it be known privately to the Whips that in any case he would not wish to continue as leader after the next election in 1984. If that is the case, it would therefore seem essential that a new leader was elected not later than February 1983. In many ways there would be an advantage in making a change quickly, but this would make the Group look inconsistent, in that having failed to get their leader elected as President of the Parliament, they then proceeded to ditch him. I understand that the Group would really prefer to make a change in February 1982, but they are anxious not to be too hard on Jim Scott-Hopkins. My advice is that if he let it be known that he would stand for one more year only, then he would not be opposed in 1982.

In the circumstances, therefore, I think it would be best for all concerned if Jim Scott-Hopkins continued for another year as leader of the Group and was succeeded by Henry Plumb in February of 1983.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'M. J.', written in a cursive style.

9 December 1981

John

fox

(File Copy)



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER.

1. I AGREE WITH THE  
CHIEF WHIP'S ASSESSMENT.
  
  2. THE PROBLEM IS THAT  
YOU HAVE TO APPOINT  
THE LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE  
MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT BEFORE THE  
ELECTION FOR THE LEADER  
OF THE WIDER EUROPEAN  
DEMOCRATIC GROUP ON  
9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY.
  
  3. MAY WE HAVE A WORD  
PLEASE?
- 1cm  
10/12/98.